
Writing Doctoral Thesis/Dissertation and Research Papers by Using the Correct English Grammar

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Abstract

Any research is the systematic investigation of study of materials and sources. The research study helps the society in order to identify the facts by theoretically or experimentally to get additional information and derive to a new conclusion. The outcome of any research is published in the form of thesis/dissertation and research papers. The Thesis should be free from English grammatical, lexical and punctuation errors. Any grammar is the structure and sound of a language. English grammar is important to realize the importance of language which is used in all the thesis and research papers. In the globalization era English language has become a necessity all over the world. The main aspects of written the sentences in research work depends upon its grammar. When the grammar is proper, the sentences make sense. Native English speakers are able to speak and write with proper speak grammatically correct sentences. But for non-native speakers who have to learn the language from its core and whose mother is another language. The Engineering, medical, and law students, though they are good in their subject, often they are not able to write thesis or research papers in good English due to their lack of proficiency in English. This present study attempts to presents some useful suggestions relating to the implementation of the correct usage of English grammar for writing the doctoral thesis/dissertation and research papers for arts, science, engineering, law, and medicines students.

Keywords: English grammar, Non-native speaker, research thesis, dissertation, sentence pattern, Parts of speech.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the research thesis is immensely important to the career progression in the universities or any research institutions. The thesis delivers the results of the research to the interested person ⁽¹⁾. The thesis should begin with a general introduction presenting an overview of the purpose of the study by having the reference to existing research. The

introduction should show why the topic has been chosen for investigation. The formulation of the research problem with the introduction should give a purpose to get a solution to this problem. The objective of the investigation will make an original contribution to the theoretical body of knowledge and also the needs the study of experimental investigation should be mentioned. It is necessary for the research scholars to publish it in a coherent way so that the readers can understand the information. It is necessary for the researchers to avoid the mistakes in English language and grammatical errors in their research manuscripts so that unnecessary delay the publication process can be eliminated ⁽²⁾. English language has a different system of grammatical rules. It is generally felt that Indian scholars have a lot of problems in English language in general and in particular in paragraph writing of English language. That is one of the reasons why the researcher has researched this field. Students commit repeated errors in using the target language. S.P. Corder (1967) proposed the hypothesis that errors are evidence of learner's strategies of acquiring the language rather than signs of inhibition or interference of persistent old habits ⁽³⁾. He claimed that a systematic study of errors is essential in order to discover the learner's built-in syllabus and learning strategies.

2. Need for the Study

Today English language is very important and is an international language in the world. The role of English language can be used to increase the knowledge of the foreign students in their subjects ⁽⁴⁾. It seems worth mentioning that the study of English Errors helps the students in order to learn the target language as 'device the students use in order to learn their subjects effectively. Researchers have provided empirical evidence pointing to emphasis on learners' errors as an effective means of improving language of students. There is a great need for such a study to point out why errors are committed by the students and then we need to bring out few remedial measures to enable the students to improve their language and use English flawlessly.

3. Research Report for Experimental Work on Heat Exchangers

When the title of research dissertation is "Experimental Studies on Heat Transfer and Pressure Drop in Heat Exchangers", it is expected that experimental work has been carried out in various heat exchangers for heat transfer and it is observed that pressure drops for single-phase fluid such as water, aqueous starch, and aqueous glycerine solutions of low concentration by varying its weight percentage in step of 2.5 wt%. The dimensionless number groups were evaluated and correlated. The empirical relationships have been found to exist which fit with data well.

4. Research Report Writing Format

A research report consists of research title, introduction, acknowledgments, & table of contents, the main part, result and discussion, or research findings, conclusion, references, annexure, bibliography, etc. The researcher needs to be aware of the purpose of the research. The Research Report Writing is a step by step process. The structure of the main part of the PhD

dissertation and the order is given in guidelines of the Doctoral thesis ⁽⁵⁾. The guidelines and the basic requirement for preparation of the thesis at IIT Kanpur is given in a separate format ⁽⁶⁾. The preparation of thesis/dissertation/report for PhD/M.Tech./M.Phil./MCA students by Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology is given in a standard format ⁽⁷⁾.

5. Thesis Submission

The	Candidate's Declaration	
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Chapter-1	Introduction	
Chapter-2	Literature Review	
Chapter-3	Formulation of the Problem	
Chapter-4	Objectives of the Research Block	
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Chapter-5	Experimental Set-up and Procedure	
Chapter-3	Experimental Set-up and Procedure	
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Chapter-6	Results and Discussion	
Chapter-7	Conclusion and Recommendations	
	Nomenclature	
	Greek Letters	
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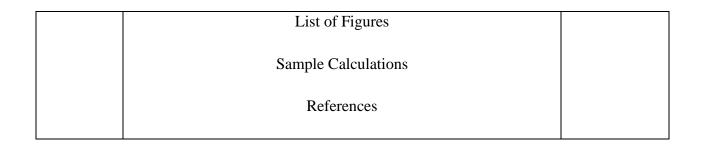


Table-1: Content of the PhD Dissertation submitted at R.E.C. Trichy-15⁽⁸⁾.

6. Ph.D. Thesis Writing in Past Tense with Active Voice/Passive Voice

While writing the research thesis/dissertation, the presentation should be clear, concise, and in correct English. The title of the thesis/dissertation is specific, and it reflects the content. The abstract is brief, and it indicates the purpose of the work. For the doctoral thesis /dissertation for English and other arts subjects, many writers feel that passive voice represents poor writing form, as it allows the object of an action to be the subject of a sentence. It is better to write the thesis/dissertation in active voice. But most of the Science and Engineering doctoral thesis/dissertation are experimental or analysis-oriented and it is expected that the doctoral thesis is written in passive voice with past tense. In these disciplines, research scholars use passive voice which can be an appropriate, sophisticated, and even preferable choice over the active voice (9). All the citations are to be written by using the past tense. In order to use passive voice correctly, it is necessary to fully understand, and be able to recognize the difference between passive and active voices properly. In technical thesis writing the focus is usually on what was done rather than who did it. There are several different ways of indicating that an event took place in the past. When we write an engineering text, we can use the simple past, present perfect, present perfect progressive, or the past perfect progressive. All of these different past tenses have slightly different meanings in terms of the chronology - or the order - in which things happened. The present tense is used to express general truths or facts, or conclusions supported by research results.

7. Dissertation/Thesis Writing with Good English

Our mother tongue is used for our daily conversation purpose. We can share our feelings, ideas, and expressions through our own language easily. So, the mother tongue influence dominates us in communicating fluently and effectively when compared with English communication. We study Tamil as a first language and English is our second language. The students as well as the Professors need to make equal efforts for better writing the thesis/dissertation with grammar. A well-written and coherent thesis that puts across the ideas clearly will impress the readers and they will easily accept with this formulated dissertation. Every student has to write dissertation for his research and also academic papers carefully with good English. It is the duty of the professors to go ahead with students who are non-English in

their native language to learn to use correct grammar.

Many research scholars underestimate the importance of English grammar in their thesis write-up (10, 11). Many of them are having misconception that having the right data and by representing it in their thesis can lead them in getting their higher degree. But they do not know that how many mistakes are there in their research thesis. The research supervisor or guide cannotuse their precious time in reading and correcting the grammatical errors. Therefore, attention from students is needed to present their research data correctly without grammatical errors if the scholars want to get positive feedback from their guide or supervisor. For writing research thesis or dissertation, appropriate grammar, articles, tenses, punctuation, sentence structure, and spelling are necessary. The correct usage of English Grammar is important because it helps the researchers to publish their articles in reputed journals. The structure conveys precise meaning from the writer to the supervisor because of the elimination of grammatical errors from their writing. Some of the examples of the correct usage of the grammar are given below.

8. Correct Usage of English

Rudolf Jaenisch at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology ⁽¹²⁾, the leading US-based researcher working on iPS cells, argues that some papers from Asia are so badly written that the reviewers are facing difficulty to assess. The research scholars' poor English includes not only outright errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation but also faulty construction of sentences, unidiomatic expressions, no agreement between subject and verb, and odd usage in their research write-up deflects a reviewer's attention from the substance of the paper to its style ⁽¹³⁾. Some of the hallmark writers are expecting a variety of sentence pattern to start. English is the predominant language for research publications in every corner of the world. The usage of grammar should be acceptable, by providing clarity of what one wants to express. Some of examples are described below.

(1) Noun and Verb Agreement (14):

Noun means 'the name of anything'; but the Verb is used to describe 'an action', 'state,' or 'occurrence' and forming the main parts of the predicate of a sentence, such as 'hear', 'become', or 'happen'. Advice is a noun and an advised is a verb expressed as ⁽¹⁴⁾:

- 1. a). My guide advised me to start write my doctoral thesis for university submission. (Here *advise* is a verb).
- 1.b). My guide gave an advice to write research article for the publication without grammar mistakes. (Here *advice* is a noun).
- 2. a). I'm feeling hunger. *Hunger* is noun.
- 2. b). I'm feeling hungry. *Hungry* is an adjective. (Both sentences are correct).

(3) Difference between "Ought to" and "Should":

- 3. a. Mother to son, "You ought to stop smoking". (Moral advice to son). Meaning is *you should stop smoking*.
- 3. b. Principal to student, "You should stop smoking". (Here order).

(4) If I was and If I were in sentences $^{(16)}$:

Many scholars may get confused, and they are unsure, whether *If I was* to be used or *If I were* to be used in sentences. The sentence depends on the scenario that they are using. For most of the sentences that may express what happened, the choice would be "if I was". For hypothetical situation, they would choose "if I were" which is explained as follows:

If I was rich, I would buy a new house. (May happen)
If I were you, I would have married her. (Hypothetical)

The scholars use "If I had" and "If I had been" to refer to past events.

If I had studied, I would have passed the examination.

If I had not passed the order, It would have been betrayal of public trust: Ashok Khemka (The Hindu, 12.8.2013)

(5) The Difference between "May" and "Might" in writing the sentences:

The word*may* is the present tense and *might* is the past tense.

May is used for possibility of a fact or could be a possibility of a fact.

E.g.: Amirtha may pass her examination. (90% possibility)

Might is used for hypothetical case or when the probability is very rare.

E.g.: If I study well, I might get first rank in university examination. (10% possibility)

(6) The difference between "made of" and "made up of" and "made by" in sentences:

This table is *made of* wood.

The Necklace is *made up of* gold and nickel. (Two or more metal)

This window is made by me.

(7) Difference between IT'S ME or IT'S I

It is the question about pronoun. The pronoun is whether to use the subject or object case after *is*, was, and other forms of the verb to be.

In earlier times, grammarians trying to model English grammar on Latin argued that the verb *to be* cannot have an object and insisted on using subject pronouns after it, as in *it's I* and *was that she?* This habit survives in the common American usage when answering the phone 'can I speak to Maria?' _ This is she.

But what comes after *to be* is not really a subject either. It is a compliment. Modern standard English remains undecided about what to do here but the fact is that most people nowadays say *it's me* and *was that her?* _ This is acceptable usage for everyone except the most formal and traditional. As always you can rephrase things to avoid the problem entirely.

Question: In answer the question who's there?

Answer: You do not have to say either it's I or it's me: you can say simply, 'I am' instead.

Note that if a who - clause follows the personal pronoun; Standard English usually prefers a subject form for example:

Question: 'It's who do the shopping'? **Answer:** 'It's me that does the shopping.'

Colloquial English on the other hand, would probably still favour 'me' here, together with various other changes.

(8) Question: Which one is correct? *I want to eat 2 banana*, or *I want to eat 2 bananas*. Answer: Numbers less than 10 should be written out in words. The correct answer is: *I want to eat two bananas*.

(9) Agreement between Subject and Verb

In S-V-C pattern the Noun is the subject of a sentence that performs the action described in the sentence. If the Noun is singular and the verb is plural, the Noun and verb of that sentence are in disagreement. The rules of English grammar dictate that the Noun and verb must agree with each other in number, i.e., they both should either be singular or plural.

9. a). Singular noun should have singular verbs.

e.g.: The pen is red.

9. b). Plural noun should have plural verbs.

e.g.: All the pens are red.

9. c). Incorrect: My friend and guide are attending the conference.

Correct: *My friend and guide is attending the conference.*

Reason: When two singular nouns refer to the same person, the verb must be singular.

(10) Improper Use of Articles

Use of Article is another difficult area where the research scholars make errors. There are two types of articles in English grammar. They are definite (the) and indefinite (a/an) articles. It is important to choose the right one to pair with a noun. The rules are different for single, plural, and uncountable nouns. Correct use of articles conveys precise meanings in Engineering.

Deciding whether to use *a, an, some,* or *the,* or use no article can be confusing. In grammar, for clarity and readability, in English sentences accurate article usage is extremely important. Research scholars who are not comfortable with English tend to use articles incorrectly often. It is important to understand the difference between indefinite articles ('a' and 'an') and the definite article ('the'). They should know when to use which article in their research thesis.

10. a) **Incorrect:** An European invited me for dinner. (*European* word pronunciation is not started with E. It is started with U).

Correct: A European invited me for dinner.

10. b) The Chennai Silks. (No article in front of a city. But here "The" refers to the store which sells silks, not to Chennai City. So, this is correct).

(11) Nominalization of Verbs

The process of turning verbs and adjectives into nouns is known as nominalization. Also, the Nominalization is the use of parts of speech that are not nouns, such as verbs, as nouns. Such nominalized verbs are also called smothered verbs. A verb with little specific meaning and this weakens the quality of writing.

Incorrect: We had a discussion concerning my bonus.

Here, it is necessary to omit the weak smothered verb and using the verb in its original form makes the sentence crisp. Such a style is preferred in academic writing. Correct: We discussed my bonus.

(12) Parts of Speech

The parts of speech indicate the words functioning as well as help analyze sentences grammatically. There are eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection which help us to construct good sentences.

According to the modern grammarians, Determiner is included in the parts of speech and now there are nine different parts of speech.

Examples for Determiners: a, the, my, every, any

The student should have a general idea of the basic grammar rules for sentence structures. It will be helpful to learn about the parts of speech.

(13) Sentence Patterns

There are four basic sentence patterns that are used when putting together a sentence.

Example: *Mr. Biju came with his guide to the university by a car yesterday to submit his thesis.* Here: Mr. Biju – subject: came – verb: his guide – object: The University – adverb: by a car – adverb: yesterday- adverb.

This sentence is of the pattern S+V+O pattern with three adverbs.

(14) Use of the Adverb "respectively"

Many users misused the word "Respectively" which is an adverb. The adverb respectively means "in the order given". The term "respectively" can be used for clarity and conciseness.

Original sentence: In air Nitrogen is 79 per cent, oxygen is 20 per cent and rare gases are 1 per cent.

Concise form: In air Nitrogen is 79, Oxygen is 20 and, rare gases are 1 per cent respectively. (This sentence construction is concise and eloquent.)

(15) Correct Usage of Punctuations:

There are many different prepositions in English, and they often have more than one meaning.

The most common grammatical mistakes are fixed by simply adding, removing, or moving a punctuation mark. Everyone needs lot of practice and good number of years of study in English to write the sentences with correct punctuation. There are fourteen punctuation marks used in English ⁽¹⁷⁻²¹⁾. The important punctuation such as the 'apostrophe'', 'the comma", the 'hyphen', the 'semicolon', 'the colon', the 'dash' and the 'abbreviation' have been dealt with updated information in this paper.

Research scholars should learn when to use comma and when a colon, semicolon are to be used. Dashes and hyphens are look similar. It is better to avoid of mixing them and check for its consistent. In research thesis writing it is very important to avoid plagiarism. Quotation marks can be used in research thesis even though it is someone else's words. Check the punctuation in the right time with right place, and properly integrated the quotes in the text. Make ensure that the correct use of apostrophes to form the possessive with singular and plural nouns.

Example:

'Let's eat, grandma!' - Inviting your Grandma.

'Let's eat Grandma!' - Consuming your own Grandma.

(16) Lack of Parallelism

In English grammar parallelism also known as parallel structure or parallel construction. Parallelism is achieved in English grammar when similar phrases or clauses that have the same grammatical structure are used in a sentence. It is used to balance nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, clauses with clauses, and so on. Parallel structure enhances the clarity of the text and makes the text easy to read ⁽²²⁾.

Incorrect: Arun likes cooking, jogging and to read.

Correct: Arun likes cooking, jogging, and reading.

Parallelism is often used as a Rhetorical device:

Examples from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address about Democratic Country (23):

..... And that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

(17) Capitalization

Capitalization indicates writing a word with its first letter as a capital letter and the remaining letter in small letters. In capitalization proper nouns are always capitalized. The common nouns such as general names of people, places and things are to be capitalized only at the beginning of the sentence. In academic writing, some of the most frequent errors relate to capitalizing models, theories and disciplines will occur. The research scholars should also make sure that the use a consistent style of capitalization for titles and headings.

(18) Sentence Structure

All the sentences in English consist of two parts: The subject and verb. The subject t is the person or thing. The Verb is used to describe 'an action', 'state,' or 'occurrence' and forming the main parts of a sentence. It is always good to avoid common sentence structure mistakes such as fragments and run-ons. The scholars should also try to write sentences of varying length and structure.

Words Choice for Commonly Confused or Misused

There are some types of words that students often get confused or misused.

Accuracy: Accuracy is value i.e., very close to the true value.

Precision: Precision is the measurement of Fitness value.

Alright: Alright means ok. "Are you feeling alright? – Yes. I am ok.

All right: All right – all are correct.

Amount: Amount – Quantity of something.

Number: Number - Numerical value which can be counted.

Anyone: Anyone – Did anyone of you can give the answer? - Any person in general.

Any one: Any one - Any one of them could win it - one person could win.

Cost effective: Cost effective – Smart green building materials are cost effective. (No hyphen – It is followed by a noun).

Cost-effective: Cost-effective—Civil Engineers are using cost-effective materials. (Hyphen. The hyphen is used only when the word combination is used as Adjectives).

Council: Council is a decision making body or governing body of a college. (Example-Councillors in Corporation)

Counsel: Counseling is giving advice. (Anna University Counseling)

Relating to: Relating to – Biju showed me all the correspondence relating to the exam.

Related to: Related to - Kumar is **related** to my family.

These are the some of the confused words and similar words we can be derived while writing research dissertation or thesis.

(19) Pronouns

Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns. The characteristic of pronouns is that they can be substituted for other nouns (e.g. *they, it, him, this*). He and him, she and her, are known as personal pronouns. The other personal pronouns are *I* and *me, you, it, we* and *us,* and they and them. First-person pronouns (*I, we*) are sometimes acceptable depending on the discipline and type of document.

(20) Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words such as *and*, *because*, *but*, *for*, *if*, *or*, and *when*. Conjunction words are used to connect different parts of a sentence. There are different types of conjunctions with different functions and rules.

(21) Ambiguity

This Ambiguity is referred in Tamil literature of Silappathikaram ⁽²⁶⁻²⁸⁾. By seeing the Anklet in the hand of Govalan, **the Pandiya King** ordered, **'Hang him not, leave him'** and bring the Anklet. But the Blacksmith twisted the word by using Ambiguity into, **"Hang him, not leave him"** and bring the Anklet. This is the reason, the Govalan was beheaded. Because of Govalan was beheaded the great Tamil epic *Silappathikaram* was born.

The Pandiya King ordered. 'Hang him not leave him'. The Blacksmith twisted the word by using a small comma.

- 2a. Hang him, not leave him'.
- 2b. Hang him not, leave him'.

(22) Confusion in Preposition (30)

A preposition is a word to describe the relationship between other words in a sentence. "Pre" is a Latin word, which means "before". Prepositions are words that we use before noun or pronoun in a sentence. It links noun, pronoun, and phrases to show their relationship with other words in a sentence. In this paper problems of prepositions and the traditional methods of common problems and possible solutions in solving these problems in preposition has been

described. Specially, a preposition is a connector. Preposition function is to connect a noun or pronoun to another noun or pronoun in a sentence. Preposition shows the relationship of direction, position, time, and place.

We are often reminded **Abraham Lincoln**'s quotes for democratic country by using three fashionable phrase '<u>of</u> the people <u>by</u> the people and <u>for</u> the people '.

(23) Spelling

There is a small difference between American and British English in spelling. Although document creation software such as MS Word gives the option to choose an American English. Spelling checking is used in various applications like machine translation, search, information retrieval etc. Spell checking technique comprises of two stages mainly error detection and error correction. Native English speaking editor is to ensure that the research scholar's manuscripts conform to all the guidelines of the target journal.

(24) Proofreading

There are many commercial as well as non-commercial spelling error detection and correction tools available in the market for almost all popular languages. And every tool works on word level with the help of integral dictionary/Wordnet as the backend database for correction and detection. Every word from the text is looked up in the speller lexicon. If a word is not in the dictionary, it is detected by the wordnet that is an error. In order to correct the error, a spell checker searches the dictionary/Wordnet for the word that is most resembled to the erroneous word. These words are then suggested to the user to choose the intended word.

The best way to avoid typographical errors and awkward sentences is to proofread your manuscript thoroughly before submission. Print out your document and proofread each sentence with a pencil in your hand. In proof-reading it is important to check for sentence construction. Although the spell-check tool built into MS Word also functions as an English sentence corrector, it is not reliable, especially if your manuscript contains a lot of scientific language. Check for punctuation by reading out the entire manuscript.

Conclusion

The syllabuses have been in vogue for more than a decade in various arts and science colleges, law colleges, Engineering colleges and medical colleges in India. There were many other studies in other regions too and they made similar recommendations. Some of them even evolved texts to be adopted for achieving these objectives. For example, CIEFL, Hyderabad had prepared a package of materials under the general title "Enrich your English" to be used in 50 hours. It aims at developing a take-off proficiency in reading and writing skills. The focus is on the reading skills though speaking and listening skills are also given due importance". But there seems to be no perceptible impact on the nature of the English courses followed in Law, medical

and, Engineering Colleges. All researcher scholars agree that it will be more effective to teach punctuation, sentence pattern, and parts of speeches, tenses, and usage in the context of writing than to approach the topic by teaching isolated skills. As students revise and edit their writing, teachers can provide grammar instruction and guides the students in their attempts to identify and correct problems in sentence structure and usage⁽³¹⁻³³⁾. Integrating grammar instruction into the revising and editing process helps the scholars to write their dissertation without grammatical mistakes. Simple English grammar mistakes or proofreading errors can detract from the overall quality of their paper. Needless to say, grammatical mistakes can affect your credibility as an author. Here, some common grammatical errors that plague manuscripts and authors described to avoid them. The research scholars can get 100% quality and confidentiality with the above.

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