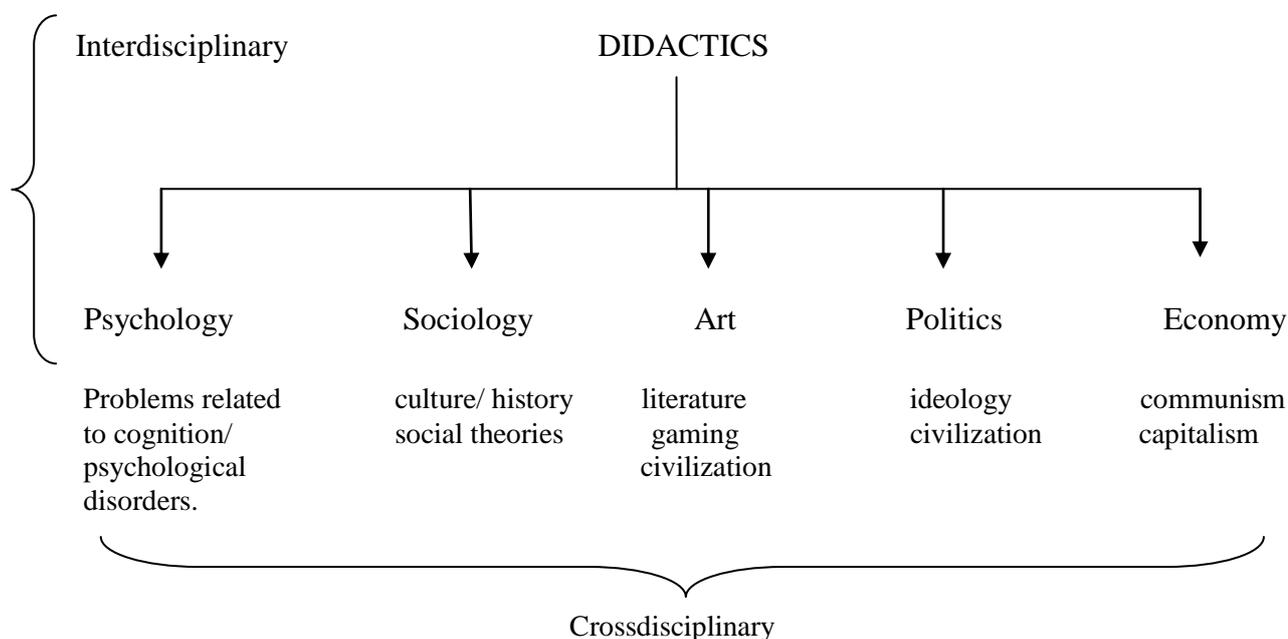


Techniques for Writing a Research Paper

1/ Techniques for Choosing and Narrowing Down the Research Topic

The kind of research approach that is going to be conducted directs the researcher to where to look for a problem in the literature. The most famous kinds of research paper approaches are the intradisciplinary, interdisciplinary and the crossdisciplinary research. If the researcher decides to stay within the field of study, which is rare in didactics because it mostly interacts with psychology, the research would be an intradisciplinary research. The researcher can also deduce and synthesize knowledge from two different disciplines, meaning integrating knowledge and methods in didactics with others from another discipline as an example. The later kind of research is an interdisciplinary one. A crossdisciplinary research, however, is appropriate if the research needs to be seen from the perspective of other disciplines. Considering the title “Stance and Engagement in Postgraduate Writing: a comparative study of English NS and Arab EFL Student writers in linguistics and literature”, the author studies the CULTURAL (sociology) differences of students from the perspective of LINGUISTICS and LITERATURE (art).

The following diagram suggests the possible disciplines that may interact with didactics as a field of study:



The research paper starts with finding a problem or a gap in the literature. When the researcher is able to identify a problem after the exploratory reading, the question “so what?” should be asked to answer the possible solutions that the researcher suggests to the problem. The following step is developing a title out of the previous steps. As a result, the title should contain the problem as well as the solution.

Example of Research Titles

1/ Pair Work and Group Work as Facilitators: reducing students' anxiety in the EFL classroom

Problem: EFL learning anxiety.

Solution: Using pair work and group work.

2/ The Effects of Technology on Student Motivation and Engagement in Classroom-based Learning

Problem: lack of motivation and classroom engagement.

Solution: Incorporating technology into a classroom setting.

3/ Stance and Engagement in Postgraduate Writing: a comparative study of English NS and Arab EFL student writers in linguistics and literature

Problem: The use of stance and engagement varies from one student to another.

Solution: The difference in use is maybe attributed to students' field of study and cultural background.

4/ Learning and Teaching EFL through Multiple Intelligences Theory: case study of ...

Problem: Ineffective teaching and/or learning.

Solution: the implementation of multiple intelligences theory.

Literature Review

It shows that you are aware of a gap in the literature, and can interpret what is already known.

As any essay, the literature review consists of an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

The introductory sentence of the introduction shows the importance of the topic under discussion. The following sentences highlight the outline of the chapter as well as the implications from the literature (see the template).

The body goes from general to specific. There are two ways of organizing the chapter, either chronologically or thematically.

General Guidelines

It is not always logical to start writing about the problem before tackling the solution. Sometimes, in case of theories for example, the review starts with the theory or the solution.

The following guidelines are not obligatory to follow for the researcher can be creative in choosing the appropriate titles for the literature review. Nevertheless, those guidelines facilitate the writing of the first chapter.

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|
| <i>What</i> | { | <p>1/ Start with the problem's key words.</p> <p>2/ Start with the most important keyword, if not, randomly.</p> <p>3/ Define the key concepts according to their meaning in dictionaries then in context. Meaning according to the discipline it belongs to, then according to the field of study. Be sure to include your interpretation and understanding of each kind of definition before synthesizing them.</p> <p>4/ In the previous step, some subtitles might be included such as characteristics, types or factors..etc</p> |
| <i>HOW</i> | { | <p>5/ How the variables influence the field of study?</p> |
| <i>Why</i> | { | <p>6 / Why it is important to deal with the problem? This step paves the way for the solution.</p> <p>7/ Defining the key words of the solution directly according to the field of study.</p> <p>8/ If there are two concepts that represent a solution, show the differences/ similarities, and the relationship between the two.</p> <p>9/ If there is (for interdisciplinary research), show their effectivity as a solution in other fields.</p> <p>10/ Synthesize (put together the whole title).</p> |

Techniques for Developing Paragraphs (Lit. Rev)

In the literature review, the researcher writes to critique materials related to the research topic. The following steps helps in developing a coherent paragraph:

- 1/ Introductory sentence (topic sentence): it introduces the main idea of the material to be critiqued.
- 2/ Qualifying the first sentence (optional)

3/ Paraphrase, summarize or state the material being it a quote, saying...etc.

4/ Interpret/criticize the material using concrete examples, other materials...etc. Mind you that the material can be used to support an idea or criticize it.

5/ Prepare for the next paragraph.

The paragraph, usually, does not exceed eight sentences (not lines). If the idea needs more than eight sentences to be explained, the researcher must break up long paragraphs. If the idea is supported/criticized using two arguments by different authors, include the argument of each author in a separate paragraph; same thing for two arguments by the same author. Otherwise, Include and explain each example in a separate paragraph.

Paraphrasing as a Technique

The most important thing in paraphrasing is keeping the same length as the original text. It is used to avoid direct quotation, and to show your own understanding. The paraphrased text should be clearer and simpler than the quote. Order is not important as long as the idea is not distorted.

To paraphrase you should:

1/ Read and fully understand the original material.

2/ Highlight the main ideas of the passage.

2/ Omit additions: examples, illustrations...etc.

3/Find simpler synonyms or alternative phrases for complex terms.

4/ Change the structure of sentences: word class and speech parts.

5/ Use your own words according to your understanding.

6/ cite your material.

Summarizing as a Technique

The purpose of summarizing is to condense the text's ideas into a shortened form. If the condensed text contains several points, they must be in order. Just like paraphrasing, the researcher uses his own words and understanding. The difference between summarizing and paraphrasing lies in length and purpose. The purpose of summarizing, albeit shortening long texts, is related to the needs of the researcher; criticizing or supporting. The needs are also extended to adopting relevant information, examples, ideas, topic sentences...etc. After identifying the relevant information, they must be paraphrased following the aforementioned steps.