Contents

Constructing Space for a Survey Project

Objectives

The **introduction** section is the beginning of a research report. It briefly introduces the research problem to the reader. The main purpose of this section is to give the background of the research and offer reasons for carrying out the project. In this week, you will learn about introduction writing and practice doing it. You will be able to

- structure an introduction
- distinguish between facts and opinions
- understand the main features of academic texts
- think critically to develop a research idea

Report

Abstract

Introduction ★
- background of the research
- reasons for conducting the study

Literature review
- Review of previous studies related to the topic

Methods
- description of methods to conduct the research

Implementation
- description of ways to collect, prepare and analyze data

Results
- presentation of research results
- analysis of data

Discussion
- interpretation of your main findings

Conclusion
- summary of your work
- limitations in your research
- suggestions for further research

Acknowledgments

References

Close Reading and Study

Text

Introduction*

[1] Although in psychology, undergraduate final-year research projects are seen as epitomising **autonomous learning** (Todd, Bannister & Clegg, 2004), we, as supervisors, noticed that project students are often anxious about whether they are conducting their research the "right" way and they can be overly cautious about making decisions (even the most benign ones) without supervisory approval (e.g. "Should I read this journal or not?" "Is it OK to have coloured font on information sheets?"). We thus questioned whether the assumed level of independence within final-year project work is truly actualised, and whether supervision in its standard form may at times promote reliance on an authority figure. Whilst affirming the need for, and benefit from, project supervision, we were interested in examining alternative learning configurations that might diminish latent **authority-dependence** and further promote **interdependent** and **independent learning**. Thus, this paper details a pilot study exploring how students engaged in a collaborative **peer learning** environment that ran alongside their final-year project work.

_____

* This title is added by the editor. The following paragraph is taken from the beginning part of a research paper by Siobhan Hugh-Jones and Anna Madill from University of Leeds, UK. (For more information about the paper, refer back to Page 9.) The remaining parts of the paper will be presented and analyzed through this course.

final-year: 4th-year (in Leeds)

epitomise: _____

autonomous learning: _____

_____

& is pronounced as _____;

it means _____

benign: _____

approval: _____

e.g.: _____

information sheet: _____

_____

assumed: _____

actualise: _____

reliance: _____

whilst: _____

affirm: _____

alternative: _____

learning configuration: _____

_____

diminish: _____

latent: _____

authority-dependence: _____

_____

interdependent learning: ___

_____

independent learning: _____

_____

peer learning: _____

_____

Understanding the text

1. **Read the text and work out the meaning of the words in the column beside the text with a partner.**

2. **In your understanding, is the statement "undergraduate final-year research projects are seen as epitomising autonomous learning" a statement of fact or a statement of opinion? Why?**

   My answer: _____

   _____

   My reason: _____

   _____

> It is important to be able to differentiate between a fact and an opinion when you read.
> - A fact is something generally known to be true. It may also be proved scientifically. For example:
>   *Mount Qomolangma is the highest mountain in the world.*
> - An opinion is a view held by a person or a group of people. For example:
>   *I believe it is the most difficult mountain to climb.*

3. **Read the following sentence from the text and answer the questions. Note that the names and year in parentheses are a typical characteristic of academic writing.**

   Although in psychology, undergraduate final-year research projects are seen as epitomising autonomous learning (Todd, Bannister & Clegg, 2004), we, as supervisors, noticed that…

   1) What does "(Todd, Bannister & Clegg, 2004)" mean to you? What is the relationship among Todd, Bannister and Clegg?

   "(Todd, Bannister & Clegg, 2004)" means: _____

   _____

Their relationship may be: _____

_____

2) In your opinion, why does a researcher need to refer to other researchers' studies when doing research and writing the research report?

Possible reasons: _____

_____

4. Why did the authors insert "as supervisors" to refer to themselves when reporting that they noticed the fact that students are anxious and cautious? List as many words as possible that belong in the "supervise" family.

Their reason(s) or purpose(s) may be: _____

_____

Members of the "supervise" family:

Verb	Noun	Adjective
supervise		

5. How do you understand "the 'right' way"? What can we infer about the authors' attitude toward different ways of doing research?

My understanding: _____

_____

The authors' attitude: _____

_____

6. In your understanding, does the statement "project students are often anxious about whether they are conducting their research the 'right' way and they can be overly cautious about making decisions" depict a fact or an opinion? Why?

My answer: _____

_____

My reason: _____

_____

Academic Expressions

Main features of academic writing

Although there is no clear standard for academic writing, it is clearly different from fiction or newspaper articles. In what ways is the academic genre, as revealed by the text in Part A, different from other types of writing you have read?

1. **The main features of academic writing are listed in the table below. Find an example for each feature from the text in Part A.**

Feature	Example
1) Formal vocabulary	
2) Use of references	
3) Impersonal style	
4) Long, complex sentences	
5) Passive voice	

2. **What connection can you identify between the third and fourth sentences in the text? How is coherence achieved in the two sentences?**

③ Whilst affirming the need for, and benefit from, project supervision, we were interested in examining alternative learning configurations that might diminish latent authority-dependence and further promote interdependent and independent learning. ④ Thus, this paper details a pilot study exploring how students engaged in a collaborative peer learning environment that ran alongside their final-year project work.

Their connection is:

_____

_____

The coherence is achieved through:

_____

_____

> Coherence in a paragraph refers to the logical connection and consistency between sentences. It means that the sentences are arranged in a clear and logical way, and the transitions between them are smooth, making it easy for the reader to follow the author's train of thought. Here are three ways to achieve coherence in a paragraph.
> - Repetition of key words.
> - Use of transitional words and phrases that show specific kinds of relationship, such as *however, therefore, for example*.
> - Use of pronouns and synonyms.

3. **The text follows a "viewpoint-observation-questioning-research idea" structure. Pay attention to the verb tenses used in the text. Do you find a clear pattern of tense use and change? What is the purpose of the use of different tenses?**

Sentence	Tense	Purpose
Although in psychology, undergraduate final-year research projects <u>are seen</u> as…		
…we, as supervisors, <u>noticed</u> that project students <u>are</u> often anxious…		

(*to be continued*)

(continued)

Sentence	Tense	Purpose
We thus <u>questioned</u> whether the assumed level of independence within final-year project work is truly actualised… …we <u>were interested</u> in examining…		
Thus, this paper <u>details</u> a pilot study exploring how students <u>engaged</u> in…		

4. **Locate the following adverbs in the text and think about their important role in developing the paragraph.**

Adverbs: *often*, *overly*, *most*, *truly*, *further*

Important role of the adverbs: _____

_____

5. **Locate the following modal verbs in the text and analyze their role in expressing the authors' attitudes.**

Modal verbs: *can*, *may*, *might*

Role of the modal verbs: _____

_____

6. **Work in a group and translate the following two sentences into Chinese.**

> We thus questioned whether the assumed level of independence within final-year project work is truly actualised, and whether supervision in its standard form may at times promote reliance on an authority figure. Whilst affirming the need for, and benefit from, project supervision, we were interested in examining alternative learning configurations that might diminish latent authority-dependence and further promote interdependent and independent learning.

Our group's translation: _____

_____

_____

_____

Coordinate clause and phrase

A coordinate clause is an independent clause that is joined to another independent clause by a coordinating conjunction such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*. Each clause in a coordinate structure can stand alone as a complete sentence, but they are connected to show a relationship between them. The presence of coordinate clauses indicates learners' syntactic development compared to the use of basic simple sentences. This is because using coordinate clauses requires an understanding of how to link independent clauses in a way that shows their relationship, demonstrating a more advanced grasp of sentence structure and complexity. For example:

They uncovered that [1]PhD and expert RA (research article) abstract writers used more noun, participle and prepositional phrase modifiers than MA students, but [2]expert RA abstract writers used only prepositional phrase modifiers in significantly greater abundance than PhD writers.
 (coordinate clauses joined by the connective "but")

A coordinate phrase consists of two or more phrases of equal grammatical rank that are joined by a coordinating conjunction. These phrases are typically parallel in structure and contribute to the coherence and flow of a sentence. Coordinate phrases, though basic structures themselves, are encouraged in written texts. They serve as a means to demonstrate careful thinking, a sign of syntactic complexity. For example:

We should [1]carry forward and foster the traditional morality [2]cultivated and developed by our ancestors.
(coordinate phrases joined by the connective "and")

1. **Translate the following sentences into English.**
   1) 写作研究中句法复杂性的定义强调所使用句法结构的多样性（range）和复杂度（sophistication）。二语写作研究尤其重视句法复杂性，将之作为分析语言水平和发展轨迹（trajectories）的一种手段。

   My translation:

   _____

   _____

2) 很明显，相较于其他主要部分类型（part genre），引言（introduction）这一部分类型在研究方面，或许还有教学（pedagogical）方面，获得了过多（disproportionate）的关注。

My translation:

_____

_____

2. **The Chinese sentences in the previous exercise are, in fact, translated from the English versions below. Now examine the original English versions and analyze their syntactic features. Then explain the strategies used in English-to-Chinese and Chinese-to-English translation.**

> **Original English versions**
> 1) Definitions of syntactic complexity in writing research emphasize both the range and the sophistication of utilized syntactic structures, and within research on second language writing, particular emphasis has been placed on syntactic complexity as a means of analyzing language proficiency and developmental trajectories.
> 2) It is evident that the introduction part genre has received a disproportionate amount of scholarly, and perhaps pedagogical, attention, relative to the other major part genres.

Subordinate clause

> A subordinate clause, also known as a dependent clause, is a group of words that has both a subject and a verb but cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. It depends on a main clause (independent clause) to give it meaning. Subordinate clauses often begin with subordinating conjunctions such as *because*, *although*, *if*, *when*, *since*, *while* and *unless*. Subordinate clauses indicate learners' syntactic development, conveying semantic relations between clauses and showcasing higher-level thinking. For example:
> 1) *Continuing our reform to a deeper level involves improving our socialist system with Chinese characteristics. When we say boosting our confidence in the system, we do not mean to be complacent.*
> (adverbial clause introduced by "when")

2) *Thus, the rhetorical work of the introduction is highly interpersonal, <u>as writers construct intertextual networks in which they situate their work.</u>*
(adverbial clause introduced by "as")

The presence of a subordinate clause indicates intermediate syntactic development. It is an effective way to enrich sentence structure and provide detailed information. However, overusing subordinate clauses affects the readability and clarity of the text. Generally speaking, we should be cautious when composing more than two such clauses in one sentence.

1. **Translate the following sentences into English.**
   1) 此类分析中涉及（include）学科领域（disciplinary communities）时，各学科领域常常代表一个比较点，为学习写作者（developing writers）提供目标（target）。
   My translation:

   _____

   _____

   2) Basturkmen（2009）指出（note），尽管有样本作文，学生作者依然经常会费力地理解（struggle to understand）研究报告各部分的形式和功能。
   My translation:

   _____

   _____

2. **The Chinese sentences in the previous exercise are, in fact, translated from the English versions below. Now examine the original English versions and analyze their syntactic features. Then explain the strategies used in English-to-Chinese and Chinese-to-English translation.**

   Original English versions
   1) When disciplinary communities are included in such analyses, they often represent a point of comparison as a target for developing writers.
   2) Basturkmen (2009) notes that student writers "often struggle to understand the forms and functions of sections of the research report," in spite of the availability of example texts.

Research in Writing

1. **Read the text again and answer the following questions to understand how the authors structure their introduction.**

   1) In which sentence do the authors tell the reader that they have referred to others' research?

      _____

   2) In which sentence do the authors show that the survey idea has sprung from observation of a phenomenon that concerns them?

      _____

   3) In which sentence do the authors raise the questions arising from the observation?

      _____

   4) In which sentence do the authors introduce the research question and the method taken to achieve the purpose of the study?

      _____

2. **What critical thinking skills are involved in developing the ideas for the authors' survey? Refer to the critical thinking skills in the box below, make your choice and explain.**

   > a. Evaluating the reliability of sources of information
   > b. Distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information
   > c. Comparing and contrasting ideas, concepts and theories
   > d. Making connections between ideas and concepts in different disciplines
   > e. Making appropriate generalizations from evidence
   > f. Recognizing contradictions
   > g. Evaluating ideas, concepts and theories
   > h. Identifying assumptions and evaluating them

   My choice: _____

Reasons (at least two):

_____

_____

3. **The last sentence of the text reads: "Thus, this paper details a pilot study exploring how students engaged in a collaborative peer learning environment that ran alongside their final-year project work." It introduces a general research question. There are several steps to develop a research topic into a feasible research question through a gradual narrowing process. How would you formulate your general research question?**

_____

_____

Research originates from an idea about some general problem or question. This problem or question is then narrowed down to a more specific research question, which then represents the central issue to be addressed.

4. **How did the authors construct space for their own research? Based on your understanding and analysis of the text, reconstruct the beginning stage of the study reported in the text.**

1) Form a survey group → 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____ 5) Decide on a research idea → 6) Construct a pilot study
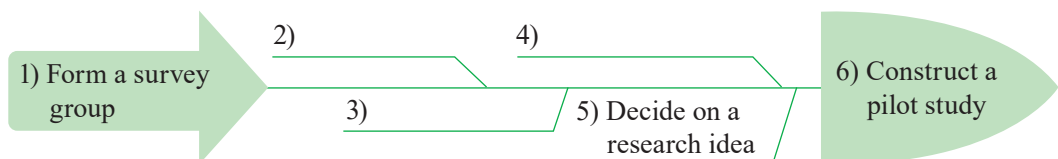
Project Doing and Sharing

Your ideas for a survey may arise from the observation of a phenomenon, a problem, or they may result from reading, communicating, or from a discussion designed for that purpose. To develop a survey idea, more focused reading is also needed.
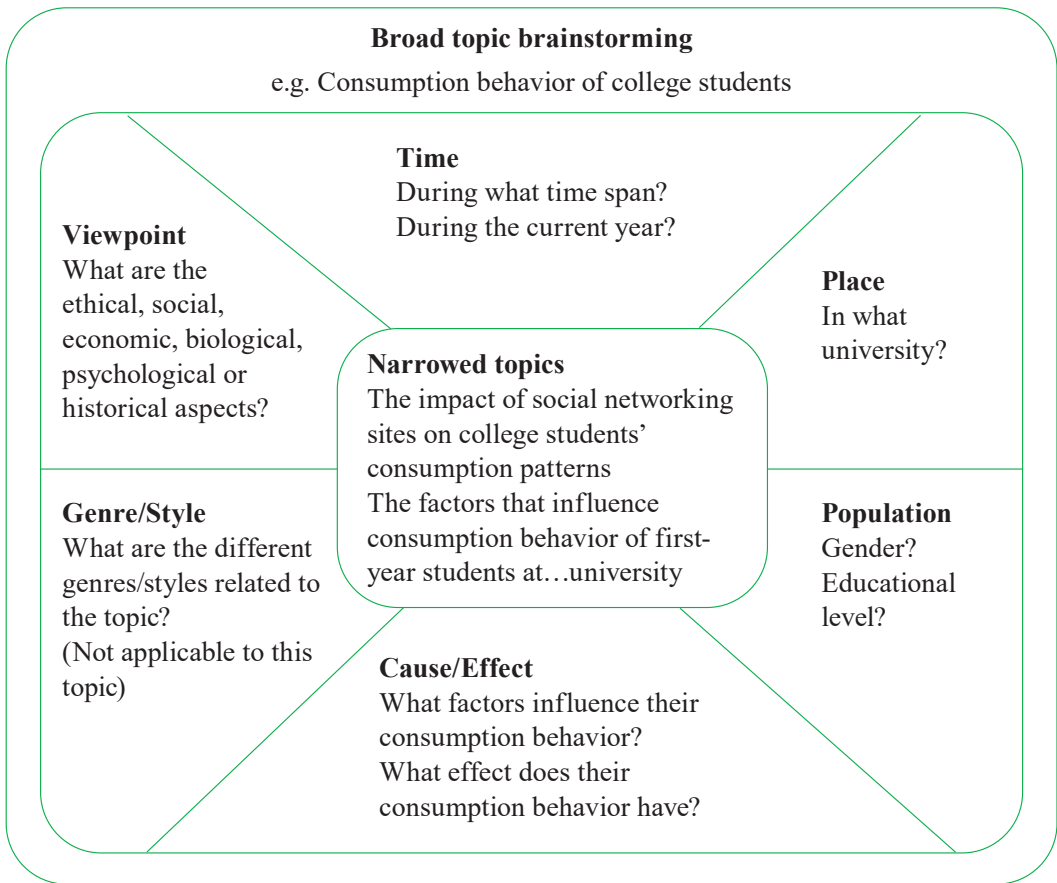
1. **In Week 1, you conducted a preliminary search on your topic of interest and got some reading suggestions from your group mates. Note down what you have read and discussed with your group mates after your initial brainstorming on the survey theme.**
    What I have read: _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    What I have discussed with my group mates: _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    Remember: It may take weeks or longer to develop a good theme for a survey.

2. **As you begin your research, you may find your topic too broad to be manageable. You can narrow it down by focusing on aspects of time, place, population, cause/effect, genre/style, etc. Read the following diagram to help you refine your topic.**

Broad topic brainstorming

e.g. Consumption behavior of college students

Time
During what time span?
During the current year?

Viewpoint
What are the ethical, social, economic, biological, psychological or historical aspects?

Place
In what university?

Narrowed topics
The impact of social networking sites on college students' consumption patterns
The factors that influence consumption behavior of first-year students at…university

Genre/Style
What are the different genres/styles related to the topic?
(Not applicable to this topic)

Population
Gender?
Educational level?

Cause/Effect
What factors influence their consumption behavior?
What effect does their consumption behavior have?

3. Answer the following questions.

1) What is the theme of your group survey project? What phenomenon (problem) do you intend to address?

Theme of our group survey project: _____

_____

Phenomenon (problem) our group plans to address: _____

_____

2) What driving question(s) have you proposed to guide the survey?

Question(s) proposed by our group: _____

_____

3) What has led you and your group to decide to do such a survey?

The factors are: _____

_____

4) What is the background of your proposed survey? Any theoretical or practical background?

The background: _____

_____

Theoretically/Practically, _____

_____

5) You need to prove that your proposed survey is significant. What is the value of such a survey?

Value of our survey: _____

_____

_____

6) Who might be most concerned with the topic/theme in question and would want to know the results of your exploration?

_____

_____

7) What are the key concepts that your proposed survey involves?

_____

_____

8) Who are the members of your group? What is your role in the group?

The members are: _____

My role is: _____

_____

The theoretical background is what previous researchers have found about a topic. The practical background refers to what you, as a researcher, have observed in daily life.

A concept is an idea or abstract principle. For example, in the study into collaborative peer learning, the key concepts involved are collaborative learning and authority-dependence.

4. **Integrate your answers to the above questions into a coherent paragraph for the purpose of introducing your survey in preparation.**

   This is independent work to be shared with other members in your group. Your version (NOT the collective version) of the introduction should be no less than 100 words. You are encouraged to use as many newly-learned items as possible in your writing, including

   - viewpoint-observation-questioning-research idea structure
   - linguistic features of academic writing
   - coherence
   - shift of verb tenses
   - adverbs and modal verbs

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. **Besides the survey theme, what other consensus have you reached? Did all group members contribute equally to the discussion of your survey theme? If not, what measures will you take to ensure that those who contributed less will contribute more?**

   Other consensus: _____

   Measures to take: _____

6. **What national or local needs will be met by the survey your group choose to focus on? What, in your opinion, motivates our national heroes to try their utmost to meet our national needs?**

   _____

   _____

7. **Like well-trained scientists, you may already possess a sensitivity to problems and innovations. What problem(s) does your group survey address? What innovative ideas have you come up with?**

   _____

   _____

Reflection and Accumulation of Learning

(Date: _____ / _____ / _____)

Reflect upon your learning in this week and accumulate your learning achievements.

	Yes	No
Academic reading		
Am I able to distinguish between facts and opinions?	☐	☐
Am I able to infer the attitude of authors from their use of quotation marks?	☐ ☐	☐ ☐
Academic expression		
Do I know the main features of academic texts?	☐	☐
Do I know the ways to achieve coherence?	☐	☐
Do I know the use of different verb tenses to express different purposes?	☐	☐
Do I know the use of adverbs and modal verbs to make the writing precise?	☐	☐
Do I know the use of coordinate clauses and phrases?	☐	☐
Do I know the use of subordinate clauses?	☐	☐
Research in writing		
Am I aware that researchers need focused reading to formulate a research idea?	☐	☐
Am I aware that authors need to give the background of the survey and reasons for carrying out the study in the introduction section?	☐	☐
Am I aware of how authors structure the introduction section of a survey report?	☐	☐
Am I aware of how researchers apply critical thinking skills to developing a research idea?	☐	☐

Am I aware of how researchers narrow down their research idea to formulate a research question? ☐ ☐

Am I aware of how researchers construct space for their own research? ☐ ☐

Research in progress

Have I decided on a theme for my group survey project? ☐ ☐

Have I formulated research questions to guide the survey? ☐ ☐

Have I identified the theoretical and practical backgrounds of my survey? ☐ ☐

Have I identified the value and significance of my survey? ☐ ☐

Have I identified the key concepts involved in my proposed study? ☐ ☐

Have I written my survey introduction with a certain structure, such as the viewpoint-observation-questioning-research idea structure? ☐ ☐

Do you have other gains?

My other gains: _____

_____

Are there any problems that your group has encountered? What are your solutions?

Problems: _____

_____

Solutions: _____

_____

Degree of satisfaction with my achievements so far: _____ %