Seminar on Master's Thesis Writing

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Parts of Master's Thesis

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Main Chapter
- Conclusion
- References
- Appendix (pl. Appendices)

Literature Review Example

- Introduction

- Main Concepts

- Approaches + Main Analysis
  - Or one chapter on comparison and analysis

- Conclusion

Empirical Research Example

- Introduction
  - (what is the goal?) Main concepts and theories
- Related research
- Experiment and Results
  - Material, Methods, Results, Discussion
- Conclusion

Example Abstract

- Background/setting the scene:
  - Icons are used increasingly in interfaces because they are compact "universal" pictographic representations of computer functionality and processing.

- The focus and innovation:
  - Animated icons can bring to life symbols representing complete applications or functions within an application, thereby clarifying their meaning, demonstrating their capabilities, and even explaining their method of use.

- The problem:
  - To test this hypothesis, we carried out an iterative design of a set of animated painting icons that appear in the HyperCard tool palette.

- The method:
  - The design discipline restricted the animations to 10 to 20 second sequences of 22x20 pixel bit maps. User testing was carried out on two interfaces – one with the static icons, one with the animated icons.

- The results:
  - The results showed significant benefit from the animations in clarifying the purpose and functionality of the icons.

Abstract from: Ronald Baecker, Ian Small, and Richard Mander. 1991. Bringing icons to life. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (CHI '91), Scott P. Robertson, Gary M. Olson, and Judith S. Olson (Eds.). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1-6.
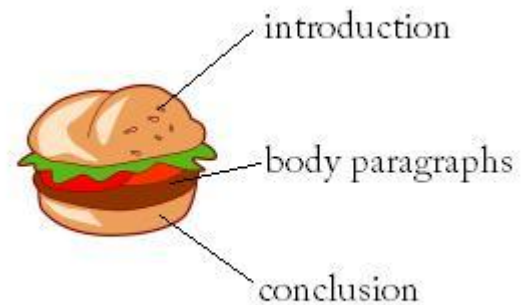
Paper Structure

- Introduction
  - Context/motivation
  - Background/literature review
  - Hypothesis/thesis/problem statement
  - Goals/methods
  - Thesis overview

Paper Structure

- Introduction
  - sets the scene
  - background
  - motivates
  - provides definition of terms and concepts
  - describes problem and argues for the approach taking
  - references other existing work
  - summarizes the structure of the paper
    - "The next section details the experimental methodology, which is a 2x2 Anova design. The subsequent section describes the results, the most notable being…"

Paper Structure

- Main body
  - organization important -> reflects how you present your argument
  - each section should have a main point
  - each paragraph should have a main point

introduction

body paragraphs

conclusion

Paper Structure

- Discussion
  - While the Results section describes the actual results, Discussion section provides further commentary
- Summary
  - summarize the paper
    - some people only read abstract, intro and conclusions
- Conclusions
  - talk about connections to the general area
  - discuss future work

Paper Structure

- Figures and Tables
  - should help the reader
  - needs to be **large enough** to be visible in print

  - tables:
    - summarizes data
    - collects main points described in text

  - figures
    - system snapshots
    - conceptual diagrams
    - should be legible, instructive, adequately labeled and titled

Paper Structure

- Figures and Tables
  - should always refer to both in text

  - provide a description of the figures and tables
    - bad:
      - "…animated icons contain movies (Figure 1)."
    - better:
      - "…The several images in Figure 1 illustrates an example of an animated icon, which represents a printer."
      - "…The several images in Figure 1 illustrates an example of an animated icon, which represents a printer. Each image is actually a key frame of a "movie" that, when played, would show the user what would happened if the icon were selected. We see a document being moved on top of the printer, and the printer putting out some paper…"

Plagiarism

- 1) Using someone else's ideas without acknowledging the source
- 2) Paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own.
- 3) Presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of an idea as your own.
- 4) Presenting an entire paper or a major part of it developed exactly as someone else's line of thinking.
- 5) Arranging your ideas exactly as someone else did – even though you acknowledge the source in the parenthesis.

  - Qtd. in Day 145.

Plagiarism

- Original text:
  - In the secondary and 16-19 education sectors in England and Wales some form of action planning, in which a teacher or tutor sits down with a student and discusses their progress and negotiates learning targets with plans to achieve them, has emerged to become a recognizable feature of teaching practice within the last 25 years (Day and Tosey, 2011, p. 515).
- Student text:
  - In secondary and further education, action planning has become a recognizable feature of teaching practice within the last 25 years (Day and Tosey, 2011, p. 515).
  - PLAGIARISM
  - Day, 145-146.

Common Formatting Issues

- Font – use a serif font
  - Illumination vs Illumination.
- Apostrophes and quotation marks
  - Czech versus English – „Ježek" vs. "Hedgehog"
  - Format – "Hedgehog" vs. "Hedgehog."
- A dash (—) is different than a hyphen (-)
  - Dash **separates** elements of a sentence
    - The study – not taken seriously at first – had eventually lead to a major breakthrough.
  - Hyphen **connects** words (Post-WIMP interface)

References

- Saul Greenberg , University of Calgary, AB, Canada: Grad Tips , http://saul.cpsc.ucalgary.ca/saul/
- Trevor Day. *Success in Academic Writing*. New York: Palgrave, 2013.