

**NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT**

**GUIDELINES FOR WRITING  
ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROPOSALS**

by  
Dugartsyrenova, V. A.

**MOSCOW**

**2016**

## Contents

<b>Part 1: Basic Requirements for Writing a Research Proposal</b> .....	3
1.1. What is a research proposal?.....	3
1.2. Structure of a research proposal .....	4
<b>Part 2: Writing Sections of a Research Proposal</b> .....	5
<b>2.1. Preliminary sections</b> .....	5
2.1.1. Title page .....	5
2.1.2. Table of contents .....	6
2.1.3. Title .....	7
2.1.4. Abstract .....	8
<b>2.2. Main sections</b> .....	10
2.2.1. Introduction .....	10
2.2.2. Literature review .....	25
2.2.3. Methods .....	36
2.2.4. Expected outcomes .....	42
<b>2.3. Supporting sections</b> .....	23
2.3.1. List of references .....	44
2.3.2. Appendices .....	46
2.4. Common mistakes in Russian students' proposal writing .....	47
2.5. Bibliography .....	48
<b>Appendices</b> .....	49
Appendix A: Sample proposal 1 .....	49
Appendix B: Sample proposal 2 .....	54
Appendix C: Glossary of research terms .....	58
Appendix D: Title page layout .....	59

### 1.1. What is a research proposal?

A *research proposal* is a written document of varying length which informs others of your future research project. It provides the rationale for conducting a research study and gives your reader a clear idea of the importance of your research topic, the gaps that your study seeks to address, your research objectives, methods for data collection and analysis, and your study's expected contribution to society and knowledge.

**Research proposals are an established way to seek funding for a proposed research project** (e.g., in the form of a grant), compete for space at a scientific conference, or enroll in an educational program to obtain a research degree. They are also a prerequisite for completing the requirements of a study plan in many programs at the undergraduate, Master's or PhD level. In those cases, a proposal is submitted for evaluation by university faculty and, if approved, allows the researcher to proceed with his (her) research, complete it, and present the project in its **final form** (e.g., Master's and doctoral level **dissertations** and **theses**).

**There is no established format for writing research proposals** as each institution or grant-giving organization will have their own requirements for preparing and submitting a proposal. Yet, since the aim of a research proposal is to convince others that you have found a "niche" that is worth exploring and that you can offer justifiable solutions to fill that niche, your proposal should be as persuasive as it can be and should demonstrate your ability to explain the nature, context, and value of your study for the research area.

**Your proposal should thus address the following questions:**

- What is your research topic? What is known about how this topic has been addressed by other scholars in the field?
- What are the specific aspects of the topic that are going to be investigated in your research (your research focus or problem)? Why is it important to investigate the problem at all?
- What are the purpose and objectives of your study?
- How do you plan to conduct your research to meet those objectives?
- What outcomes are you planning to achieve as a result of conducting your research project? What are your preliminary results (if you have these obtained and analyzed before writing the proposal)?
- What do you think is the overall contribution of your study to addressing your problem?

**The success of producing a strong research proposal** depends not only on a good grasp of your topic and your research skills but also on your ability to justify the need for your research in writing using clear, concise, and compelling language. **The next section** will provide basic guidelines on the format of an undergraduate level research proposal.

## 1.2. Structure of a research proposal

Different types of research proposals vary in length (from 1-2 to 30 pages) and follow a variety of formats. Many proposals will have basic sections that are commonly found in other genres of research writing (e.g., research articles and reports, dissertations and theses), including abstract, introduction, literature review, and methodology (methods). There may also be variations in the headings of the sections in proposals. While some proposals such as those for a PhD thesis are quite sophisticated and require a lot of detail, the ones offered at **the undergraduate level** are usually just for a semester or a year-long project and thus lack the scope of a full-fledged Master's or doctoral level research proposal.

**Here is a suggested format for an undergraduate level research proposal at your department. Your proposal should consist of the following sections or components:**

- 1) **Preliminary sections** (front matter): should include the title (cover) page, table of contents, title (10-12 words), and abstract (100-200 words)
- 2) **Main sections:**
  - ✓ Introduction (400-600 words)
  - ✓ Literature review (700-1,000 words)
  - ✓ Methods (methodology) (300-500 words)
  - ✓ Expected outcomes (300-400 words)
- 3) **Supporting sections** (back matter): a list of references (no fewer than 12, which is 300-400 words!), tables and graphs (200-400 words, if applicable), and appendices (200-400 words, if applicable).

The **length** of your proposal should be between **2,500-4,000 words**, including references and appendices (e.g., tables and graphs). The method adopted for this proposal format is the **APA** (American Psychological Association) **citation style**. This style is **used internationally** for preparing scientific works submitted to journals published by the Association in disciplines such as education, sociology, psychology, physical education, etc. The APA style should be applied throughout the entire body of your proposal.

**The rest of this document will provide more detailed information on the requirements for writing the different sections of your proposal.**

## PRELIMINARY SECTIONS

### 2.1.1. Title Page

The title page of a research report traditionally follows a preset layout and should not be numbered. The subsequent pages of your proposal should be numbered using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3 ...). Like the rest of the proposal, the title page should be **double-spaced** throughout and typed in **Times New Roman, 12 pt**. The margins should be set at 1" (2.54 cm) on all sides.

**Here are the main elements that should appear on the title page:**

- the full title of your proposal in **boldface**
- your name: first name, middle initials, and last name
- your group number
- your institutional affiliation (National Research University Higher School of Economics) and department (School of World Economy and International Affairs)
- your academic advisors' titles (e.g., instructor, senior lecturer, assistant professor, etc.) and names
- year and place of writing the proposal.

See Appendix D for a full-sized template to use in your proposal.

### **2.1.2. Table of contents**

To provide an overview of your proposal's structure, it is important to list your contents on a separate page that follows the title page. Your list or table of contents should reflect the sections of your proposal arranged according to section numbers (together with headings and subheadings). Use Arabic numerals to indicate the page number for each section.

Should you use any **tables, figures** or **charts**, number those consecutively throughout your proposal (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2, Table 1, Table 2) and include the number of the page in which they appear in the table of contents.

### 2.1.3. Title

A good title to a proposal indicates what you explore in your study and should reflect the nature, scope, and purpose of your research. It should be catchy, brief, and self-explanatory. Your title can change after the research is completed, yet you can develop a **working title** early on to guide your work and keep you focused on your purpose.

#### Tips:

- a title normally includes some key words from a study
- your title should **not** exceed **10-12 words**
- it is normally formulated as a noun phrase or question, although the question form tends to be less formal
- each word in the title that is **less than four letters long** (e.g., most prepositions and articles) should be **CAPITALIZED** (**T**he **R**ole of **M**ale **S**iblings in the **S**ports **A**chievements of **T**eenage **G**irls)
- a title can be made up of two parts separated by a colon: the main part and the subtitle
- if the title has two parts, the first word in the subtitle should always be CAPITALIZED (The Effects of Using Virtual Worlds on Spanish Language Acquisition: **A** Pilot Study)
- if quotes are used in the title, the source should be acknowledged in the footnotes.

#### Things to avoid:

- using **vague** language such as "A Study of...", "A Study to Investigate ..." or words and phrases which are too general, such as "Russia-China Politics," "Political Freedom"
- putting quotation marks around your title
- putting your title in italics
- using exclamation marks, although the question marks are acceptable in titles which are formulated as questions
- using expressions which are a verbatim translation from the Russian language and do not sound authentic in English (e.g., "on the example of," "on the case of")

#### Below are some examples of titles (authors' names are indicated in brackets):

- Financial Market Integration and Loan Competition: When is Entry Deregulation Socially Beneficial? (Kaas, 2004)
- Fiscal Sustainability and Public Debt in an Endogenous Growth Model (Moraga & Vidal, 2004)
- Forecasting with a Bayesian DSGE Model: An Application to the Euro Area (Smetz & Wouters, 2004)
- Longer-Term Effects of Monetary Growth on Real and Nominal Variables, Major Industrial Countries, 1880-2001 (Haug & Dewald, 2004).

#### 2.1.4. Abstract (100-200 words)

The **abstract** is a very brief **summary** of your proposal and usually the most read part of it. The abstract is what helps the reader to decide if your work relates to their research interests and get a basic understanding of what will come in subsequent sections. The abstract follows the title and, if detailed enough, should quickly orient your audience as to:

- **the context (background) to the research problem that you plan to address**
- **the research gap/ problem**
- **the purpose of your study**
- **your proposed methodology (method)**
- **expected results**
- **the broader implications or contribution of your study to the field.**

Note that the last two elements may often be missing in an abstract.

#### Tips:

- your abstract should appear on a **separate page** following the title page
- it should be **one paragraph** in length
- it should **not exceed** 200 words
- the word "Abstract" should be **centered** on a separate line
- the first line following the abstract should **not** be indented
- each sentence in the abstract (or a part of it) should fulfil a specific communicative function (e.g., *show the significance of the research topic, provide some background to the study, state its purpose, justify proposed methods, describe the contribution of your study to the research area*)
- it is best to avoid using acronyms, abbreviations, or symbols in your abstract
- your abstract should **not** contain any information that is missing in your proposal
- your abstract should include **the key words** (up to six—italicize and capitalize the word *Keywords*)
- **the key words** should be listed on the next line after the abstract and indented.

Note that if written in sloppy, badly argued, or vague language, the abstract is likely to give your reader the wrong impression of your work and discourage her (him) from reading any further.

**Here is an example of an abstract from a research proposal in the field of economics:**

#### Abstract

**[Context]** Tanzania's protected areas contribute to the national income through protection of animal species and habitats attracting large numbers of tourists. **[Research gap]** However, local communities who largely bear the costs of conservation receive only a small percentage of the benefit. Consequently, wildlife populations decline and habitats are being lost through conversion to agriculture. **[Purpose]** This study aims at estimating the total local economic value of conserving the Tarangire Ecosystem to contribute to an understanding of potentials for conservation through tourism. **[Method]** The contingent valuation method will be used to measure the willingness to pay and willingness to accept (dichotomous choice elicitation) of local communities for the protection of the Tarangire ecosystem. A two-stage systematic random sampling design will be used to select about 150 respondents to socioeconomic, perception and attitude, and contingent valuation surveys. Data will be analyzed with logit/probit models.



*Keywords:* tourism, national income, Tarangire ecosystem, conservation.

Adapted from Wassie, cited in Pettenella

Pettenella, D. (2016). Research synopsis writing. Retrieved May 20, 2016, from <http://intra.tesaf.unipd.it/School/for%20PHD%20FONASO%20ResearchSynopsisWriting.pdf>

Here is another example of an abstract from a research proposal in the field of education:

### **Health and Healing the Ute Way: Perceptions of Diabetes Among the Uintah-Ouray**

#### Abstract

**[Purpose]** Generally stated, the purpose of the proposed research project is to evaluate perceptions of diabetes among the Uintah Ouray Utes in order to improve diabetic healthcare. In tandem with local initiatives, this study seeks to more fully understand native perceptions of diabetes and empirical translations of these perceptions in order to help develop an “innovative and effective community based educational plan” (Cesspooch, 1999). **[Method]** This project, based upon Rapid Assessment Procedure (RAP), will consist of a descriptive and exploratory study to record these perceptions and their underlying cultural basis (Beebe 1995; Scrimshaw & Hurtadok, 1987). Following the premises of participatory action research, members of the Ute tribe will be implemented as consultants, collaborators and experts in the project design in order to increase efficiency and success of the proposed research project (Chrisman et. al., 1999; Whyte, 1990).

*Keywords:* Uintah Ouray Utes, diabetic healthcare, native perceptions, educational plan.

Adapted from:

Utah State University (2016). Health and healing the Ute way: perceptions of diabetes among the Uintah-Ouray. Retrieved May 20, 2016, from <http://rgs.usu.edu/undergraduate-research/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/08/Proposal-Model1.pdf>

## MAIN SECTIONS

### 2.2.1. Writing the Introduction (400-600 words)

#### *What is an Introduction*

The Introduction section in research proposals (as well as research articles, theses, etc.) is, strategically, one of the key sections of the whole work. Although placed first following the abstract, just like the Abstract, the Introduction usually is **the last section to be written** as it is difficult to describe your study effectively before you have conducted appropriate survey of relevant literature, identified the problem to be addressed, worked out the research methodology, thought out expected outcomes, and even obtained preliminary findings.

The **aim of a typical Introduction** is twofold: 1) to appeal to the reader's interest and signal why your proposal is worth reading, and 2) to orient the reader as to the significance of the research problem within a broader research area, the gap or needs that your study seeks to address, and how well it appears to address that gap. Much like a **mini-synopsis** or an overview of the whole proposal, a typical Introduction first sets the scene for the current investigation and then explains why the present study is important, what its purpose is, and what its major contribution (significance) to the field is.

To give the reader an idea of established knowledge in the research area, the Introduction section includes a **review of relevant literature** that concludes with a statement of gap(s) that need to be filled. By the end of reading an Introduction, the reader should be able to understand what the proposed study is about, what previous research it builds on without referring to other publications on the topic, and what one can expect to find in subsequent sections of the work. In research proposals, dissertations and theses, however, the review of literature on the chosen topic is often not integrated into the Introduction section. It appears as a separate section (called the "Literature Review" section) which immediately follows the Introduction and provides a detailed review of relevant sources. The guidelines on writing a literature review can be found in section 2.2.2.

Just like other sections in a piece of research writing, most Introductions follow a **logical pattern of organization** that can be described in terms of the so-called "**moves**" (Swales & Feak, 2004)—stretches of text that fulfil the author's communicative intentions or functions in a text (e.g., providing the background to a study, describing the study's purpose, etc.). Moves can be divided into smaller units called "**steps**," which serve to convey communicative functions within a certain move. **The length of a step** can vary from a single sentence to a number of paragraphs. Although there are some steps that carry the weight of the entire Introduction section and are thus obligatory (e.g., indicating a research gap), other steps (e.g., providing definitions) are optional.

To illustrate, in **Move 1** (widely known as "**Establishing a territory**") through a series of steps, the writer establishes a context for his or her research or situates it within the general topic area and then narrows the focus down to the more specific aspects of the topic. In most cases, the necessary background information and details are provided, key concepts are defined or given new interpretations, and links to other studies on the topic are made before the writer can take the next logical step—establish what is missing that calls for further research on the topic.

After having reviewed and summarized previous research, in **Move 2** (often referred to as "**Establishing a niche**") the writer makes a claim that there exist serious shortcomings in how (and whether) the problem has been addressed and points to a "niche" or gap that has to be

filled. New questions can be raised to stress the need for more research on specific aspects of the problem, and to make a compelling argument for why the present research is important.

In **Move 3** (“**Occupying the niche**”), the writer outlines how the proposed study will address the gap. This final part of an Introduction is a place for the writer to announce the purpose (and objectives) of the present study, outline the proposed theoretical framework and methods, the study’s scope and boundaries (limitations to what it sets out to achieve), and explain what the expected value and outcomes of the study are.

Here is a suggested **framework or plan for structuring the Introduction section** in a research proposal. Note that some of the steps included in the framework are marked as “optional,” meaning that they may appear in an Introduction, but this is not always the case:

<b>Move 1:</b>	<b>Establishing a territory</b>
Step 1	Showing importance of the topic
Step 2	Providing background information or facts ( <i>optional</i> )
Step 3	Clarifying definitions ( <i>optional</i> )
Step 4	Reviewing previous research
<b>Move 2:</b>	<b>Establishing a niche</b>
Step 1	Indicating a research gap or needs
Step 2	Presenting justification for the present study ( <i>optional</i> )
<b>Move 3:</b>	<b>Occupying the niche</b>
Step 1	Stating the purpose of the present study, research questions, and hypothesis
Step 2	Presenting methodology
Step 3	Stating expected outcomes

There are no hard and fast rules as to how the elements (moves and steps) should be ordered in an Introduction or any other section of your work. Research has shown that the move-step structure of Introductions to research articles, reports and proposals, may differ considerably across a variety of disciplines. Some steps can be introduced repeatedly and cyclically within the same move. Moreover, more than one step can be found within the same sentence. However, for the purposes of writing research proposals at your department, the format described above will be used.

**Here is a sample Introduction which illustrates the basic moves-steps as shown above.**

#### **Competition and Scholarly Productivity in Management: Investigating Changes in Scholarship from 1988 to 2008**

<sup>1</sup>Industry membership represents a primary emphasis in management research, especially strategic management (Porter, 1980). <sup>2</sup>Several studies reveal that industry membership explains a significant amount of variance in firm performance (Misangyi, Elms, Greckhamer, & Lepine, 2006). <sup>3</sup>Complementing these investigations of firm performance is research that examines characteristics of the industries themselves, from broad attributes such as life cycles (Agarwal, Sarkar, & Echambadi, 2002) to more detailed characteristics such as munificence, dynamism, and concentration (Dess & Beard, 1984).

<sup>4</sup>Some scholars have viewed the management discipline as an industry with its own characteristics and influences. <sup>5</sup>Researchers, for instance, have studied an array of complementary topics regarding **management scholarship** such as article impact (e.g., Bergh, Perry, & Hanke, 2006); author impact (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Bachrach, & Podsakoff, 2008); journal quality (Singh, Haddad, & Chow, 2007); faculty pay (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1992); and editorial board memberships (Van Fleet, & Hyman,

2009).<sup>6</sup> However, scholars have only begun to explore factors that influence scholarly productivity in management.

<sup>7</sup>We extend this stream of research by examining the evolution of scholarly productivity in the management discipline between 1988 and 2008. <sup>8</sup>We focus on research productivity as evidenced by publications in prominent research outlets. <sup>9</sup>Because scholarly research influences managerial practice and enables instructors to present new knowledge to students, an understanding of the evolution of research productivity in the management discipline represents a worthy endeavor. <sup>10</sup>Such an understanding may help ensure the field's continued development (Bailey, 2006; Boyd, Finkelstein, & Gove, 2005) and legitimacy (Hambrick & Chen, 2008).

<sup>11</sup>We hope to make two primary contributions through our research. <sup>12</sup>First, we will examine the management discipline as an industry and document significant changes in scholarly productivity over time. <sup>13</sup>Using proxies we discuss in detail later, we will explore change over time in the number of individuals who achieve the standards required for promotion to the associate- or full-professor levels at typical research-oriented universities within a typical promotion and tenure "clock." <sup>14</sup>Our preliminary results suggest that competition for space in prominent journals has risen dramatically over time, even when considering the simultaneous increase in journal page space. <sup>15</sup>Thus, for the vast majority of active research scholars, the time needed to achieve these outcomes has increased markedly from 1988 to 2008. <sup>16</sup>Second, we will develop and implement a routine that will allow us to explore potential differences in scholarly productivity between management's primary sub-disciplines (which differ on their level of analyses: "Micro" primarily considers individuals or groups of individuals, while "macro" primarily considers organizations).

<sup>17</sup>We believe that our study has important implications for several stakeholder groups. <sup>18</sup>First, our findings may help to educate both junior and senior professors on the changing publication norms in the management field. <sup>19</sup>Likewise, our results may be of use to business school committee members and administrators by enabling such individuals to recognize the changing standards of scholarship within the management discipline. <sup>20</sup>Finally, such knowledge may help PhD students—the future of our discipline—to understand and engage the profession more successfully.

Adapted from:

Certo, S.T., Sirmon, D., & Brymer, R. (2010). Competition and scholarly productivity in management: Investigating changes in scholarship from 1988 to 2008. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 9(4), 591–606.

### Language tips:

- the parts in the Introduction (Move 3) that describe the future study are written using Future tense
- avoid using "research" in the plural form, as this noun is **uncountable** (research **is/ has been done**), use "a/ the study" in the meaning of "научное исследование"
- avoid using one sentence paragraphs.

The following sub-section will provide detailed guidelines on structuring and writing your Introduction based on the move-step approach. Consult the Language Guide... to learn about specific vocabulary and grammar structures used when writing the Introduction and other sections of a research proposal.

Note that self-graded exercises will be available through an online tutorial for you to practice identifying, distinguishing between, and reordering the different communicative elements of Introduction excerpts from a variety of fields. Additional exercises will enable you to hone your vocabulary and grammar skills as you move through the different sections of the tutorial starting with the Introduction module.

## *The Mechanics of Writing the Introduction*

### Move 1: Establishing a Territory

#### Step 1: Showing the importance of the topic:

In a typical Introduction to a research proposal, article or report, the first step in move 1 is for the writer to “establish the territory” (Swales, 2004) within which the topic of the research is situated. This means convincing the reader of the importance (significance) and relevance of the topic in question and can be done **in two ways** or **two sub-steps**:

- by **stressing the topic’s importance in the real world** (step 1A);
- by **highlighting research activity in the problem area** (step 1B).

#### Step 1A significance claims

The first strategy (step 1A) allows the writer to show that the topic is novel, urgent, problematic, or has been recognized on a global scale. The topic is introduced as significant because it addresses the real world’s needs (societal needs, environmental concerns, etc.) rather than the needs for advancing research in the problem area. Thus, often, no mention is made of research activity or scholarly interest in the topic. This type of claim may be more preferable in emerging fields or areas of research where not much research has been done for the author to draw on.

**Here are some examples of Step 1A significance claims.** Note the kind of language that is used to emphasize the importance of the topic. These and all the other examples to follow contain information about the discipline in which the research study was written (e.g., **Economics**).

1. Ventures **face an uphill battle** in securing critical resources for survival and growth (**Economics**).
2. The **uneven distribution** of resources such as oxygen, water, food, heat and mates **force many animals to travel** between different patches to obtain them and to use some resources in the process (**Wildlife Behavior**).
3. Tropical-forest nature reserves **are experiencing mounting human encroachment, raising concerns over their future viability** even in remote areas (**Conservation Biology**).
4. Technology **opens up various potentials for language learning**: access to native speakers and peer learners around the world, easy 24/7 access to instructional and authentic language learning materials and learning support, and facilitation of the construction of positive learner identities (**Applied Linguistics**).

#### Step 1B significance claims

The second strategy (step 1B) differs from the first one in that the topic’s importance is established by highlighting research activity and scholarly interest in the general problem area and the topic concerned. Often, references to previous studies are provided to show the author’s familiarity with major findings (results) from existing research on the problem.

**Here are some examples of step 1B significance claims.** Note the language used to emphasize scholarly interest in the topic and how well it has been explored in other studies:

1. Authentic literacy experiences that connect to student lives **are stressed in theoretical and empirical educational research** (**Applied Linguistics**).

2. **Research on the inherent duality of the nature of democracy has been growing** at a rapid rate (Political Science).
3. Industry membership **represents a primary emphasis in management research**, especially strategic management (Management).

Although there is significant variation in the ordering of Move 1 steps across different disciplines, significance claims (either of 1A or 1B type) are normally found **at the beginning** of the Introduction section. They often start as single sentences that introduce the author's claims about the topic's importance (see the boldfaced sentences in the examples below). They are followed by a series of **supporting sentences** that develop and illustrate the author's major point or argument.

### "Mixed type" significance claims:

In some cases, it may be difficult to draw a sharp distinction between step 1A and 1B significance claims as some authors may start their Introduction with general statements about the topic as a point of major social concern or interest (with regard to healthcare, education, public policy issues, etc.) but then link to or **reference** specific studies to support those statements and emphasize how well the topic has been addressed by researchers. In this case, **references** to the studies cited are often provided in brackets (see "citations" in the examples below).

**Here are some examples of the "mixed type" significance claims.** The more general statements are highlighted in bold (bolded):

1. **The scholarly and public discussion of the role of the media during elections is heated and ongoing.** In the United States, **much attention has been paid** to the role of political advertising in either mobilizing or demobilizing the electorate (*citations*) (Political Science).
2. **Globalization is increasing economic, social, and political interdependencies around the world.** Consequently, public relations as a discipline are more often charged with managing communication and relationships between organizations and their stakeholders on an international level (*citations*) (Public Relations).
3. **As companies expand internationally and their foreign operations become more dispersed, language differences start to affect interactions within and beyond their boundaries** (*citations*). To cope with these challenges, MNCs (Multinational corporations) have implicit or explicit language policies for corporate communication, documentation, and interaction (*citations*) (Business).

### Practice

For practice with distinguishing between the different types of significance claims described above, consult the Introduction module of the online tutorial.

### Language Focus

As can be seen from the examples of significance claims above, the language used to make significance claims builds on a range of vocabulary items (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.) which:

- stress the urgency of the problem and may often include 'alarming,' 'critiquing,' 'expressing concern,' 'stressing value' expressions (step 1A);
- signal the topic's 'importance' and 'merit' in the eyes of scholars (step 1B).

The relevance and significance of the problem are often emphasized through the use of **present tenses** such as the Present Simple, Present Continuous, Present Perfect, and Present Perfect Continuous, as in the examples below:

1. As companies expand internationally and their foreign operations become more dispersed, language differences **start** to affect interactions within and beyond their boundaries (*citations*) (**Business**).
2. Globalization **is increasing** economic, social, and political interdependencies around the world (**International Relations**).
3. Research **has shown** that the most efficacious psychological treatments for anxiety disorders come from the cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) paradigm (**Behavioral Psychology**).
4. Research on the inherent duality of the nature of democracy **has been growing** at a rapid rate (**Political Science**).

In academic (research) writing, the choice of the tense often depends on the author's decision, however, **the Present Simple** tends to be used whenever the author wants to present the information as accepted facts or truths or to add credibility to his or her claims. **The Present Perfect** tense is often employed to stress the relevance of some facts, previous scholarly activity, or events up to the present moment. **The Continuous tenses** become helpful when there is a need to emphasize ongoing processes that are or have been taking place in the indefinite present or over a certain period of time up to now.

#### Language Practice

Consult *the Language Guide* for more information on the language structures for **showing the importance of the topic** (pp. 1-3). Additional online activities will be available in the Introduction module of the online tutorial.

#### Step 2: Providing background information or details on the topic (optional)

Once the importance of the topic has been established, some authors feel compelled to give the reader additional information or facts which provide a background to the topic. This can be done by explaining or clarifying theoretical assumptions, highlighting historical trends, describing properties or features of objects under investigation, etc. Background facts and details normally come from research studies and may thus be followed by references to those studies, although this is not always the case. Whenever background details are presented more as common knowledge or accepted facts, they may not contain references to any studies. Background statements can span one or a few sentences in length.

While prominent in certain fields, step 2 statements are absent in many studies and may be regarded as optional. This is particularly true when authors are certain that their readers share the same background knowledge on the subject.

Here are examples of extracts from Introductions to research articles in the fields of political science, economics, and applied linguistics. Each extract contains "background statements" highlighted in bold:

1. Over the last three decades, electoral reform has moved center stage in both new and established democracies. **In Europe, the post-1989 democratization wave brought important debates about electoral system choice and free and fair elections.**

However, electoral reform also emerged on the agenda in a number of established democracies. In common with other countries, declining political participation, corruption scandals and party finance irregularities put the management of the democratic process on the political agenda (*citations*) (Political Science).

2. In logistics, the emergent technologies represent an important link in SCM (*citations*), because they can help organizations to achieve interesting results in terms of eco-friendliness and competitiveness. In particular, green technologies can contribute to face the global competition thanks to a general costs reduction, a better SCM, a risks' reduction (*citations*), and the development of sustainable distribution system (*citations*). These technologies can also lead to a concrete innovation of logistics, focused on environmental burden reduction policies, mainly oriented to pollution, gas emission (*citations*), economic and material inputs optimization (Economics).
3. It has been recognized for some time that the processes of reading and writing are inextricably intertwined, with writing helping to support cognitive demands made upon the reader whilst processing a text (Applied Linguistics).

### Language Practice

Consult the *Language Guide* for more information on the language structures for **providing background information or details on the topic** (pp. 2-3). Additional online activities will be available in the Introduction module of the online tutorial.

### Step 3: Clarifying definitions (optional)

Another step that writers often take to establish a context for their study is providing or clarifying definitions for key concepts and terms. The authors may offer their own definitions and explanations of the concepts or refer to other scholars' definitions, especially for concepts that can be defined in a variety of ways. When other authors' definitions are used, these are often integrated as direct quotes (thus quotation marks should be used) or paraphrased. The sources are acknowledged in an **in-text reference** at the end of a sentence.

Here are **step 3 examples** from research articles in different fields. Take a look at the examples. Note how in the first example the author first gives a definition of a term coined by another prominent scholar and then provides his or her own definition of this term:

- Self-efficacy pioneer, Bandura, defined perceived self-efficacy as "concerned with judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (1982, p. 122). In other words, self-efficacy is a belief, held either individually or collectively, that future outcomes can be influenced within the context of external constraints [*author's own interpretation of the definition*] (Applied Linguistics).
- Transparency, defined as the ability of the principal (voters) to observe the agent's (delegate's) behavior and the consequences of the agent's decisions, aligns the interests of the two actors and allows the principal to hold the agent accountable (Political Science).
- Engagement represents active participation in the learning process, which consists of activities and perceptions that learners are involved in in the form of attention, interest, curiosity, and motivation (*citation*) [*paraphrased definition*] (Education)
- Homelessness, a severe form of residential instability, disproportionately occurs among young children from low-income families (Education).



### Language Practice

Consult the *Language Guide* for more information on the language structures for **clarifying definitions** (pp. 3-5). Additional online activities will be available in the Introduction module of the online tutorial.

#### Step 4: Reviewing previous research

Move 1 often ends with a preliminary and rather brief review of key findings from previous studies on the topic (a short paragraph or two). This is done to place the present study in the context of related studies. It is also a good way to show the author's knowledge of important research findings in the research area and add credibility to any background information, definitional clarifications, etc. At this stage, the review of previous studies normally takes the space of one or a few sentences so only the most relevant information from key studies is included. A more comprehensive review of previous research should be reserved for the subsequent section of a research proposal known as the "Literature Review" (see 2.2.2 to learn more about writing this section).

Here are two extracts from the Introduction section of a research article in the field of business. Note how the information from the studies is often presented: a focus is placed **on what specific authors did in the studies** (see the bolded text). To provide the author's evaluation of other scholars' findings in the context of the present study, analytical statements like the ones highlighted in green at the end of each extract are often made.

##### Extract 1

If instead multiway clustering is nonnested, the existing approach is to specify a multiway error components model with iid errors. **Moulton (1986) considered** clustering due to grouping of three regressors (schooling, age, and weeks worked) in a cross-section log earnings regression. **Davis (2002) modeled** film attendance data clustered by film, theater, and time and provided a quite general way to implement feasible GLS even with clustering in many dimensions. **These models impose strong assumptions, including homoscedasticity and errors equicorrelated within cluster** (Cameron et al., 2011) (Economics).

##### Extract 2

Controlling for clustering can be very important, as failure to do so can lead to massively underestimated standard errors and consequent over-rejection using standard hypothesis tests. **Moulton (1986, 1990) demonstrated that** this problem arose in a much wider range of settings than had been appreciated by microeconometricians. **More recently Bertrand, Duflo, and Mullainathan (2004) and Kezdi (2004) emphasized that** with state-year panel or repeated cross-section data, clustering can be present even after including state and year effects and valid inference requires controlling for clustering within state. **These articles, like most previous analyses, focus on one-way clustering** (Cameron et al., 2011) (Economics).

Below are more extracts from research studies in the fields of economics and political science. Note that the **focus is now on the studies and specific findings** rather than on what specific authors did. See the bolded parts of the text.

1. **Some public health studies focus on** particular policy adoptions and impacts, especially the work-place smoking ban (*citations*) (Political Science).

2. For instance, **many studies produce evidence that** the presence of democratic institutions increases the likelihood of terrorist targeting, **while others show that** democracy diminishes the prospects of such violence (**Political Science**).
3. **Empirical applications** dealing with the approach **are extensively reviewed in** Mendelsohn and Dinar (2009). **Recent empirical work takes into account** a number of contemporary aspects that were formerly critically received (*citations*) (**Economics**).

### Practice

For practice with identifying and distinguishing between steps 1-4 of Move 1 described above, consult the Introduction module of the online tutorial.

## Move 2: Establishing a Niche

### Step 1: Indicating a research gap

Move 2 is the part of the Introduction section that provides a rationale for why the present study is needed. It “establishes a niche” by **indicating** specific areas in research (**gaps**) that have not yet been addressed with due attention. Normally, the findings from the reviewed studies point to the questions that still remain unexplored and thus call for further investigation. Strategically, this part of an Introduction is of primary importance and cannot be left out.

**It is possible to indicate a (research) gap in three ways:**

- by pointing to a lack or paucity of studies in the research area or topic,
- by pointing to a lack of required methods, instruments, or frameworks for addressing the problem as a motivation to propose these in the present study,
- by exposing some of the deficiencies or flaws in previous studies (inconclusive findings, questionable assumptions, flawed methodology, etc.) that the present research hopes to overcome.

**Here are some examples of “gap statements” from research articles in different fields.** Note what kind of language is used to emphasize the gap:

1. **No study has been reported about** the type of processing approach of English language by learners of non-romance languages in general and Persian in particular. (**Applied Linguistics**).
2. Although the real price of oil is one of the key variables in the model-based macroeconomic projections generated by central banks, private sector forecasters, and international organizations, **there have been no studies to date** of how best to forecast the real price of oil in real time (**Economics**).
3. Scholars have recently become more interested in the relationship between democracy and terrorist violence, but increased research on the topic **has still left several important questions unanswered** (**Political Science**).
4. **There is no current scale** designed to measure ... from the perspective of students (**Applied Linguistics**).

### Question raising

As an alternative to indicating a research gap (or needs), a “niche” can also be established by identifying issues that have yet to be addressed and proposing these in the form of indirect

questions (also known as embedded questions in the English grammar). This step is referred to as “question raising” (Swales, 2004). Question raising statements will most often include question words such as “**whether (or not),**” “**as to how,**” “**what,**” “**when,**” etc., which follow the normal word order (with the subject coming before the verb!). While favored by some authors, this rhetorical strategy tends to occur less frequently than indicating a gap.

**Here are some examples of “question raising” in research studies:**

1. **The question then becomes whether or not** students perceive the socially-constructed textual production online in the same ways they perceive socially-constructed textual production in academic spaces (EDU.G1.o., MICUSP, **Education**).
2. This homogeneity of socialization experiences **raises the question of whether** such elites can sufficiently represent the interests of voters with whom they share so few life experiences (**Political Science**).
3. Yet, despite the importance of understanding how shop person predetermined budgets might estimate the total price of their shopping baskets, **it remains largely unclear whether, when, and how** they keep track of in-store spending (**Marketing**).

#### Language Practice

Consult the *Language Guide* for more information on the language structures for **indicating a gap** (pp. 5-8). Additional online activities will be available in the Introduction module of the online tutorial.

#### Step 2: Presenting justification for the present study (optional)

Having pointed out the gap(s) that need to be addressed, some authors may provide a statement (a justification) that explains why the present study has to be undertaken. This is often done to make a stronger argument for why the current study is important and prepare the ground for introducing the study’s purpose.

**Here are some examples of “justification claims.”** Note the use of linking words, *thus* and *therefore*, which are commonly employed to emphasize a result or a consequence of something:

1. Therefore, it would be useful to construct and analyze a model in which ...
2. It thus **seems useful/ worthwhile to generalize the previous approach to this more general case.**
3. Thus/ therefore, **further research is needed on X.**
4. Thus/ therefore, **it is of interest to examine/ compare...**
5. Thus/ therefore, **the study of X merits further attention.**
6. Therefore, exploration of this topic **presents a worthwhile research avenue/ seems a worthwhile pursuit.**

#### Practice

For practice with identifying and distinguishing between steps 1-3 of Move 2 described above, consult the Introduction module of the online tutorial.

### Move 3: Occupying the Niche

#### Step 1: Stating the purpose of the present study, research questions, and hypothesis

As a way to address the research gap identified earlier, the writer **introduces the present study** by **stating its general purpose** or **explaining what the study sets out to do** to address the research gap.

Here are some examples of “purpose statements” found in research articles and proposals:

1. In this study, **we propose and illustrate a framework for** high-frequency business conditions assessment (**Business**).
2. **The purpose of this research is twofold.** Our first motivation is to propose a new analytical strategy to explicitly account for the endogeneity of any adaptation measure to climate. Our second motivation is to assess the extent to which modelling adaptation explicitly affects the partial effects of the climatic attributes (**Economics**).
3. **This paper aims to offer a new perspective on** green technologies and innovations’ influence on SCM (*citations*) in order to achieve a better understanding of strategies and policies designed to deal with the emerging challenges in ... (**Economics**).

#### Language Practice

Consult the *Language Guide* for more information on the language structures for **stating the purpose of the study** (pp. 8-10). Additional online activities will be available in the Introduction module of the online tutorial.

#### Stating research questions (optional)

As is the case with most journal articles, the statement of the purpose can be followed by the formulation of the so-called **research questions—well-thought-out statements (1-3) in the form of questions** that allow the author to define the scope of the study and capture the specific (and novel!) points that will be addressed. Research questions are an established format for presenting the focus of a research study in the international scientific community.

Research questions should be **narrow enough** to be answerable under the current conditions and to. If too broad or complex, research questions can disorient the writer as to what exactly to address, where to start the research, and what methods and procedures to employ (e.g., “What is the effect of technology on Russian citizens’ voting patterns?”).

Here is an example of research questions following a statement of the purpose in a research proposal in linguistics:

The **purpose of this study** is to explore how the use of specific text variables may contribute to different perceptions of a speaker in English-language CMC. I also want to explore the possibility that text cues can contribute to perceptions of other personal characteristics such as race, internet use, and education level. **To this aim, this study will address the following research questions:**

- How do subjects perceive speakers’ age, gender, and other characteristics according to use of standard or nonstandard orthographic features?
- Are some orthographic features more salient than others?
- Does speaker presumed age or gender make a difference as to subjects’ perceptions of textual variation?

(Adapted from LIN.G1.o6.2, MICUSP)

Here are some more examples of research questions from research articles in applied linguistics and economics:

- We further deemed it useful to explore what difference there might be dependent upon the proficiency level of the writer. **Hence our research questions were:** 1) What kinds

of unguided feedback in English do Taiwanese university students give in online response to English compositions by unknown peers mediated by a Web 2.0 resource? 2) Is their feedback different depending on the level of writing proficiency exhibited in the compositions? (Applied Linguistics)

- Specifically, **the study focuses on the following research questions:** 1) How do L2 students engage in the collaborative writing process using Web-based word processing tools? 2) What is the nature of group participation in Web-based collaborative writing? (Applied Linguistics).

### Stating a hypothesis (optional)

Depending on the field and the topic, some proposal Introductions (this is especially true of experimental studies) will include a **hypothesis** (*singular; plural—hypotheses*). A hypothesis is a prediction or expectations regarding the nature and relationship between some variables that you want to test out. Hypotheses are usually generated based on the author's observations of the subject under study (inductive reasoning) and/ or a good knowledge of what has already been established in the relevant literature (current knowledge). Once established, a hypothesis guides the conceptual design of the study and the research methods used. Yet, as in the case of research questions, a hypothesis should be **verifiable** or **testable** through the use of statistical or analytical tools in order to be confirmed or discarded. Some proposals may include more than one hypothesis.

A hypothesis should normally explain what variables will be measured and what methods (experiment, statistical measures, etc.) will be employed to test the hypothesis. Your variables will need to be "**operationalized**," that is, explained in terms which allow the researcher to measure or test them scientifically (e.g., How would you measure the concept of "political freedom?" How can you assess what nation can be considered to be "politically free" according to your definition?). These concepts will often have been operationalized by other scholars in your field, however, it may be the case that you will need to operationalize those terms on your own.

**Here is an example of a hypothesis from a research article in the field of political science:**

#### **Who's Afraid of Conflict? The Mobilizing Effect of Conflict Framing in Campaign News**

Thus in the present study we expect conflict framing to have more of a mobilizing effect on voters in countries in which baseline levels of polity evaluations in media coverage are more favorable compared to countries with more negative evaluations. The current study context, the 2009 EP elections, provides a unique case of varying degrees of polity evaluations across countries to test our expectations. Based on the above considerations we put forward the following expectations:

**Hypothesis 1:** Exposure to campaign news coverage framed in terms of conflict mobilizes citizens to vote.

**Hypothesis 2:** Campaign news coverage framed in terms of conflict has more of a mobilizing effect on citizens if polity evaluations are favorable than if they are less favorable.

Adapted from:

Schuck, A., Vliegenthart, R., & De Vreese, C. (2016). Who's afraid of conflict? The mobilizing effect of conflict framing in campaign news.

*British Journal of Political Science*, 46(1), 177–194.

Here is another example of a hypothesis from a doctoral research proposal in the field of economics:

**The Implications of Economic and Social Mobility for  
Transnational West African Migrants in Spain**

**Hypothesis.** From the central question of this study, how does the social and economic integration of sub-Saharan West African immigrants in Barcelona affect the types of transnational activities they pursue and the degree of their involvement in these activities, **the following hypothesis emerges: Immigrants with greater social and economic integration in the host country will demonstrate a wider range and an increased frequency of transnational behaviors.** This hypothesis contains four variables to be measured: a) the level of incorporation of West African immigrants in Spain's economy; b) the level of their social adaptation; c) the types of transnational activities they practice; and d) the frequency of engagement in these activities. These variables are defined and operationalized below in subsequent sections.

Margolis, M., & St. Jacques, E. (2004). The implications of economic and social mobility for transnational West African migrants in Spain. Retrieved May 20, 2016, from [http://gravlee.org/ang5091/proposals/stjacques\\_nsf.pdf](http://gravlee.org/ang5091/proposals/stjacques_nsf.pdf)

## Step 2: Presenting methodology

In this part of an Introduction, in one or a few sentences, the author describes the chosen methodological approach to carrying out the study. Specific **sources of data** (written sources, human subjects, etc.) and procedures for accessing, collecting, and analyzing the data are proposed in light of the stated purpose, research questions or hypotheses. This part does not have to be detailed as more specific information on the methodology and why it was chosen to meet the study's objectives will be provided in the Methodology (Methods) section of the proposal (2.2.4). What to include in the description of the methodology depends on the specific field and the nature of your study.

Often, specific **data collection instruments** (or methods) will be mentioned at this point, such as surveys, tests, participant observations, interviews, etc. Information on the **methods for analyzing and interpreting the data**, such as different types of statistical analyses, content analysis of written documents (e.g., records of organizations, historical documents, websites, personal correspondence, diaries, transcripts of oral recordings), etc. is also often provided. Some studies may also include information on specific **materials** that will be used that will be used during experimentation.

### Here are some of examples of 'Methods' descriptions in Introductions:

- This article will proceed to analyze how tobacco control policy has developed in Ireland, **based upon multiple sources, including documents, case studies, quantitative data, and interviews with those involved in the policy process (Political Science).**
- Specifically, we will assess how and in what ways encounters with the criminal justice system influence citizens' political attitudes and behaviors, **using two data sources that allow us to estimate this relationship (Political Science).**
- To study the conditional impact of conflict news framing on mobilization, **we will employ a multimethod research design** including content analysis and a two-wave panel survey. **The content analysis will be used to investigate** how the news media in

the different EU member states have covered the campaign, and **the panel survey will be used to assess** the impact of such coverage on voter turnout. (Political Science).

- Departing from the common practice of comparing second moments implied by the model with second moments observed in the data, **we will compare** model forecast error statistics with the same statistics obtained with professional forecasts. (Economics).

Note that in some cases, the methodology and the general purpose can be described in one and the same sentence, as in the following examples. The first part of the sentence explains what the study's purpose is ("assess the causal effects of smth on smth"), while the second part (highlighted in bold) explains how its purpose can be achieved:

- This study advances understanding in this area by assessing the causal effect of contexts on individual political orientations **by tracking the preferences of individuals before and after residential moves, over an eighteen-year period** (Political Science).
- We investigate the effect of news media coverage of the election on individual turnout, **while controlling for many of the usual explanatory factors for turnout** (Political Science).

### Step 3: Stating expected outcomes

If present, this part of an Introduction typically concludes the whole section. Its purpose is to provide the reader with the author's idea (interpretation) of what the expected results or outcomes of conducting the study is in just a few sentences (1-3). This final part is also the space to provide some insights into the proposed **value** (significance) and implications of the study in terms of addressing the research gap and adding to the current body of knowledge on the topic. More detailed information on how to describe expected (and preliminary) outcomes of the proposed study in a separate section of your proposal will be given in section 2.2.5.

Here are some examples from adapted Introductions to research articles and proposals. Note the frequent use of "cautious" language—**hedging structures** (e.g., modal verbs and adverbs—*may, might, possibly, perhaps*). These allow the author to avoid making strong claims about the value of the study:

1. This study **may shed a powerful light on** how policy is constructed in authoritarian settings, and what adverse consequences there can be of exporting transparency without electoral sanctioning (Political Science)
2. In this way, the study **may contribute to** academic knowledge and challenge policy makers to embrace a more variegated approach to the question of 'national' security and citizens' roles within it (Political Science).
3. The findings **may have significant implications for** more typical party systems in that they are not completely devoid of intra-party variance, and social background may go a long way to explaining this variance (Political Science).

Note that in research articles, which report on actual results and implications of a study in retrospect, the language tends to be more assertive. The **Present Simple** tense is often used to emphasize the author's belief that the study has something important to say, as in the examples below:

1. **The results of this study contribute** some empirical evidence in an attempt to raise awareness of a test bias which has been overlooked in many ESL/EFL contexts (Applied Linguistics).

2. In fact, our findings **challenge a centerpiece of political participation orthodoxy**—that individual resources such as time, knowledge, and money are the strongest predictors of participation (**Political Science**).
3. Based on our results, this study **provides a more nuanced picture of how** a citizen's sense of (in)security is linked to the levels at which they perceive certain issues as threatening (**Political Science**).

### Practice

For practice with identifying and distinguishing between steps 1-3 of Move 3 and all the steps in the Introduction section, consult the Introduction module of the online tutorial.



### 2.2.2. Writing a Literature Review (700-1000 words max.)

#### *What is a Literature Review*

The **purpose of the literature review section** is to give a detailed overview of what has already been done by other scholars in relation to general research area and your research problem. While some topics (and research problems) may be novel, the importance of pursuing other topics may seem less evident to the reader, calling for substantial evidence to show why they are worth exploring. Writing this section should thus allow you to:

- demonstrate your knowledge of the research area and problem by connecting it to the existing body of knowledge
- show how the proposed study fits into the broader context
- identify and give credit to major studies that have laid the groundwork for your own research
- identify and discuss major theories or conceptual framework(s) that your study will build on
- provide definitions of key concepts and terms you will be using (where necessary)
- demonstrate your ability to identify and critically assess both the merits and inconsistencies (drawbacks) in other scholars' works, and draw your own conclusions about the areas of inquiry which have yet to be addressed (research gaps)
- show how your study can address the gap(s) to advance current research on the topic.

**The research and study skills that are key to preparing a high quality literature review are:**

- locating information that is relevant to your research
- evaluating and selecting most relevant works related to your research problem
- reading critically and taking notes on the material from source texts
- grouping information into logical clusters
- synthesizing and integrating information from selected sources as you present a critical discussion of the findings from the sources (their weaknesses and strengths in addressing the issues at hand)
- acknowledging the sources properly (referencing) to avoid plagiarism
- using compelling and coherent language to build your line of argument.

For many students, especially non-native speakers of English, **the complexity of writing the literature review** section lies in:

- doing extensive research and selecting relevant works on their topic
- limiting the scope of their search (which at some point can appear to be never ending)
- analyzing and evaluating information in connection to their research problem and the overall purpose of the study
- identifying and presenting key concepts, themes, and empirical results to inform their reader about the current state of knowledge on the topic while using paraphrasing and summarizing strategies effectively
- making a strong argument for why new research within their area of scholarly inquiry is needed.

## ***The Mechanics of Writing a Literature Review***

### **Step 1: Searching for sources**

An important stage before even planning your writing is finding what to read on your topic. It is most likely that you will have some ideas on where to start looking from your scientific supervisor. You may in fact have already found and compiled your own reading list on the topic. In contrast, at this stage you may not be certain about what exactly you are looking for until you gather some initial material and formulate your **research questions**—questions that help the author define and narrow down the scope of a study. Research questions are an established format for presenting the focus of a research study in the international scientific community.

Below is an example of research questions from a research article in economics.

#### **Example:**

Among the many issues potentially raised by these comparisons, **we concentrate on two main questions:** Can the behavior of professional forecasts be reconciled with the forecastability implied by a standard dynamic stochastic general equilibrium (DSGE) model with nominal rigidities (the Smets and Wouters 2007 model)? **This leads naturally to a second question:** would a modified version of the model, e.g., one with a varying inflation target, deliver a better fit in terms of forecastability?

Adapted from:

Azevedo, J. V., & Jalles, J. (2016). Model-based vs. professional forecasts: Implications for models with nominal rigidities. *Macroeconomic Dynamics, First View*, 1–30.

When precisely stated, research questions guide the approach taken to resolving the research problem at hand and the selection of relevant sources to include in the literature review (Fink, 2012). It may also be advisable to prepare additional questions to ask yourself as you search for the sources:

1. What published research is available on my topic?
2. Where do I look for the sources to include in my literature review?
3. What types of sources would be most relevant and helpful (journal articles, books, government reports, banking statistics, etc.)?
4. What do I need to find out in line with my research topic (and research questions)?
5. How do I evaluate the information I come across for its relevance to my research objectives and credibility (especially, information from online sources)?

#### **Primary vs. secondary sources**

At this stage, an important consideration is whether you will be using **primary** or **secondary sources** for your research. **Primary sources** report on the results of “original” experiences (experiences coming from researchers’ own observations, experiments, etc.) or “raw” evidence created at the time period being studied. This type of sources are valuable in the sense that they provide “firsthand” evidence from those participating in scholarly activity or event and have not been influenced by someone else’s subsequent interpretations of that activity or event. Some of the **examples of primary sources** include: fieldwork, findings from experiments, data from surveys and interviews, statistical data, online interactions via various online communication channels, historical and legal documents, art works, speeches, memoirs, diaries, audio and video recordings, transcripts, etc.

## Secondary sources

Secondary sources are sources which describe, interpret, comment upon, generalize or summarize information from one or multiple primary sources, with the author being detached from the actual experiences or events under focus. **Examples of this type of sources** include: textbooks, book reviews, accounts of interviews and surveys, surveys of previous research on a topic published in academic journals (so-called “syntheses of literature”), articles which report on the results of or evaluate other scholars’ original research. Since secondary sources present information filtered through one’s personal interpretations, there is a certain element of subjectivity to the information. On the other hand, such sources can provide a comprehensive picture of the various interpretations and opinions on a subject.

Both primary and secondary sources are employed in research studies. The combination in which these sources are used is determined by one’s research focus and methodology. Your scientific supervisor can provide some guidance on the kind of sources that are best suited to your research purpose and questions.

### Types of sources for research

Some authors (Ridley, 2012) point to the following types of literature sources commonly used for research purposes:

#### 1. **Books**

Books include a range of printed material such as textbooks, professional books, collections of articles, reference materials (e.g., encyclopedias and dictionaries) published by experts in the field. This type of sources report on recent research in the field and are thus an authoritative source of information on various aspects of your topic.

#### 2. **Academic journals**

To ensure the quality of a research article that will meet your research needs, a good place to start is peer-reviewed academic journals. These journals accept articles based on strict selection criteria, therefore only the “strongest” articles that have gone through several stages of **blind review** (i.e., evaluation by anonymous peer experts in the field who judge the quality of the work and its suitability for the journal). To comply with rigorous standards of academic integrity, most articles published in top peer-reviewed journals typically report on most recent developments in the field and provide good models of research design, analysis, interpretation, and discussion of key findings as well as effective use of academic prose.

#### 3. **Literature reviews**

These are original collections of scholarly systematic reviews or syntheses of research in a certain field. Literature reviews are usually published by teams of researchers who focus on specific issues.

#### 4. **Grey (also “gray”) literature**

This type of sources are generated by non-governmental organizations, corporations, government agencies, educational institutions, private companies, etc. They are less easily accessible for acquisition and use through traditional distribution channels (e.g., typical bookstores). Some examples include: theses and dissertations, different types of reports (scientific reports in progress, government reports, statistical reports, popular media reports, etc.), official and legal documents, technical specifications, patents, personal correspondence, diaries, etc.

## **5. Websites**

Websites can be created and maintained both by professional and commercial organizations and individual Internet users and should be evaluated carefully for the credibility of the information presented as in most cases online materials do not have to undergo rigorous peer review checks. Thus, a lot of the information published online may not be trustworthy and should be treated with caution.

### **Tools for searching sources**

Here are two of the most frequently used tools for finding information sources:

#### ***Bibliographic databases***

The purpose of bibliographic databases is to inform scholars about new research and disseminate knowledge to a wide audience. Bibliographic databases contain lists of publications in a specific topic area, for instance, scholarly publications in academic journals and conference proceedings. These databases are usually available through the library subscriptions and can be accessed online. Various databases provide information on a variety of journals, with thousands of abstracts to journal articles and other types of scholarly literature.

Most databases are now operating online and are much like electronic catalogs. They offer convenient discipline-specific search tools and statistical information on the popularity of journal articles (for example, measured by the number of downloads of these articles) and frequency of their citations by other scholars.

Online databases with hundreds of Russian-language and international electronic books, academic journals and dissertations in a variety of fields are available to HSE students and staff through the university's library subscription. Among the largest English language databases which provide access to journals in economics, finance, political science, law, sociology, psychology, language studies, information science, etc. are:

- American Economic Association (AEA Journals)
- Annual Reviews
- Cambridge Journals Online
- JSTOR (short for "Journal Storage")
- Oxford Journals Online
- ProQuest
- Sage Journals
- Science Direct
- Springer
- Taylor and Francis Group
- Wiley Online Library.

Full texts of most journal publications available through the university subscription can be accessed and downloaded either from HSE computers or outside provided that you have an individual username and password to access them remotely.

#### ***Web-based search engines***

Most well-known search engines (e.g., Google, Yahoo, etc.) provide tools for collecting vast amounts of unsorted information, a lot of which may be non-academic, misleading, and provide little value for your research purposes. An alternative is to use research-oriented web

search engines, such as Google scholar (<https://scholar.google.ru>), which can narrow down your search to professional and research-related sources and bibliographic information on these.

#### Tips:

- use your research questions to identify key words for searching the literature
- narrow down your search by asking for specific titles of published literature on your topic, specific authors' names, etc.
- avoid using resources that are non-academic in nature (e.g., blogs, wikis, mass media reports, online presentations and user-produced encyclopedias, including Wikipedia)
- be critical when evaluating the content of online resources in terms of their quality (information supported with evidence and references, academic style of writing, absence of glaring grammar and spelling errors, etc.)
- make sure to check who or what organization created the website before deciding to proceed further and include it as a reference
- check if the website you have identified as relevant for your research purposes is updated often enough to establish the recency of its materials unless it is absolutely necessary for your research.

#### Step 2: Evaluating and selecting sources

Once you have found the sources which you think are relevant for your topic and research problem, the next step is to review them and decide which of them to include in your literature review. Your initial **bibliography**, or all the works related to your topic that you have found or read, will result in a shorter list known as "**References**." This list will display only the works that you have cited in your proposal, which is why its alternative name is "Works cited."

Your selection of sources for referencing (or your "references") should be wide enough to show how much you know about the current state of research on your topic. It can be further narrowed down once you start organizing your ideas in writing and selecting only the most relevant works. Citing only 2-5 sources in a research paper at this level may produce a poor impression of your work.

As you select your sources for the literature review, it is highly important to be able to justify your choice of the source. The quality and relevance of the references should be given careful consideration. Your study should build on authoritative sources, most of which will be **print sources**. If your sources appear unprofessional or selected in a rush, the validity and credibility of your arguments can be questioned.

**Here are some guidelines on determining the value of your sources:**

#### Author credibility

To determine the credibility of a source, the author's scholarly reputation should be established. Check whether the author is an authority in the field (a scholar affiliated with a university, a research institution, or a reputable organization). The works of prominent scholars would normally figure in the reading lists for your topic area, your instructor's lectures, or in the reference lists to the literature that you have started reading, etc. Their names can also be mentioned in academic lectures offered by universities around the world and available online (for example, through massive open online and blended courses, which can be accessed through iTunes U catalog, Coursera, Khan Academy, and other similar platforms). Trustworthy works written by scholars will also list all the sources cited in the research and possibly suggest additional sources to look at.

## Citation frequency

Citation frequency of a work is often an effective way to evaluate the value or impact of a published work as it shows how often the findings from this work are mentioned by other scholars in the field. If you use online databases, these will normally include statistical tools that measure how popular and influential a paper is by the frequency of its downloads and number of citations by other scholars. This information will also give you an idea of the scale and quality of the author's scientific output.

## Recency

The timeliness of the information contained in a source (how up to date it is) is another important criterion to consider. In some disciplines, the more recent the information is, the more valuable it is. It is commonly believed that your references should be most recent, preferably last five years. Yet, while true in many cases, this assumption may not apply to established or fundamental works in the field which were published decades ago but may have lasting value (Oliver, 2012). Moreover, some recent publications may be of mediocre quality or may not address your individual research purpose. This means that this criterion should not be the guiding principle as you evaluate and select works to examine and cite in your literature review.

## Compliance with the standards of conducting research

The studies included for review should follow rigorous research designs, with clearly stated research objectives, research questions, valid data collection and analysis tools, and objective interpretations of the results (even if these are only preliminary results) that show connections to other scholars' findings.

## Step 3: Structuring the literature review

### Pre-writing stage: Structuring reading

The processes of reading and writing are closely interconnected. Reading the selected sources at the pre-writing stage not only serves to inform you about your research topic but also to help you refine your research focus and limit your sources to the most relevant ones, which will be reviewed and later referenced in your review.

After you have made a selection of key sources, these will be read more closely and grouped under themes that reflect different aspects of your topic. Grouping your readings according to themes does not require that you read them each closely from cover to cover. Scanning and skimming the readings may be enough to accomplish this task. It may be a good idea to place your readings into different folders to distinguish between them (note that some of the readings in the folders may deal with multiple themes and can thus appear in several folders).

After you have grouped your readings under themes (for example, 3-5 per theme), it is important to start looking into the readings more closely to identify theoretical concepts, findings and interpretations given by scholars which would eventually help you identify the current research gap that creates "a space" for your study. Pay special attention to findings from **original (empirical) studies** on your topic as the primary source of information as these report on scholars' own experiments, observations, and conclusions drawn rather than interpretations of results obtained by others (secondary information) (Fink, 2014, p. 12). Since your literature review is not going to be very detailed (1000 words at maximum), set a limit on the amount of reading that you will undertake.

As you read, make sure to **take detailed notes on key points** from the studies keeping in mind your initial research purpose. Making notes on source material before you begin actual writing can help you make sense of the information and connect the different pieces of information into thematic clusters. In fact, your notes can “grow” into actual pieces of text within the various sections of your future literature review. They can be arranged under **topic headings** which will later become the basis for your outline of an actual literature review section (the headings can also change over time). It may be the case that the more you read and reflect on the content of your source texts, the more you will want to adjust your research purpose (and research questions), which is a natural part of conducting research.

### Planning writing

Planning your writing involves organizing the information you have and writing an outline which will allow you to take your reader from topic to topic and from one argument to another. An important rule to remember is that the information should be organized and later presented in a way that will give the reader a clear sense of what is important to know about the recent developments in investigating the topic and what specific domains remain unexplored. This is where your notes and critical commentary on selected points made at the reading stage will be of use.

There are a number of **approaches to structuring the information** (studies) for your literature review distinguished in the literature on academic writing (Ridley, 2012; Swales & Feak, 2012; Weissberg & Buker, 1990):

- **topical**: grouping the studies by themes or subthemes under which you can compare and contrast different approaches, conceptual frameworks, and characteristics identified in relevant works
- **chronological**: arranging related studies from earliest to most recent ones (not advisable unless you want to show how research on your problem has been evolving over time)
- **methodological**: grouping studies according to the methodological approaches proposed and discussed in selected studies in connection to the problem.

The way you will be presenting the information will depend on the approach that you select, which in its turn will be determined by the overall purpose of your study. However, as stated earlier, your future literature review should not be a collection of different findings or key points from studies that happen to somehow be related to your topic. The information should be arranged and conveyed so as to show that in reviewing the literature you are guided by your specific research purpose (and research questions) and that you can present a **critical commentary** on the importance of key findings or and similar/ contrasting viewpoints of different scholars as a lead up to the current research gap. Your line of argument should be clear from the start.

### Tips:

- keep records of the studies from which citations were taken or which you might cite (including page numbers); failure to take notes on the material you used from other sources can result in unintentional plagiarism
- avoid using too many direct quotes as integrating direct quotes effectively is an art in itself; paraphrase the information instead to retain your unique writing style and report on only the most relevant content without giving unnecessary details
- separate your opinions and assertions from those of the authors whom you cite; you may add your name to your own ideas or use different colors to distinguish between these opinions

- reflect on your readings and keep notes on your thoughts as they emerge and evolve over time
- be ready to continuously revise your writing, refine your research focus, and discuss it with your supervisor(s), classroom peers, family and friends, which will result in more than one draft.

#### Step 4: Writing the literature review

Most literature reviews begin with a broader context and then move toward issues which are most relevant to a research problem. Your literature review should be structured as follows (note that you do not have to use "Background", "Empirical Research", etc. as your subheadings):

1. **Background** (introduction): defines the topic and research focus and highlights general trends in scholarly literature on the topic
2. **Empirical research** (main body): moves toward more specific aspects of the topic; reviews key studies grouped *chronologically, topically or methodologically*; clarifies key concepts and terms where necessary (note that to provide smooth transitions between studies and ideas linking words are used extensively).

#### Here are some guidelines on writing this part:

- 1) Explain and discuss theories (1-2) which are key to understanding your research problem and which may provide the basis for the theoretical framework that you decide to use in your study; the discussion of these theories can be grouped under specific subheadings, for example, "Decision Theory", "Neoclassical Economic Theory."
- 2) Make sure to provide a **critical** discussion of empirical findings and insights from studies which focus on specific aspects of your topic. This is a space to introduce, comment on, and identify the possible weaknesses in the major approaches and/or framework(s) offered by other scholars with the aim of resolving related issues. Such flaws can include flaws in the methodology used, inconclusive or contradictory findings, dubious interpretations of the results, or even a lack of sufficient research on your topic (especially in cases when there is no or little published research on the topic).
3. **Statement of purpose and objectives** (conclusion): summarizes the review by explaining how your study is going to address the research gap; this is usually done by restating your research purpose (and questions) and, possibly, outlining your **research objectives or aims** (smaller tasks that you will be performing to meet the purpose). This is the second time that you announce your study's purpose (it was first stated in the Introduction).

#### Example:

**This study has three objectives:** (1) to determine whether and when budget shoppers keep track of how much they spend while shopping, (2) to understand how they estimate the total price of their shopping baskets, and (3) to examine the implications of estimation biases for consumer welfare and retail performance (Marketing).

#### Tips:

- use subheadings to name the different parts of your literature review where necessary
- leave out unnecessary details that do not relate directly to your research problem
- use link words to show connections between topics, studies or ideas



- reference all the studies that you mention
- proofread your text to see how the text “flows” and whether there are any errors to correct (spelling, grammar, vocabulary use, etc.).

### Language Practice

Consult the Language Guide for more information on the language structures for **reviewing previous research** (pp. 11-14). Additional online activities will be available in the Literature Review module of the online tutorial.

**Here is an adapted extract from a literature review to a research proposal in the field of economics:**

#### **New Products Introduction into Foreign Markets: Empirical Investigation of an Optimal Entry Strategy**

<sup>1</sup>This research relates to the research area that focuses on new product introductions in international markets. <sup>2</sup>A number of studies have been found that focus on strategic issues, such as introduction timing of a new product (Golder & Tellis, 1993; Bayus, Jain, & Rao, 1997; Krider & Weinberg, 1998; Shankar, 1999). <sup>3</sup>These studies generally focus on whether one should be an early or a late entrant in a particular market (pioneer versus follower), and how the decisions of competing firms influence this timing decision... [*giving a broad overview of studies*]. <sup>4</sup>Yet, these studies include only one market / country, i.e., the domestic country, and therefore do not indicate how first-mover advantages translate into an international context (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1998).

[*Moving on to more specific aspects of the study and reporting the results of single studies*]

<sup>5</sup>A study by Mascarenhas (1997), however, does investigate first-mover advantages in an international context. It examines entries by 187 firms into 68 international markets for four offshore drilling products over an 18-year period (1966-1984), and finds that a first entry (before other foreign entrants) results in higher long-term international market share and survival. <sup>6</sup>The major conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that first-mover advantages also hold in international markets—a conclusion that is confirmed in a study by Pan, Li, and Tse (1999). <sup>7</sup>However, not much can be concluded about the optimal timing and sequence of entering multiple foreign markets or the factors that influence these decisions [*adding criticism*].

<sup>8</sup>The only study that provides some answers to the optimal entry timing and sequencing is a study by Kalish, Mahajan, and Muller (1995). <sup>9</sup>Using innovation diffusion models in a monopoly and competitive game theory framework, it analyzes under what market place conditions a waterfall (entering one market at a time) with respect to sprinkler strategy (entering all target markets simultaneously) is optimal. <sup>10</sup>The results of the study suggest that in today's market place a sprinkler strategy be strongly suggested, but that under certain circumstances, such as a very long product life cycle or weak competitors in the foreign market, a waterfall strategy may be the preferred strategy. <sup>11</sup>This study, however, has a number of potential limitations [*adding criticism*]. <sup>12</sup>First of all, it includes only two markets and two competitors in their analysis, which is not very realistic as today most large companies operate in many countries, all over the world, and face competition from both local and global players.

<sup>13</sup>Furthermore, the cross-country influences, i.e., the interaction between individuals in one country with individuals in another country, have not been explicitly included. <sup>14</sup>In their study, Putsis, Balasubramaniam, Kaplan, and Sen (1997) have found different mixing patterns (cross-

country interactions), and suggest investigating the implications of different mixing patterns on the choice between a waterfall and sprinkler strategy. <sup>15</sup>So far, this has not yet been done [adding criticism]. <sup>16</sup>Another limitation is that the authors test their theory with a hypothetical example. <sup>17</sup>For real-life support they refer to a publication by Riesenbeck and Freeling (1991). <sup>18</sup>However, this latter study does not describe the results of an empirical study about the appropriateness of either a waterfall or a sprinkler strategy, but only gives some examples of recent product introductions following a sprinkler strategy in a descriptive way.

[Stating how the present study will address the gap] <sup>19</sup>The purpose of this research is to extend this research by formulating a conceptual framework which will describe the process of a product launch in international markets and to include a complete set of variables that influence both the timing and sequencing of entering into foreign markets. <sup>20</sup>The proposed framework should be applied to real-life, realistic data, in order to be able to provide reliable suggestions to international marketing managers who have to make global launch decisions.

Adapted from:

Loughborough University. (2016). New products introduction into foreign markets: Empirical investigation of an optimal entry strategy. Retrieved May 20, 2016, from <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/sbe/research/phd-mphil/researchstudentproposals/>

## Avoiding plagiarism

Whether intentional or unintentional, **plagiarism**, or presenting others people's ideas as your own, is a serious offense and is a sign of poor academic practice. The penalties for committing plagiarism are determined by the honor code or ethical guidelines at a school or university and can range from getting a lower grade on a task or failing a course, to being expelled from university. This implies that any idea, scientific insight, or result in another author's work has to be properly acknowledged or referenced unless you are reporting facts which have become common knowledge. Copying the exact wording from the original source (even if just a few words) without putting it in quotation marks is an instance of plagiarism even when the source is referenced properly. If the original wording from a source text has been changed but no reference has been provided to the source, this is yet another instance of plagiarism.

**Citations**, or references to the work being cited, allow the writer to avoid plagiarizing other authors' ideas and content as well as fulfil the following functions:

- acknowledge another researcher's contribution to the field
- provide support for your own arguments
- show your understanding and awareness of existing research on your topic
- demonstrate your ability to select and integrate information from sources effectively to contextualize your work within your broader research area
- give the reader the opportunity to locate (find) further information on the topic through the sources that you indicate.

**To avoid plagiarism, it is important to:**

- use effective note-taking techniques to be able to track down the sources from which content or specific ideas were taken
- keep neat records of the reference details to the sources
- use proper referencing techniques in line with your citation format (e.g., APA) when referring your reader to a source
- separate your own ideas from those of other authors when discussing the source texts

- source (both for in-text references and the references which will appear in your list of references)
- double check how you referenced your sources before submitting your work.

### Using direct quotes

Although the temptation to use direct quotes extensively may be quite strong, most experienced writers would caution against the frequent use of these for the following reasons (Oliver, 2012; Pyrczak & Bryce, 2011; Ridley, 2012):

1. a direct quote can contain details that need further explanations if taken out of the context
2. the wording in a direct quote (especially longer quotes) can interfere with the “flow” of the text (how smoothly it reads) due to the differences in your and another writer’s tone and styles
3. a heavy use of direct quotes may suggest the author’s failure at giving his or her own interpretation of the idea being referred to.

### Tips:

- use direct quotes only when you are certain that the original wording best captures the author’s idea(s) and tone
- keep your quotes on note cards or in a file stored on your computer, with page numbers indicated (you will need the page number(s) for in-text citations following the sentence with the quote)
- make sure that the original wording has not changed and that the quoted text is placed within brackets
- if integrated into your own text, direct quotes should fit grammatically with the text; in such cases you might need to modify a direct quote for it to fit with the rest of the sentence and place the modified part in square brackets [...], as in this example:  
*Connor stated that the Reagan administration “[was] a textbook illustration” of the political business cycle (Connor, 2005) (“was” replaces “is”, which was in the original quote).*
- if you happen to copy paste information from a source text as you plan or organize your writing, highlight the original wording (e.g., by a different color) to separate it from your own text; make a record on the source and the page number
- any statistics, illustrations, another author’s opinions, personal observations, empirical findings, and unproven assertions made by different scholars have to be properly referenced at all times!

## 2.2.4. Writing Methods (300-500 words)

### *What is Methods*

Methodology is often the section that experienced writers tend to write first. The Methodology section not only describes but also **justifies** your general approach to collecting and analyzing your data (your **research design**) to meet your research purpose and objectives. This section is often referred to as the most important section, or the 'heart' of a scientific work. When written in a compelling way, the Methodology section makes it easier to believe that the expected results should be good as well. You will need to **consult with your scientific advisor** to discuss your suggestions about how to plan and conduct your study and craft the methodology section.

### Primary vs. secondary research

Normally, to address the research gap and questions posed and to test a hypothesis, any empirical research can be broken down into **two main stages** regardless of the field:

1. **Data collection**: the process of gathering and measuring information on desired variables
2. **Data analysis**: the process of analyzing and interpreting the data to be able to explain what it means in the context of the present study.

### Data for a study can be obtained either by:

- you collecting original or primary data yourself to meet your individual research purpose—this is called **primary research**, OR
- another researcher (institution, organization) that collected the data for a different purpose and made it available for others to use—this is called **secondary research**.

The methods (or instruments) for collecting **primary data** include experimentations, surveys, interviews, participant observations, focus groups, etc. Types of **secondary data** include records of organizations, economic reports, monetary and financial statistics, business and consumer surveys, international trade statistics, forecasts, tax data, historical and legal documents, business correspondence, political speeches, etc.

### Data collection instruments can also be classified as:

- **existing** (developed by another scholar and suitable for use without any adaptation—e.g., a ready-made survey employed in a similar study; the scholar is acknowledged as the "author" of the instrument)
- **adapted** (designed by another scholar but slightly or heavily adapted to suit one's research purpose)
- **newly designed** (developed by the researcher to address his or her study's specific research purpose—one's own survey items, interview questions, tests, checklists, etc.).

### Quantitative vs. qualitative data

There are in fact two major types of data often viewed in opposition to one another: **quantitative** and **qualitative**. **Quantitative data** are any data obtained and represented in numerical form—e.g., results of statistical tests, percentages. Quantitative research is often viewed as numbers driven. Tests, rubrics, checklists, which elicit data in numerical form, are often used as sources of quantitative data.

**Qualitative data** are data that can be observed (and later described) but cannot be measured in numerical form. This type of data allow researchers to understand and explain meanings, experiences, values, attitudes, opinions, feelings, etc. Examples of such data include:

characteristics of people (friendly, intelligent, etc.), cultures, locations, events, and processes. Open-ended questions to tests, surveys, transcripts of interviews with participants, field notes from observations, etc. are employed to obtain qualitative data. The data are then interpreted with the help of qualitative analysis methods, such as content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, framework analysis, etc.

The use of either quantitative or qualitative data in a study determines its research design: quantitative or qualitative. An approach that builds on a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis is known as “**mixed methods**” design.

### Planning research

Before any data collection begins, there are some questions to ask oneself with regard to:

#### Data collection:

- Will I employ **quantitative** or **qualitative** methods (**or both—mixed design**) to collect the data? What will be my rationale for using these methods?
- What will be my **data sources**: primary or secondary? In case my project requires that I collect primary data, what will be my data collection instruments? How will I access the different data types that I need? Are these data easily obtained? What are the procedures for obtaining the data?
- If I am planning to use **human subjects as the source of primary data** (e.g., customers of a certain brand in market research), what will be the basis for their selection from the whole population? Where will I find the subjects for my study and how will I approach them? What ethically acceptable strategies and procedures will I employ to motivate them to participate in my study?

#### Data analysis:

- What methods should I use to analyze and interpret (explain) the data (econometric analysis, use of economic models, Box-Jenkins analysis, time-series analysis, seasonality analysis, content analysis of documents)?
  - Will I need to use statistical tools to process my data?
- 

### *The Mechanics of Writing the Methods Section*

Methodology sections vary in length and level of detail, which depends on the type of study. How much detail is provided can be determined by the extent to which your reader should be informed about your approach to carrying out the study in order to understand what you plan to do and why it is reasonable to do it in this way. Specific details should be provided in case your methods are novel or require extensive explanation for your study.

**The recommended structure for the Methods section is as follows in research proposals:**

#### 1. **Data collection:**

- restate your study’s purpose
- introduce your variables (e.g., economic indicators) and add any necessary definitional clarifications to show how you operationalized the variables to fit your study’s purpose.
- provide a **justification** for your data collection methods (and possibly materials) and procedures for obtaining the data.

If applicable to your study, you may need to describe your criteria for selecting participants and any materials specially designed to gather the data. This part can have subheadings,

for example, *Participants* (individuals who agreed to participate in your study), *Materials*, *Context of the Study*, *Equipment*, *Duration* (period of study), *Experimental Procedures*, etc. It is advisable to include sample questions from your data collection instruments (e.g., survey or interview questions), which are normally placed in the Appendix section.

2. **Data analysis:** Justify your choice of proposed data analysis and the procedures for processing and analyzing the data.
3. **Scope and limitations.** As a researcher, you should be able to critically evaluate the **scope** (boundaries) of your research and its **limitations** (drawbacks). The scope explains what restrictions you might face when carrying out the proposed study and what your research does not promise to achieve due to some factors or conditions beyond your control. For example, you may be limited in terms of:
  - the timeframes for conducting an extensive study if you are only given a semester
  - access to specific facilities that you may wish to use (e.g., premises, equipment, or software)
  - access to reliable data sources (e.g., primary empirical sources which are only available in a foreign language; an adequate number of human subjects who you may need to employ but who you may not be able to find or recruit)
  - availability of previous research on your topic
  - availability of published data collection instruments (the lack of which creates a need for designing your own instruments).

The **limitations** describe the anticipated drawbacks of your study stemming from the restrictions you have outlined. If no mention is made of the limitations, the reader may assume that you are not aware of the imperfections of your method or that you are trying to hide them, which goes against the principles of scholarly objectivity. To illustrate, here are extracts from research proposals which outline **the scope and limitations** of studies in the fields of cultural anthropology and political science:

#### Extract 1

**Scope.** Participant observation over an eight-week period will be used as a primary method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews will be scheduled and conducted with each team member individually to provide more insight into their personal perspectives on... Group interviews will not be employed in this study due to a mismatch in some students' academic calendars.

**Limitations.** Time constraints of one semester require less time than may be ideal for an ethnographic study. With only 5 hours a week spent on this project, there are bound to be aspects of leadership practice, organizational culture, and team communication that will not be revealed during my observations. Being an outsider may also limit what is revealed to me as my subjects may be guarded in their conversations around me.

Adapted from:

Utah State University. (2016). Health and healing the Ute way: Perceptions of diabetes among the Uintah-Ouray. Retrieved May 20, 2016, from <http://rgs.usu.edu/undergraduate-research/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/08/Proposal-Model1.pdf>

## Extract 2

### All Policies are Glocal: International Environmental Policy Making With Strategic Subnational Governments

We will examine the national and international effects of strategic policy formation at the subnational level. We will analyze games of complete information, with no uncertainty about preferences and ideal points. To simplify, we assume that there are only two national governments. **We do not attempt to construct a multilateral negotiation game, because the dynamics of coalition formation would greatly complicate the solution of the game.** This limitation notwithstanding, we believe a simple two-player game can offer insights into how subnational policy makers strategically shape their national policy makers' negotiation positions and the ultimate outcome.

Adapted from:

Bechtel, M., & Urpelainen, J. (2015). All policies are glocal: International environmental policy making with strategic subnational governments. *British Journal of Political Science*, 43(3), 559–582.

Below are three more extracts from **Methodology** sections adapted from research studies in the field of economics, political science, and education.

## Extract 1 (Economics)

### Model-Based Professional Forecasts: Implications for Models With Nominal Rigidities

**We will be analyzing** five macroeconomic indicators from the SPF, namely, nominal GNP/GDP, real GNP/GDP, industrial production index—total, real personal consumption expenditures—total, Consumer Price Index, and unemployment. **We look** only at point forecasts and define these as the median forecasts in every release of the survey (results with the mean forecast are very similar and will not be reported). **Our sample** for SPF forecasts **will span** 1984q1–2009q2. All data will first be aggregated quarterly when necessary (to be consistent with the variables forecast in the SPF). The data will be in growth rates.

**We will assess** the predictive power of SPF forecasts by measuring their performance relative to an estimate of the unconditional means of the variables analyzed. More specifically, **we will compute** the average of each variable from 1982q4 through to 1984q1– $h$  quarters, for  $h = 1, \dots, 5$ . **We will then compute** the average from 1982q4 through to 1984q2– $h$ ,  $h = 1, \dots, 5$ , to forecast 1984q2, and so forth until 2009q2, i.e., with an expanding window of observations.

Adapted from:

Azevedo, J.V., & Jalles, J. (2016). Model-based vs. professional forecasts: Implications for models with nominal rigidities. *Macroeconomic Dynamics, First View*, 1–30.

## Extract 2 (Political science):

### Who's Afraid of Conflict? The Mobilizing Effect of Conflict Framing in Campaign News

To study the conditional impact of conflict news framing on mobilization, **we will employ** a multi-method research design including content analysis and a two-wave panel survey. The **content analysis will be used** to investigate how the news media in the different EU member

states have covered the campaign, and **the panel survey will be used** to assess the impact of such coverage on voter turnout. **We will analyze** the content of the media outlets that will be included in our panel study design and for which **respondents will report** their individual exposure.

**This design will enable** us to assess the effect of campaign news more specifically by including the results of our media content analysis in our measure of individual news exposure with the same news outlets that are in our panel survey analysis. **Our design is also unique in that it will include** an in-depth content analysis of campaign coverage in twenty-one of the then twenty-seven EU member states and **will combine** this analysis with panel survey data in these twenty-one countries. Thus **we will be able to conduct** a multilevel analysis that **will assess** the impact of both individual- and country-level variables as well as their cross-level interaction on the mobilization of citizens in the 2009 EP elections across Europe in a single study.

*[Continued further in more detail]*

#### *Media Content Analysis*

To empirically test our expectations and collect information to build into our measure of news exposure in the analysis of our panel data, **we will rely on** a large-scale media content analysis. **This content analysis will be carried out within the framework of** Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union (PIREDEU), which is funded by the European Union's FP 7 programme.

*Sample.* **The content analysis will be conducted** on a sample of national news media coverage in all twenty-seven EU member states. **We will focus on** news items dealing with the EU and the EP election campaign specifically. In each country **we will include** the main national evening news broadcasts of the most widely watched public and commercial television stations. **We will also include** two 'quality' (broadsheet) and one tabloid newspaper from each country. **Our overall television sample will consist** of fifty-eight TV networks and our overall newspaper sample will contain eighty-four different newspapers.

*Period of study.* The **content analysis will be conducted** for news items published or broadcast within the three weeks running up to the election. Since election days varies across countries, the **coding period will also vary** from, for example, 14 May–4 June for some countries up to 17 May–7 June for others.

...

Adapted from:

Schuck, A., Vliegenthart, R., & De Vreese, C. (2016). Who's afraid of conflict? The mobilizing effect of conflict framing in campaign news. *British Journal of Political Science*, 46(1), 177–194.

**Extract 3 (Education):** Note how the author provides detailed justification for the proposed data collection instruments (diagnostic quizzes and individual interviews with first-year undergraduate calculus students) and the criteria for selecting the participants for the study:

### **First-Year Undergraduate Calculus Students: Understanding Their Difficulties With Modeling with Differential Equations**

#### **Methods**

*Materials and their justification*



The whole **student cohort will be given** diagnostic quizzes consisting of a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. The **multiple choice questions will include** a number of problems typical of the ones seen in class with distractors chosen to reflect the hypotheses given above and other likely student errors (e.g., making a sign error). [**Justification of a data collection instrument**] **The reasons for** choosing to use diagnostic multiple choice questions **are** as follows. First, while the differential equations which describe a scenario will have been developed in class, students cannot be expected to be able to develop their own DEs [*differential equations*] as the focus of the course will be on providing a motivation for doing integrals. Consequently, what is of interest is whether they can read and understand a DE. **This could be assessed** by asking students to describe in words what they understand a DE to be saying, but as students may not be able to articulate clearly what they are thinking **this might not be** a very successful approach for a written quiz (we might get a lot of blank responses for example) and **so this approach will be left to** individual interviews as described below... As stated above, in questions asking students to identify which of a range of possibilities is the correct DE describing a given scenario, distractors which reflect various hypotheses about the likely bugs in student thinking **will be provided. It is hoped that** the prevalence of such bugs will then provide insights into common issues with student thinking.

...

#### *Participants*

**This research will use a convenience sample of first-year officer cadets** studying introductory calculus in both the Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Engineering programs at the Australian Defense Force Academy (ADFA). An issue raised by such a sample is whether the findings with such a particular group are generalizable to students studying mathematics at regular universities. That is, will the findings have external validity? It is believed that this group does not in fact pose any significant problems for external validity for the following reasons. First, although the students are officer cadets, the degree programs they are studying are offered through the University of New South Wales and hence they are studying the same sorts of maths that students studying introductory calculus at any Australian university would be studying. In addition, because ADFA is in fact more selective than the average Australian university, it can be expected that the officer cadets will not be any weaker, on average, in mathematics than their peers at regular universities. Finally, there is in fact an advantage to doing this study at ADFA. As the officer cadets studying there come from all over Australia, the possible influence of different State-based education systems can potentially be investigated. This would not be possible at regular universities where almost all domestic students could be expected to have had the same state-influenced school curriculum.

Adapted from:

Rowland, D.R. (2016). Annotated sample research proposal: Process and product.  
Retrieved May 20, 2016, from <http://uq.edu.au/student-services/pdf/learning/research-proposal-sample-v2.pdf>

#### Language Practice

Consult the Language Guide for more information on the language structures for **describing methods (methodology)** (pp. 15-17) and **indicating scope and limitations of a study** (pp. 18-19). Additional online activities will be available in the Methods module of the online tutorial.

### 2.2.5. Writing Expected Outcomes (300-400 words)

This section is also referred to as “Anticipated Results” by some authors. This part will serve as the **conclusion** to your entire proposal. The purpose of the section is to convince the reader that you have a clear understanding of:

- what you plan to achieve as a result of completing your research (the expected outcomes)
- the value of your study (its theoretical or practical significance for the field)
- the implications of your **preliminary** results (results that you have already obtained at this stage based on your data).

#### Discussing expected outcomes and your study’s value

Discussing expected outcomes implies outlining in which specific ways your research will help resolve your research problem in relation to the gap(s) identified in previous studies. To write this section successfully, you will need to refer yourself back to the research gap, your research questions, and/or hypothesis. You should be able to envisage and explain the contribution of your study to complementing existing research or knowledge on the problem. Explain where and how the results of your research will be shared (e.g., in the form of an academic presentation at your department, at a conference, at an exhibit, etc.). Depending on your topic, you may also need to state your anticipations of the study’s practical benefits for interested parties. To complete these functions, the following wording can be used:

- We will contribute to the empirical literature on this approach.
- This research is pertinent to fields of study including ... Manufacturers (customers, etc.) interested in ... need to be aware of ... Researchers hoping to utilize ... will be well informed about ...
- Results from this study will be presented in the department of ... at the National Research University Higher School of Economics. Upon conclusive results, the data obtained could stand for publication in an academic journal such as .., which publishes research on ...

#### Reporting preliminary findings

In case you have already obtained and analyzed your data, you may wish to briefly report on your **preliminary findings** and provide your interpretations of what they mean in the context of previous research on the topic. Your results may turn out to be contradictory to those suggested by other scholars, reconfirm those results, and reveal new areas for investigation (research gaps) based on the issues that emerge. You should be able to inform your reader about new directions or avenues of research that will extend the current research on the topic. Some of the wording to use is as follows:

- Our results suggest that ... (aid only has a positive and significant effect when given to democratic countries; however, the size of the effect is relatively small) (Dutta & Williamson, 2016)
- Our preliminary results highlight the importance of ...
- Our analysis reveals that care should be taken if/ when ...
- In light of these results and previous literature, we interpret this as suggesting that...
- Our results cast doubt on ... because ...

**Here is a more extensive expected outcomes extract from the earlier research proposal on diabetes:**

The perceived outcomes of this project are two-fold. First, this project will aid the Uintah-Ouray tribe in treating diabetes. Diabetes is becoming a major concern for the tribe and was recently listed as the number one health concern for the Uintah-Ouray Ute. In an effort to facilitate better diabetic health care, reservation health and government officials have selected a number of priorities they wish to accomplish, one of which is to develop an innovative and effective community-based educational plan (Cesspooch, 1999). The data gathered in this project will enable Ute officials to better tune their program to the needs and desires of their people and help improve adherence and efficiency. Secondly, a paper detailing this project and its results will be publicly presented April 14, 2000 at the O.C. Tanner Symposium, whose theme this year is "Body, Mind and Spirit: Culture and Health in America." This project is especially pertinent because it addresses dual goals of the symposium—integrating alternative options and improving healthcare. The paper will be presented with the help of Larry Cesspooch, Public Relations Director for the Uintah-Ouray Tribe and a Ute medicine man.

Adapted from:

Utah State University. (2016). Health and healing the Ute way: Perceptions of diabetes among the Uintah-Ouray. Retrieved May 20, 2016, from <http://rgs.usu.edu/undergraduate-research/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/08/Proposal-Model1.pdf>

### Language Practice

Consult the Language Guide for more information on the language structures for **reporting on expected or preliminary outcomes** (p. 20).

## SUPPORTING SECTIONS

### 2.3.1. List of references

**References** is usually the last section in a piece of research writing (e.g., journal articles, proposals, and research reports) unless appendices are included. References indicate all the sources cited throughout the body of your proposal which your reader can easily locate and review. References are different from a **bibliography**, which is a complete list of works that you have consulted during the research process but which may not have been mentioned in the proposal. The style for citing references adopted for this proposal format is the APA style.

#### Tips:

- the references section should start on a **separate page** and should be **labeled “References”**
- it should list **at least 12 authoritative sources** (journal articles from peer-reviewed Russian and international journals, chapters in edited books, official reports, etc.)
- just like the rest of your proposal, the references section should be **double-spaced**
- your sources should **not** be numbered (APA style requirement)
- **all lines** following the first line of an entry (a specific source in your list) should be **indented** one-half inch (**1.27 cm**) from the left margin; this is known as the **hanging indent**, which can be adjusted for the whole page on a word processor (APA style requirement)
- your sources should be arranged in **alphabetical order**, foreign-language sources included (APA style requirement)
- the titles of **foreign** (e.g., Russian) **language sources** should be **transliterated into English** (i.e., spelled using Latin letters), **with the English translation provided in square brackets** (see two examples highlighted on the next page)
- there is **no need** to translate **foreign** (e.g., Russian) **journal titles** into English.

The major manual on **APA style** is the “Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association” (6<sup>th</sup> edition). This manual outlines the mechanics of preparing scientific works that are submitted to journals published by the Association. The guidelines cover such aspects as formatting your document in terms of spacing, margins, font size, indentation; use of numerals, and, what’s most important, **in-text citations** (citations you provide in the body of your work) and **citations on the References page**.

**Numerous online sources are available which offer tips on formatting your work in line with APA style requirements. Here are some links to those sources:**

- rules for preparing a reference list (Purdue University): <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/>
- a 30-minute **online tutorial** on formatting your references (Cardiff University): <https://ilrb.cf.ac.uk/citingreferences/apatutorial/>
- rules for formatting specific types of sources (Cornell University): [https://www.library.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/apa\\_2010.pdf](https://www.library.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/apa_2010.pdf)
- rules for **citing foreign language sources** (Mount Saint Vincent University): <http://libguides.msvu.ca/apa/foreign>

**Here is a part of a References section from a research paper on learning management systems.** Note the hanging indent applied to each entry in the list. The last two sources were published in French and Arabic (see how the titles were first given in the original, and then transliterated—the Arabic source—and translated into English).

- Adamson, I., & Shine, J. (2003). Extending the new technology acceptance model to measure the end user information systems satisfaction in a mandatory environment: A bank's treasury. *Technology Analysis and Strategic Management*, 15(4), 441–455.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Alier, M., Mayol, E., Casac, M. J., Piguillem, J., Merriman, J. W., Conde, M. B., ... Severance, C. (2012). Clustering projects for elearning interoperability. *Journal of Universal Computer Science*, 18(1), 106–122.
- Balachandar, A., & Gurusamy, R. (2012). Conflict segments of women employees of IT sector in India. *International Journal of Human Capital and Information Technology Professionals*, 3(1), 42–53.
- Piaget, J. (1966). *La psychologie de l'enfant* [The psychology of the child]. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Najm, Y. (1966). *Al-qissah fi al-adab Al-Arabi al-hadith* [The novel in modern Arabic literature]. Beirut: Dar Al-Thaqafah.

### 2.3.2. Appendices

In case you have some important material that illustrates some points but need not appear in the body of your work (e.g., additional tables, graphs, glossaries, specifications of models, questionnaires, etc.), the best section to place to is the **appendices section**. This section appears **at the very end** of your proposal following your list of references. It normally includes **original material** that you have produced for your study. You should direct your reader to a specific appendix at an appropriate point.

#### Tips:

- each appendix should appear on a new page and should be labeled "Appendix"
- where there is more than one appendix, each should be labeled with a capital letter (Appendix **A**)
- the numbering should continue through the appendices section
- the appendices should be sequenced in the order they are mentioned in the proposal
- it is best not to include more than 3-5 appendices.

#### Here are some examples of language to refer your reader to a specific appendix:

- a questionnaire was designed to measure customers' attitudes to ... (see Appendix A)
- the interview consisted of five questions (see Appendix B).

## 2.4. Common mistakes in students' research proposal writing

Listed below are some **typical mistakes** which are found in undergraduate research proposals and which **should be avoided**:

- lack of clarity in setting the context for the proposed study
- failure to provide a detailed review of the literature to show extensive knowledge of the research area and specific topic
- failure to acknowledge the sources used as if the information presented (especially some theoretical constructs) was the writer's original contribution
- failure to identify a research gap based on a review of literature and to justify the need for the present study
- failure to use appropriate vocabulary and grammar structures to communicate the writer's intentions in various sections of a proposal
- failure to use quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing strategies effectively to integrate ideas from original sources into one's own text
- failure to logically sequence ideas to make an argument (ignoring the move-step framework)
- repeating ideas
- failure to not only describe but also justify the methodology that the writer intends to employ in the proposed study
- failure to critically assess the impact and potential contribution of one's own study
- failure to give enough attention to the APA style guidelines and meet this format's strict requirements (especially when it comes to formatting references).

## 2.5. Bibliography

- Day, R., & Sakaduski, N. (2011). *Scientific English: A guide for scientists and other professionals*. Santa-Barbara: Greenwood.
- Fink, A. (2010). *Conducting research literature reviews: From the Internet to paper* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Glasman-Deal, H. (2010). *Science research writing for nonnative speakers of English*. UK: Imperial College Press.
- Katz, M. J. (2006). *From research to manuscript: A guide to scientific writing*. Berlin: Springer.
- Oliver, P. (2012). *Succeeding with your literature review: A handbook for students*. New York, NY: Open University Press.
- Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Ridley, D. (2012). *The literature review: A step-by-step guide for students* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Swales, J., & Feak, C. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Weissberg, R., & Buker, S. (1990). *Writing up research: Experimental research report writing for students of English*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Yakhontova, T. V. (2003). *English academic writing for students and researchers*. Lvov: Pais.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Sample proposal in business/ economics.

---

#### ABSTRACT

Industrial globalization presents the need for companies to expand into new territories worldwide. Research has attributed difficulties in doing so largely to problems and difficulties in the process of knowledge transfer, and has recently pinpointed the essential role of implementing knowledge from other parts of the world, and the learning required to do so. An ethos of knowledge transfer, implementation and learning are needed for international business success. Chinese multinational companies are a new and significant phenomenon yet are culturally ill-disposed to such an ethos. This study will employ longitudinal ethnographic research to identify if and how they reconcile this conundrum, to advance understanding concerning the link between knowledge and learning and international business development.

#### INTRODUCTION

The knowledge source, the knowledge transfer process, and the knowledge recipient have been categorized as the three principle elements of a knowledge-management system (Wiig, 1995). As knowledge retention and distribution have always been the concern of organizations and their managers, sophisticated techniques and systems have been designed for managing the knowledge source and knowledge transfer (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Wiig, 1995). One of the recent streams of research in international business has been concerned with knowledge-management within multinational corporations (MNCs), especially knowledge transfer between parent firms and subsidiaries. For these firms, cross-border knowledge transfer and implementation have become topics of considerable interest.

For most multinational companies, transferring knowledge is important for self-improvement and development, both in home and in host markets. Knowledge transfer is a circular process; MNCs gather knowledge from business partners and then apply it back to doing business with these or other business partners. In this process, knowledge application (which can be referred to as 'implementation') plays an essential role. It determines the effectiveness of knowledge transfer without which MNCs cannot develop and may not survive in foreign markets. Thus, the implementation of transferred knowledge should be a focus of attention; especially for companies dealing with multinational markets.

Many firms in the People's Republic of China have, in recent years, grown so rapidly that they are now transforming into MNCs. However, their complex culture background, the different political environment, and these firms' comparatively undeveloped management skills and technologies serve as barriers to their internationalization. These aspects also represent obstacles for foreign companies aiming to do business with Chinese MNCs. This study will attempt a comprehensive investigation of the factors that influence the implementation of international business knowledge transfer within the Chinese-Western context.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

##### Knowledge Transfer in MNCs

Buckley and Casson (1976) advocated that the very existence of a MNC lies in its ability to internalize externalities by putting together resources and activities at a more efficient rate than markets do. According to Kogut and Zander (1993), an MNC can be defined as a social community in which knowledge exists among cooperating members; the productive knowledge of this community has been defined as competitive advantage.

Nowadays MNCs are widely viewed as the most efficient mechanisms for the international transfer of tacit knowledge. Based on this advantage, MNCs are able to create and dynamically transform networks of information involving multi-location data-inputs, centralize and disperse information processing and constantly evolve modes of data analysis and knowledge-processing capabilities (Gupta & Govindarajan, 1996).

The importance of knowledge transfer derives from the increasing globalization and convergence of industry, the challenging environment that forces companies to expand into new markets. New markets normally imply new customers, competitors, stakeholders, and business practices whose effective management depends on appropriate organizational knowledge and skills (Prusak, 1998; Riesenberger, 1998). Since a market entrant may not necessarily have these skills in-house, it must either develop them internally or acquire them externally by cooperating with or taking over other firms that possess them (Barney, 1999).

On the one hand, knowledge transfer is one kind of 'knowledge sharing', a natural product of interaction which may be unplanned and even unintentional (Szulanski, 2000). This point may help to explain the knowledge transfer (or lack of it) between parent firms and subsidiaries, or between subsidiaries of MNCs. On the other hand, simple sharing is not an efficient way to transfer knowledge, because when translated into another culture, it may result in knowledge that is technically appropriate but culturally void (Kayes, Kayes, & Yamazaki, 2005).

This concern can be addressed theoretically with the 'knowledge based view'. This explains how firms grow and gain competitiveness through creating and learning know-how, and serves as an analytical tool that presents an evolutionary view of firm (Kogut & Zander, 1992, 1993; Spender, 1996). Although the knowledge based view is interested in the humans who play a major role in the process of knowledge creation, transfer, and acquisition within the organization (Conner & Prahalad, 1996), it hints at the term 'knowledge learning' to describe the complete process of knowledge transfer in acquisitions, joint ventures and strategic alliances.

## Learning

A consensus has emerged that an essential competency for success in managing the global organization lies in learning (Ferraro, 2002). Learning is not a simple imitation process, it suggests the company draws on direct experiences from others to solve problems, make sense of normal daily events, and, finally, create new knowledge. Kolb (1984) developed a four stage model of experiential learning that lies behind knowledge creation: generating knowledge, gathering knowledge, organizing knowledge and acting on knowledge.

Based on these four stages, a seven-stage of cross-cultural knowledge transfer model has been developed (Kayes, Kayes, & Yamazaki, 2005). Figure 1 adopts this to the situation of international acquisitions and alliances. It highlights the transfer between the two parts of the process, transferring and implementation, in which:

- Transferring is just a simple knowledge flow process; companies discover and replicate knowledge from partners: it is a passive adaptation. Reception and replication of knowledge might be labeled learning to imitate (Zott, 2003)
- Implementation includes knowledge understanding and exertion, involving not only learning experiences from partners, but also making them an element of a new way of managing and operating. Learning to create new knowledge depends on user firms' dynamic capabilities, that subset of capabilities which allows the user firm to

reconfigure, reintegrate and transform its resources (in this case, knowledge resource) into new competencies and competitive advantages (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

Although much attention has been given to transferring knowledge, researchers are now finding that without implementation, the simple transferring process can be meaningless. In other words, implementation is the ultimate objective of knowledge transfer, this involving action.

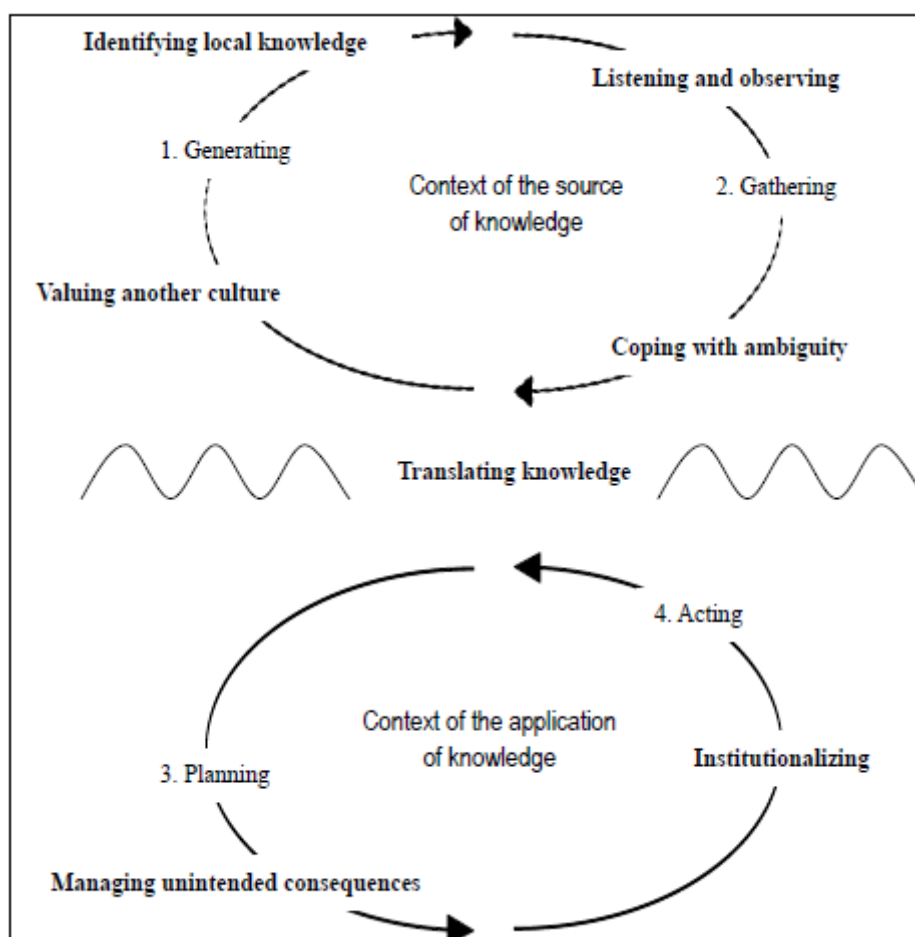


Figure 1. Cross-cultural knowledge transfer in international mergers and alliances

The capabilities and conditions of successful knowledge transfer have been viewed from various perspectives by international researchers, but few studies have addressed the implementation of knowledge transfer, especially the international business knowledge transfer between MNCs. It remains unclear how companies connect the external knowledge transfer with internal knowledge transfer and knowledge learning.

### Purpose and Objectives

Chinese MNCs are a new phenomenon, and, being novices in the international business area, are still in the initial stages of multinationalization process from a knowledge transfer point of view. Their lack of global experience in dealing with multinational business means they often do not realize the need for a different management approach and mentality. They are highly influenced by the traditional Chinese culture dimension, which shapes operations into a conservative pattern with top-down communication styles, which may limit knowledge flows at different levels.

This research will investigate and analyze the international business knowledge transfer and implementation within Chinese MNCs. To this aim, I will explore how MNCs translate knowledge from one subsidiary to another, how they reorganize, adapt and institutionalize this knowledge, and how they develop an organizational learning cycle. In doing so, this study will build on two different perspectives of knowledge transfer implementation, that of the knowledge transfer and that of knowledge learning. Common and different knowledge transfer features will be identified in Chinese MNCs, and how these features influence the development of Chinese MNCs will be investigated. These issues will be critically analyzed to compare the observed practice in Chinese MNCs with theoretical developments and with the results of earlier studies.

## METHODOLOGY

Based on earlier studies, knowledge transfer relies on the capability of managers; their flexibility and learning capability influences the transfer process, therefore talking with managers directly is necessary to understand the process of knowledge transfer, implementation and learning. A longitudinal in-depth investigation is therefore required for these complex cases, in a qualitative study employing ethnographic research principles. The best way to collect primary data is through periodic personal interviews. There are two clear options:

1. A single case study of one Chinese MNC, and its subsidiaries in different countries. This research method provides the deepest and broadest research data. However, the research result may highly be influenced by some unique factors of the interviewed company, limiting the scope for generalization.
2. A multicase study of two to three Chinese MNCs in different industries, together with their subsidiaries in different countries. It will be possible then to compare the differences and similarities between the companies, draw comparative conclusions about knowledge transfer in the Chinese MNCs, and generate more generalizable findings. The access demands, however, especially for a long-term investigation then become substantial and present new problems. For example, people move jobs, making it difficult to maintain long-term relationships with interviewees.

Which research method should be adopted highly depends on the possibilities for gaining access, but the general research steps have been decided. Three managers from each company, from different departments or subsidiaries, will be interviewed three times each. Through reduplicate checking of the same general questions, the complete change process will be discovered and examined.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge about international business knowledge transfer and implementation with regard to Chinese MNCs, these being new to the international arena. It ultimately aims to provide references for improving management practice concerning knowledge transfer and learning in international business.

...

## REFERENCES

- Barney, J. B. (1999). How a firm's capabilities affect boundary decisions. *Sloan Management Review*, 40(3), 137–145.

- Buckley, P. J., & Casson, M. C. (1976). *The future of the multinational enterprise*. London: Macmillan.
- Conner, K., & Prahalad, C. K. (1996). A resource-based theory of the firm: Knowledge versus opportunism. *Organization Science*, 7(5), 477–501.
- Davenport, T. H., & Prusak, L. (1998). *Working knowledge: How organizations manage what they know*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Ferraro, G. P. (2002). *The cultural dimensions of international business* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Gupta, A.K., & Govindarajan, V. (1996). *Determinates of knowledge outflows from and inflows into foreign subsidiaries in multinational corporations* (Unpublished paper).
- Kayes, A. B., Kayes, D. C., & Yamazaki, Y. (2005). Transfer knowledge across cultures: A learning competencies approach. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 18(4), 87–100.
- Kayes, D. C. (2003). Proximal team learning: Lessons from United Flight 93 on 9/11. *Organizational Dynamics*, 32(1), 80–92.
- Kogut, B., & Zander, U. (1992). Knowledge of the firm, combinative capabilities, and the replication of technology. *Organization Science*, 3(3), 383–397.
- Kogut, B., & Zander, U. (1993). Knowledge of the firm and the evolutionary theory of the multinational corporation. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 24(4), 625–645.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Prusak, L. (1998). Why knowledge, why now? In D.A. Klein (Ed.), *The Strategic Management of Intellectual Capital* (pp. 154–174). Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Riesenberger, J. R. (1998). Executive insights: Knowledge—the source of sustainable competitive advantage. *Journal of International Marketing*, 6(3), 94–107.
- Spender, J. C. (1996). Making knowledge the basis of dynamic theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17, Winter Special Issue, 45–62.
- Szulanski, G. (2000). The Process of knowledge transfer: A diachronic analysis of stickiness. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process*, 82(1), 9–27.
- Teece, D. J., Pisano G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(7), 509–533.
- Wiig, K. M. (1995). *Knowledge management method: Practical approaches to managing knowledge*. Arlington, TX: Schema Press.
- Zott, C. (2003). Dynamic capabilities and the emergence of intraindustry differential firm performance: Insights from a simulation study. *Strategic Management Journal*, 24(2), 97–125.

Adapted from:

[www.business-school.ed.ac.uk](http://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk)

## Appendix B. Sample proposal in political science (2002).

---

### ABSTRACT

The exorbitant levels of contributions and expenditures in recent campaigns have triggered a heated debate over the influence of money in American elections. This debate has led to extensive research at the national and state level about the significance of money in elections. However, very little research has been conducted on the role of money and elections in small constituencies. Understanding this relationship is important because "one fifth of all money spent in an election year is spent at the local level" (California Commission on Campaign Financing, 1989). To compensate for lack of research regarding small constituencies this project will conduct a quantitative test and qualitative examination of the significance of money in these small grassroots campaigns.

### INTRODUCTION

The contemporary debate in political science surrounding the influence of money in elections has two distinct sides. One side sees money as the root of all evil. "Politics are corrupted and democracy is stolen from people" (Gais, 1998, p. 1). The other side promotes the view that the ability to raise and spend money in elections is a fundamental liberty afforded by freedom of speech (Gais, 1998, p. 1). Money is necessary in all elections in order for the candidate to communicate their message to the voters. The importance of spending money to reach voters changes with district size, number of constituents, mass media expenditures and so forth. As these factors increase, so does the amount of money needed to campaign. The question at hand is whether money plays a significant role in elections in small constituencies that do not face the expenses associated with increased district size.

This study addresses the extent to which money influences small constituency elections. For the purposes of this paper, I define a small constituency conceptually to be one in which door-to-door voter contact and grassroots campaigning are both feasible and necessary components of a successful campaign. I am examining the electoral processes and financing of Vermont Legislative House races. These races exemplify the characteristics of elections in small constituencies. Vermont has some of the smallest electoral districts in the entire country. Campaigns in Vermont are run according to traditional grassroots campaign practices. Door-to-door campaigning is extremely important and necessary if a candidate has any hope of competing successfully in a Vermont election. Grassroots campaigning applies in other state legislative districts and small local city council races in the United States as well. Vermont's house constituency sizes are 4,059 for single-member districts and 8,120 for two-member districts.<sup>1</sup> However, I am hesitant to argue that these numbers define small constituencies because Vermont is an extreme case. That is why for the purposes of this study, the conceptual definition is best because it allows for flexibility in different contexts.

Vermont has a population of 608,827 (2000 Census) and is one of the smallest states in the Union. The combination of a small population and a large number of House seats results in some of the smallest districts in the country. Their size makes voter contact feasible on a door-to-door basis, thereby reducing the need for costly mass media, voter contact and travel expenditures. However, if the door-to-door campaigns in a small constituency district, such as

---

<sup>1</sup> To calculate these figures, the population of Vermont, which is 608,827 (2000 Census) is divided by the total number of House districts which 150. This yields the number 4,059 people per House district. For two-member districts, this number is multiplied by two, yielding 8,120.

in Vermont House districts, demonstrate a distinct correlation between money and electoral success, then this finding would present evidence to the effect that there is something fundamental about the role of money in winning elections at any level. Thus, this project will provide a rigorous test of the importance of money in all elections by testing for the impact of money on elections in which money is least likely to be important.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This study will attempt to add to the amount of explanatory research on money's role in elections. On a broader level, much has been written on the subject of money in presidential and congressional elections. Spending patterns at the presidential and congressional levels have been widely researched, particularly in the past few years because the level of spending in them has skyrocketed since the 1996 Presidential campaigns. The 2000 elections marked the most expensive presidential and congressional elections to date. The 1974 reforms passed by Congress have proved ineffective in controlling what they were intended to control, mainly special interest money and unmatched levels of spending by candidates. This failure is due in part to the advent of soft money campaigning. Soft money is money not directly contributed or spent on a specific candidate. Rather, it is given to the party organization to run interest advocacy ads supporting the position of that party's candidate and get out the vote projects along with other voter contact and mobilization efforts.

At present, there is one state level campaign finance legal battle. This landmark decision is known as *Landell v Sorrell* in which a number of interests challenged Vermont's 1997 campaign finance law known as Act 64 (*Landell v Sorrell*, 2000). Act 64 is unique because it focuses on limiting campaign expenditures. In this judicial challenge the federal district court upheld Vermont's campaign finance regulations on contribution levels. In his expert testimony, Anthony Gierzynski testified that from his research on Vermont elections, Act 64 did not impose any undue restrictions upon candidates that would limit their ability to campaign effectively. Many candidates did not raise or spend anywhere near the amount of money at which the law set the financial cap. For State House candidates, that cap for contributions is no more than \$200 from an individual or political party. The expenditure limits are \$2000 for challengers/open seat elections (\$3000 for two-member district) and 85% of that for incumbents (\$1800 for one-member districts, \$2,700 for two-member districts). However, the federal district court struck down as unconstitutional the provision of the bill that imposes mandatory spending limits and the contribution limits on political parties and out of state contributors. A three-judge panel in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the district court's ruling on the spending limits and on the contribution limits for political parties. The decision of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court has been further appealed.

Only recently has anyone delved into the study of financing elections at the state level (Breux & Gierzynski, 1991; Gais & Malbin, 1998; Gierzynski & Breux, 1991, 1996; Magleby, 2002; Moncrief & Thompson, 1998). What state level research has been done has been conducted on a broad range of state gubernatorial and legislative races. This research has uncovered commonalities between state and national level elections in areas of the importance of incumbency, spending levels and voter contact. However, this research is still mainly in states with large and moderate level districts and has neglected to focus primarily on small constituencies. A study of small constituency elections and the importance of money is necessary to add to our knowledge of the role of money in elections being that a number of state and local elections are in what are defined to be small constituencies. This project will

contribute to the knowledge base a rigorous test of the significance of money in small constituency elections using Vermont House legislative races as a case study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Through the combination of literature review, independent data gathering, hands-on research and field experience, I will develop an understanding of what it takes to get elected in Vermont. My advisor is Professor Anthony Gierzynski, a nationally recognized expert on state legislative elections as well as campaign finance. I have assisted Professor Gierzynski over the past three years in previous research projects involving finances at the state level in the Vermont campaign finance case, *Landell v Sorrell* and a similar case in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

To research the influence of money in small constituencies, both quantitative and qualitative research methods will be used. I have been reading what has been written to date regarding both congressional and state elections (California Commission, 1989; Gierzynski, 1994; Goidel, Cross, & Shields, 1999; Jewell, Moncrief, & Squire, 2001). Through books and articles from political publications, I have come to have a comprehensive understanding of the status of the research and of the broad policies and themes that are accepted by the political community in regards to the study of elections. In order to get an inside view of the workings of Vermont House elections, I am currently engaged in participant observation by serving as campaign manager for Professor Anthony Gierzynski's Vermont House candidacy.

Since this is a study of Vermont elections, I am focusing primarily on information pertaining to elections here at home. This is where the quantitative component of my research is important. I am compiling expenditure and contribution data for all Vermont House candidates from the 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2002 elections. The expenditure data is being entered into five large databases which were created using Microsoft Access. This data will provide me with information on who and what candidates spend money, as well as how much. From this data, I will abstract statistical models that will isolate the significance of money, while controlling for other factors, such as partisanship, district size and so forth.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

Why do we care about what happens in a small constituency campaign? First and foremost is the question of the importance of money. If in these small districts, places in which money would be least expected to have a significant impact, it in fact does, that would present evidence that money is fundamental in elections at all levels. The findings of this project will further enhance our understanding of not just elections in small constituencies but in all elections meaning that politicians, activists and citizens alike all have a great deal at stake in what happens in small constituency campaigns.

Additionally, the states are important in and of themselves. As of late, the national government has demonstrated a trend towards the devolution of power. Devolution means giving more power and leverage to the states, getting away from centralized federal power. This is significant because the states are being afforded much more power and have the potential to significantly influence national politics. States also currently have some abilities to influence who controls Congress and the way in which national level politics operate. They achieve this influence through their redistricting abilities. Redistricting is required of state house once every ten years. It consists of redrawing the electoral districts in the state to adjust for population shifts in order to maintain the constitutional requirement of one person equals one vote. The combination of devolution increasing state power and their current redistricting abilities signify an increasing amount of state level influence and power throughout American politics.



Using Vermont as a case study from which to examine the importance of money in small constituencies will also be valuable. Vermont elections will be studied in-depth from within the framework of Vermont politics and campaign practices. Since Vermont House districts are smaller than many city council districts around the country, Vermont House races present good cases of small constituency campaigns. This study will provide a clear and coherent examination of Vermont elections, in the context of Vermont law and characteristics.

However, if this study does not find a major significance in small constituency elections, the findings will still have important implications. There is the conception among some people that small elections are more democratic and clean. Finding that money is not important could reinforce this image by implying that elections are not bought on the smaller level and perhaps larger elections should more closely align themselves with the principles of small constituency elections.

All of this will have implications for campaign finance reform. Up until this point reform has been largely ineffective due, in part, to loopholes in the laws and the use of soft money. Could the focus of campaign finance legislation reform be incorrectly oriented? Is there justification for campaign finance reform laws, such as that in Vermont? If we can fully understand the role and importance of money in the smallest and most basic elections, this understanding can lead to more realistic and effective reforms, either on a state-by-state basis or on the broader national level.

## REFERENCES

- Breaux, D., & Gierzynski, A. (1991). It's money that matters: Campaign expenditures and state legislative primaries. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *16*, 429–443.
- California Commission on Campaign Financing (1989). *Money and politics in the Golden State: Financing California's local elections*. Los Angeles, California: Center for Responsive Government.
- Gais, T., & Malbin, M. (1998). *The day after reform: Sobering campaign finance lessons from the American States*. Albany, New York: The Rockefeller Institute Press.
- Gierzynski, A. (1994). Elections to the state Legislatures. In J.H. Silbey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the American Legislative System: Studies of the Principal Structures, Processes, and Policies of Congress and the State Legislatures* (vol. 3). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Gierzynski, A., & Breaux, D. (1996). Legislative elections and the importance of money. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *16*, 337–357.
- Gierzynski, A., & Breaux, D. (1991). Money and votes in state legislative elections. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *16*, 203–217.
- Goidel, R., Gross, D., & Shields, T. (1999). *Money matters*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Jewell, M., Moncrief, G., & Squire, P. (2001). *Who runs for the legislature?* Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Landell v. Sorrell (2000). (Docket No. 2:99-cv-146). Expert testimony of Anthony Gierzynski.
- Magleby, D. (2002). *Financing the 2000 election*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Moncrief, G., & Thompson, J. (1998). *Campaign finance in state legislative elections*. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

Adapted from:

<http://www.uvm.edu/>

## Appendix C. Glossary of research terms

### Sections

Abstract	аннотация
Title page (cover page)	титульный лист
Introduction	введение
Literature review = review of literature	обзор литературы
Methods/ methodology	методы исследования
Expected outcomes/ results (also known as anticipated results)	ожидаемые результаты исследования
Scope (of research)	рамки исследования
Limitations	рамки, ограничения, недостатки исследования
Discussion	обсуждение результатов
Conclusion	заключение (основные выводы исследования)
References (also Works cited)	список литературы
Appendix ( <i>pl.</i> – appendices)	приложение

### Miscellaneous

(research) problem	проблема (исследования)
topic/ research area	тематическая область
problem statement	постановка (формулировка) проблемы исследования
(research) purpose	цель исследования
(research) objective/ task	задача исследования
(research) gap	ниша, пробел в исследованиях по проблеме
hypothesis ( <i>pl.</i> hypotheses)	гипотеза исследования
data ( <i>pl., uncount.</i> )	данные
citation	ссылка на источник; цитата из источника
data analysis	анализ данных
data coding	кодирование данных (преобразование данных для их отображения в другом виде, например, численном)
data collection	сбор данных
direct quote (quotation)	прямая цитата
context of the study	контекст исследования
justification for the study	обоснование исследования
significance/ value	актуальность (значимость) (работы, научной проблемы)
theoretical framework	теоретическая основа, концепция, модель
qualitative methods	качественные методы исследования
quantitative methods	количественные методы исследования
research design	планирование/ проектирование исследования
case study	кейс-метод, метод кейсов
interview	беседа, интервью
questionnaire	анкета, вопросник
observation	наблюдение
survey	опрос
the IMRD format (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion) format	установленный формат эмпирической статьи, разбивающийся на разделы введение, методы исследования, изложение результатов и их обсуждение

## Appendix D. Title page layout

**Syrian Civil War: Global Impact and  
Implications for Neighboring Countries**

A Research Proposal Presented to  
The Foreign Languages Department

by

**Marina A. Ivanova**

412

National Research University – Higher School of Economics

Academic advisors:

Prof. E.A. Volkova

Prof A.I. Ivanov

Moscow 2016