



Composition of a Research Paper

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Abstract

A research paper is a verbal presentation of research finding in reliable and persuasive manner. A researcher has a problem/question or questions on particular subject, area or issue. A research finds the answer to this question. The answer of this question is the finding of the research. A thesis statement is a sentence that includes the finding of the research, the main point of the research paper. The paper clearly states the main point and supports it with reasoning, data, examples and interpretations. The topic of the research paper includes the research area and the perspective of the researcher on it. In other words, it attempts to provide a glimpse of the main point as far as possible. The topic is linked to thesis statement. The thesis statement is clarified and a bit more elaborated in abstract. "Keywords" in research paper lists some words that are closely related to the main point of the paper. Introduction briefly presents the background of the research area and perspective (theory). Literature review surveys earlier researches and finds the research gap. The purpose of the research is to fill this gap. The secondary sources like books and articles are acknowledged and cited in the text and listed in the references. Introduction and literature review are based on secondary sources but analysis and interpretation has your own voice. We can use the earlier researches and books in our paper but the statement of the paper should be different from earlier works. Others' views should not dominate our paper but our own voice should be leading others with additional emphasis.

Keywords: research question, thesis statement, supporting detail, research methodology, outline, clarity

Introduction

A research paper presents the research finding with clarity and coherence. It has a point or statement to convince the readers (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1985). The writing persuades the readers with reasoning and evidence. A research paper has various elements that are arranged in a certain way to convey the main point in persuasive manner. This is called the composition of the paper. In well composed paper, all the elements of the writing hang together naturally as the organs in human body. The title of the paper indicates the research area and the researcher's stand on the subject matter he is going to explore. In other words, the title gives a subtle glimpse of the main point of the article. Although a title needs to be brief and concise, it attempts to indicate the essence of the article.

A research article deals with a statement of problem and the research question. The researcher looks at the research area but he is not satisfied with the scene, situation and the material what he has read (Aitchison & Lee, 2006). It means he has some problems in the area. He has some questions. He is not satisfied. He wants answers to the questions. He wants solutions to the problems. Thus, there is a need of research. A research is not done just for pleasure, to publish paper or just to show others. It is done to solve the problem (Thody, 2006). A research paper should clearly state what the problem is. This is called statement of problem.



The solution to this problem is the thesis statement. A research paper should clearly mention the thesis statement and support it with data analysis, reasoning, evidence, examples and interpretations.

A research paper presents a point in reliable and convincing manner. All the elements in a research paper are connected to the thesis statement (Weissberg & Buker, 1990). All the things are used to prove a point. Despite being attractive and beautiful, the words, sentences, paragraphs and ideas that do not support the main point of the paper are removed. All the parts of the paper are interconnected to each other as the organs in human body or any other living organism (MacArthur, Graham & Fitzgerald, 2008). The writer's attempt is that nothing is needed to be added in the composition. Likewise, if something is removed from the paper, it appears incomplete.

A research paper builds on already done researches and goes beyond them. It means the paper reviews the existing literature, finds gaps or problems, and attempts to fill this gap (Lupton & Miller, 1999). It adds something new on existing knowledge. Existing research reports and papers are reviewed and summarized along with in-text citations and references (Temple, 1993). Failing to acknowledge and cite sources raises the issue of plagiarism. Analysis, interpretation and discussion of a work of art present the researcher's original contributions. The main point of the paper is derived on the basis of interpretation (Graham & Harris, 2005). In other words, the interpretation supports the thesis statement. In this part, researchers bring their own ideas and present them in their own language. There are fewer citations.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research, for it attempts to formulate the method of writing a research paper in the area of arts and humanities, and there is not a fixed way to compose a paper. It highly depends on the researcher and writer how he presents his findings. There can be multiple ways of composing a paper. The essential element is the clarity of communication. Nevertheless, a guideline for writing can be highly useful to the beginners. When they know the basic elements, they can formulate their own ways and apply them in their presentations. The paper highly depends on secondary sources like theories of academic writing and personal writing experience of the writer.

Applying the Codes of Composition in Writing

This part of the article states the rules of writing research paper and applies it in the writing through demonstration. A research paper clearly states the research area which has been explored and studied. Research question arises in the research area. For example, 'Nepali art' can be the research area which is wide and includes much area. Similarly, 'portrait paintings of the Rana period' can be other research area which is narrow. There can be other many research areas between these two areas like 'Nepali sculpture', 'Nepali painting', 'traditional Nepali painting' and 'modern Nepali painting'. If the research area is too wide, we cannot study in detail and the finding may not be convincing (Juzwik, Curcic, Wolbers, Moxley, Dimling & Shankland, 2006). Thus, we should narrow down the research area so that we can study it closely and support the thesis statement with enough evidence.

Research area can be further narrowed down by stating the researcher's stand or perspective upon the research area. The area 'Nepali art' can be narrowed down by connecting other word like 'symbols'. Then, the title of the research paper is 'symbols in Nepali art'. Nepali art has many aspects and points but here, the researcher traces the symbols in Nepali art and



shows their significance. This title is focused and worth researching. Here is a list of appropriate and inappropriate research topics:

<i>Inappropriate research topics</i>	<i>Appropriate research topics</i>
Nepali paintings	Voice of women in Nepali paintings
Traditional Nepali sculptures	Magical elements in traditional Nepali sculptures
Pagoda architecture of Nepal	Anthropomorphic features of pagoda temples of Nepal
Contemporary Nepali paintings	Western influence in contemporary Nepali paintings
Postmodern Nepali arts	Inter-textuality in Postmodern Nepali arts
Paubha paintings of Nepal	Tantra in paubha paintings of Nepal
Nepali mandala painting	Nepali mandala painting: instrument of meditation
Lain Singh Bangdel's paintings	Lain Singh Bangdel's paintings: a formalist perspective

Inappropriate research topics are loose, general, vague and wider whereas appropriate topics are specific, focused, to the point and clear (Randolph, 2009). The former topics only indicate the research area whereas the latter topics include researcher's stand and perspective along with the research area. In the former, we do not have the clue of thesis statement whereas in the latter, the tentative thesis statement has been indicated. In other words, the well composed research paper attempts to include the main point even in the title.

After fixing the research area, we can make an outline of the research paper. The outline is like a map which shows the areas where we are going to travel. A research paper may have the length of 10 pages, 100 pages or 300 pages but the outline can be drawn in one page. The outline includes the research area, topic, thesis statement, methodology, theory, point of view or perspective, primary sources, secondary sources, method of analysis and interpretation, sections and parts of the paper, the flow of idea and the structure of entire paper from the beginning to the end (Calkins, 1986). The beginners can make the outline in separate paper and begin their writing following the steps on it. The experienced writers may have the outline of the paper in their mind. It is the guideline of writing. In outline, we can see the organization and organic unity of our writing. The outline brings the scattered ideas together in a string. It is a single picture of the entire paper.

The abstract of the research paper is kept at the beginning. The essential element of the abstract is the main point of the paper. It states the thesis statement and clarifies it. The title is explained and clarified. Research area and perspective are indicated briefly along with the materials and methods of exploration.

A research paper also makes a list of keywords, the main words used in the paper that capture the essence of the paper and the key components of the research. This paper discusses the method of writing a research paper, and the terms like 'research question', 'thesis statement', 'supporting detail', 'research methodology', 'outline', 'clarity' are the keywords which capture the essential elements of research writing.

Introduction of the paper presents the background of the topic and the paper. The topic suggests research area and perspective. This has been a bit more elaborated and clarified in abstract. In introduction, topic, research area and perspective are further elaborated and clarified (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). The researcher uses citations for the information he has brought from early researches (Roberts & Hyatt, 2018). Introduction provides the entire picture of the research paper in brief. It summarizes the parts and sections of the paper in brief. It also states the



thesis statement but does not fully support here. The part 'analysis and interpretation' supports the main points with evidence.

For example, 'voice of women in contemporary Nepali paintings' can be a research topic. Here, 'contemporary Nepali paintings' is the research area which has been studied from feminist perspective. The introduction of this topic briefly presents the background of the contemporary Nepali paintings. It clarifies term 'contemporary' in Nepali context. To clarify contemporary art, it also discusses the traditional art in brief. For this, the research paper uses the information from articles, books and research reports. It cites the sources in the text and lists the detailed information in the references at the end of the paper. An introduction can include literature review or it can be kept in separate part. The discussion of contemporary Nepali painting using secondary sources can be a part of literature review. The literature review should indicate the research gap that contemporary Nepali paintings have not been studied from feminist perspective.

Feminism is another key component of the paper which has been used as a tool for analysis and interpretation of the artworks. This term is defined, explained and clarified using arguments of feminist theorists. For this part as well, secondary sources are highly used. After introducing the research area and theory, we connect the area with the theory or perspective, and again restate the thesis statement. One should be careful that every time the thesis statement is restated, the language should be different despite the essence is the same, for the repetition of the same sentence in several place can be monotonous.

Research methodology shows how the research has been conducted and the thesis statement is derived. It presents the way or method of exploring the research area. The research may be qualitative, quantitative, inductive or deductive. Quantitative research method uses quantity, amount, or numbers for analysis. The finding is derived in number. For example, the answer of the question 'How many Nepali paintings were sold in 2022?' comes in number. The number indicates the quantity. And the study is objective, that is, there is the possibility that almost all the researchers find the same answer from their study. Qualitative research method is used to analyze and interpret the things that are related to abstract qualities like beauty, human values, kindness, love, perspective and point of view. The appreciation of a work of art is related to quality rather than quantity. And the effect of the beauty or the meaning of the work may be different from one viewer to another viewer.

In deductive method, the theory is clearly stated in the beginning and it is strictly applied in the particular examples. There is the movement from general to specific. A deductive argument is valid or invalid. On the other hand, inductive method derives thesis statement from the examples. There is the movement from specific to general. An inductive argument is not valid or invalid but more probable or less probable. Inductive and qualitative research methods are highly useful in the field of arts and literature, for thesis statements are supported through the interpretations of artworks and texts.

Appropriate theories can be used as tools to interpret the artworks. The research area can be explored from the perspective of formalism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, structuralism, feminism and postmodernism. The theory we use should be indicated in research methodology. Research methodology shows the way of exploration that even if new researcher follows this method he will go through these similar steps and tentatively reaches to the same destination.

In the section of 'analysis and interpretation', at the beginning, the main point of the research paper or the thesis statement is restated clearly, and it is supported by discussing the



artworks (Slade& Perrin, 2007). We take only such works that support the main point. We describe the poem, painting or sculpture; we write what we see in the work. Next, we interpret the artwork including images, symbols, shapes and colors; we state the meaning of the work. Then, we link the description and interpretation with the main point. In other words, the description, analysis and interpretation should support the thesis statement (Lunsford & Ruszkiewicz, 2007). To make our point strong and convince the readers, we interpret more artworks or texts.

Let me demonstrate this process in the research topic 'symbols in traditional Nepali sculptures'. The title itself indicates that 'traditional Nepali sculptures have symbols.' In a sense, this sentence itself is the thesis statement. But it can be made more meaningful and clarified in this way: 'Traditional Nepali sculptures have symbols that suggest abstract qualities of our culture. The visible images suggest invisible dimensions.' Now, we take only those traditional sculptures for interpretation that have symbols. Let's take the sculpture of *Shivalinga*. In this work, a circular disk has been penetrated with a cylindrical stone. The circular disk with a hole in the middle and elongated shape coming out from the disk to drain the water resembles the vulva. The long cylindrical stone inserted into the disk resembles the *linga*. The artwork has two parts that symbolize the male and the female genitals. The combined form symbolizes the union of the male and the female. Furthermore, the female and the male symbolize the *prakriti* (nature, external world, matter) and *purusa* (individual *sadhaka*, consciousness). The union of *prakriti* and *purusa* symbolizes the union of matter and consciousness, the external world and the individual self, you and me. The unity of the self and the other symbolizes the oneness of the universe. When there is only one thing (*brahma*), there is no duality, division, discrimination, sweats, tears and rush. Wherever we look, we see ourselves. The key concepts of *Upanishadas* like '*Aham Brahmasmi* (I am the *brahma*)', '*Tattvamashi* (that is you)' and '*Sachitanand* (the realization of truth provides absolute bliss)' have been symbolized by the *Shivalinga*. The artwork is the key in the quest of the self and the world.

In the above interpretation, we described the artwork, traced the symbols and suggested the significance of the symbols. We analyze more works in similar manner. This supports the main point of our research paper. This is qualitative analysis, for it is related to human experience and abstract concepts which cannot be measured in quantity and number.

The conclusion of the research paper again mentions the thesis statement, for it is the main point we asserted, supported and convinced the readers. The major contents of the paper are summarized. The significance and implication of the paper are suggested. On the process of research, if we find some other gaps, which this paper has not explored, we show this research area and problem for forthcoming other researchers. A research paper should have clarity; it attempts to convey the idea in easy and comprehensible manner. We should avoid the misconception that using undefined jargons, difficult words, extremely long, complex and difficult sentences increase our prestige and quality. This scares, terrorizes and underestimates the readers that they do not understand great idea and scholarly language. This only confuses the readers. Only the fools can praise you though they do not understand what you have written. But in the long run, this hypocrisy will be revealed. We should remember that our writing is for the readers. We should have clear thought, reasoning and clear language. A research paper should be concise; the words and sentences should be meaningful. In less words, we should try to say more. Some writers collect information and focus on increasing pages. They repeat the same ideas and sentences again and again to increase volume. By doing so, they kill the interest of the



readers. We should remove unnecessary ideas, words and sentences and make our writing sharp, concise and significant.

A research paper should have coherence and organic unity; all the parts should be connected to each other and the entire paper should support the thesis statement or the main point of the article (Swales & Feak, 2001). The ideas should flow smoothly from one sentence to other sentence, from one paragraph to other paragraph. Despite the beauty of the individual component, it should be removed from the paper if it is not related to the topic or the main point. All the parts of the paper should naturally hang together as the organs in our body. It means that the paper should be well organized or well composed. We should try to make the research paper like a living organism; nothing needs to be added and nothing can be removed from the living being.

Conclusion

A research paper has a thesis statement which is supported through analysis and interpretation. It clearly mentions the main point of the paper and proves it in convincing manner. The research area is explored from certain perspective and point of view. All the sections of the paper like topic, abstract, introduction, interpretation and conclusion are linked to the controlling idea or the main point of the writing. Removing unrelated parts and redundancy, the presentation is made concise. All the parts are connected to each other making an organic whole. Coherent language and ideas create the smooth flow from one sentence to other sentence and from one paragraph to other paragraph. The clarity of language and reasoning in the paper conveys the contents to the readers in convincing manner.

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