



Research Proposal Development in ELT: Tools for Planning, Structuring and Writings

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to explore the tools and processes involved in developing a research proposal for English Language Teaching (ELT), focusing on effective planning, structuring, and writing practices. A theoretical framework underpinned by constructivist learning theory and sociocultural theory guides the design of the study. The research employs a qualitative approach, synthesizing existing literature and expert guidelines to develop a comprehensive framework for research proposal development. Key stages such as selecting a topic, conducting a literature review, formulating research questions, and outlining methodological strategies are critically analyzed. The study suggests that clear research objectives, grounded in theoretical principles, significantly enhance the coherence and impact of research proposals. Furthermore, the alignment of personal interests with current trends in ELT increases the likelihood of sustained researcher engagement. In addition, the paper presents that a systematic approach to proposal development, incorporating clear objectives and methodological rigor, improves the overall quality and relevance of ELT research. The paper suggest that the incorporation of mentorship and peer feedback in the proposal development process and the necessity for researchers to remain flexible in their methodological choices, adapting them to the research context. This study contributes to the field by providing a structured guideline that can be utilized by novice researchers in ELT.

Keywords: Research proposal development; English language teaching (ELT); constructivist learning theory; sociocultural theory; methodological rigor



Introduction

Developing a research proposal in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) or any other academic discipline involves several key components and requires a range of tools to ensure that the process is efficient, thorough, and leads to a strong proposal. A well-crafted research proposal is the result of meticulous planning, research, and collaboration. By leveraging these tools, researchers can streamline the proposal development process, enhance the clarity and coherence of their proposals, and increase their chances of securing approval from the Department. Each tool or resource offers unique benefits that can help researchers at different stages of the proposal development process, from initial brainstorming and literature review to writing, submission, and presentation.

Developing a research proposal in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) is a complex, multifaceted process that requires careful planning, a clear structure, and a thorough understanding of the research context. A well-crafted research proposal plays a critical role in advancing teaching methodologies, enhancing learner outcomes, and contributing to linguistic theory. According to [Creswell \(2014\)](#), a research proposal must outline the problem to be studied, the rationale for the study, and the methodology that will be used to investigate the problem. In the context of ELT, the proposal serves as a structured blueprint that guides the researcher in systematically addressing language-related issues.

The process of developing a research proposal also involves grounding the work in appropriate theoretical frameworks. For instance, constructivist learning theory ([Piaget, 1971](#)) emphasizes the active role of the learner in constructing knowledge, a principle that resonates with the researcher's engagement in formulating their research topic. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory ([1978](#)) also highlights the importance of social interaction in learning, suggesting that collaboration, peer feedback, and mentorship are integral to the proposal development process. Furthermore, Freire's critical pedagogy ([1970](#)) stresses the importance of addressing social justice and equity in education, which is essential for ELT researchers working with diverse populations.

A critical part of developing a research proposal is conducting a comprehensive literature review to identify research gaps. As [Ridley \(2012\)](#) describes, the literature review is the foundation of your thesis, guiding your research focus and helping you identify the gaps in current knowledge that your study will address. This gap serves as the basis for defining the research problem, which [Swales \(1990\)](#) highlights as crucial for positioning one's research within the broader academic discourse. In this context, [Swales and Feak \(2012\)](#) emphasize that academic writing demands not only clarity and coherence but also critical engagement with the literature.

Formulating clear research objectives is another key aspect of research proposal development. [Locke and Latham \(1990\)](#) argue that clearly defined and challenging goals lead to higher performance. These objectives must be carefully crafted to ensure that the study remains focused and purposeful. As [Murray \(2011\)](#) points out, research questions are the



driving force of your dissertation or thesis, and they must be carefully formulated to be both researchable and significant.

Methodological rigor is also central to developing a strong research proposal. [Evans, Gruba, and Zobel \(2011\)](#) stress that a good thesis demonstrates methodological rigor, showing that the research has been carefully planned and executed. The justification of methodological choices-whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods-is critical in ELT, where diverse research questions require different approaches. Effective time management is also important, as [Dunleavy \(2003\)](#) asserts, allowing researchers to allocate sufficient time for each stage of the research process, ensuring that the research is conducted systematically.

Ultimately, the development of a research proposal in ELT is a reflection of the researcher's ability to align their personal interests with current trends and gaps in the field while grounding their work in established theories and frameworks. This structured approach not only enhances the clarity and coherence of the proposal but also increases its potential impact on the field of language teaching and learning.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist Learning Theory

The process of selecting a research topic is often informed by constructivist learning theory ([Piaget, 1971](#); [Vygotsky, 1978](#)), which emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their own understanding based on personal experiences. In ELT, researchers choose topics that resonate with their interests and expertise, enabling them to construct knowledge through a deep, personally meaningful exploration of language teaching issues. According to constructivist principles, learning is more effective when it aligns with personal curiosity and motivation. This theory underpins the idea that selecting a research topic in ELT should be driven by personal interests to ensure sustained engagement throughout the research process.

Sociocultural Theory of Language Development

The sociocultural theory of language development ([Vygotsky, 1978](#)) is highly relevant in ELT research, as it emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in language learning. Sociocultural theory suggests that language acquisition is mediated by interaction, which could justify investigations into teaching methods that leverage social learning environments, such as peer learning or online collaborative platforms. Furthermore, critical theory ([Freire, 1970](#)) may inform the background when addressing issues of power dynamics, equity, or social justice in language education.

Goal-Setting Theory

Goal-setting theory ([Locke & Latham, 1990](#)) supports the specification of clear research objectives by emphasizing that clearly defined and challenging goals lead to higher performance. In research proposal development, specifying objectives-both main and sub-objectives-is essential for guiding the research process and ensuring focused inquiry.



Innovation Theory

The significance of research is often discussed within the framework of innovation theory (Rogers, 1962), which explains how new ideas and technologies spread within educational systems. In ELT research, studies that address current trends, such as technology-enhanced learning or online teaching strategies, contribute to the innovation diffusion process by providing empirical evidence of effective teaching practices. Research significance is also connected to pragmatic theory (Dewey, 1938), which emphasizes the practical application of research findings in solving real-world problems, such as improving communicative competence through online platforms in a digital age.

Problem-Based Learning

The formulation of a research problem is grounded in problem-based learning (PBL) theory (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980) which posits that inquiry should be driven by real-world problems that require solutions. In the context of ELT research, problem formulation is essential for addressing gaps in existing literature and practical challenges in language teaching.

Research Objectives

The three main objectives of the theoretical research article Research Proposal Development in ELT: Tools for Planning, Structuring, and Writing are: (1) to explore and provide a comprehensive understanding of the tools and processes involved in developing a research proposal in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), including effective planning, structuring, and writing practices; (2) to establish a theoretical foundation for research proposal development by integrating constructivist learning theory, sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy, and other relevant frameworks; and (3) to offer a systematic guide for ELT researchers to enhance their skills in formulating research questions, conducting literature reviews, and selecting appropriate research methodologies to address specific language teaching and learning challenges.

Methodology

The study employs a theoretical framework grounded in established learning theories, such as constructivist learning theory, sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy, and goal-setting theory, to provide a systematic approach to research proposal development. It draws upon these theories to establish the foundation for the study, exploring the importance of careful planning, structuring, and alignment with existing literature. The methods in this article are essentially conceptual, involving a review of existing literature and theories to inform best practices in research proposal development. This approach includes synthesizing various theoretical perspectives to create a comprehensive guideline for researchers. The emphasis is on understanding different stages of the research proposal process, such as topic selection, literature review, formulation of research objectives, and methodological planning, all guided by an extensive analysis of relevant theories and prior scholarly works. The methods are thus reflective and interpretive, aiming to build on established academic knowledge to enhance the understanding of the proposal development process in ELT.



Results and Discussion

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the various stages involved in developing a research proposal for English Language Teaching (ELT). It begins by emphasizing the importance of selecting a research topic that is both relevant to the field and of personal interest to the researcher, which ensures sustained motivation throughout the research process. This section further explores strategies for topic selection, including conducting a preliminary literature review, understanding current trends in ELT, and considering resources and constraints. Following topic selection, the background of the study is discussed, highlighting the significance of establishing a broader context to justify the relevance of the research. The section then delves into the objectives and purpose of the study, underscoring the need for clear and specific goals to guide the research process effectively. Additionally, the formulation of research questions is addressed, focusing on the importance of designing questions that are aligned with both the objectives and the practical challenges faced in the field of ELT. The section concludes with a discussion on delimitations, which involves setting boundaries for the study to ensure that it remains focused and manageable. These delimitations, while necessary for feasibility, are also examined for their impact on the applicability and generalizability of the research findings. Overall, this results and discussion section integrates theoretical insights and practical guidelines to offer a comprehensive framework for developing a robust research proposal in ELT.

Selecting the Topic

To begin the process of choosing a research topic, it is important to first determine a broad subject area that is both relevant to your field of expertise and personally intriguing to you. Keep in mind that you will dedicate a substantial amount of time to studying and engaging with your selected subject. Having a topic that captivates your attention will enhance your ability to concentrate throughout the duration of your research project.

Selecting a research topic in ELT (English Language Teaching) and Applied Linguistics involves identifying a gap in the existing literature, understanding the significance of potential contributions, and considering the researcher's own interests and expertise. The chosen topic should be both original and relevant, addressing current challenges or exploring new territories in language teaching and learning. [Pandey \(2024, p. 110\)](#) lists the following strategies which can be beneficial for researchers to select a topic in ELT research.

Personal interests and expertise

Start with what genuinely interests you within the field of ELT. Consider areas you are passionate about, whether it's language acquisition, teaching methodologies, curriculum development, technology integration, assessment, or something else. A strong personal interest in your research topic can keep you motivated throughout the research process.

Researchers are more likely to be successful and motivated if they are passionate about their topic. For example, a researcher with a background in technology-enhanced learning might choose to study the use of mobile apps for developing speaking skills in secondary school



students learning English as a second language. This aligns the researcher's skills with a practical and relevant topic in the field of ELT.

Conduct a preliminary literature review

The first step in selecting a topic is to conduct a thorough review of the current literature to identify areas that have not been extensively explored or where conflicting findings suggest further investigation is needed. For example, while there is considerable research on vocabulary acquisition in ESL learners, less might be known about how digital tools can enhance vocabulary learning in adult learners. Investigating such a gap could lead to valuable insights into effective teaching strategies in adult education.

Current trends and needs

Look into the latest trends in ELT and current issues faced by educators, learners, and institutions. This might involve technology-enhanced learning, bilingual education, online teaching strategies, or addressing specific needs of diverse learner populations. Staying relevant to current practices and challenges can increase the impact of your research.

Choosing a topic that aligns with current issues in ELT and Applied Linguistics can significantly enhance the practical relevance of the research. For instance, with the increasing importance of global communication, a study might focus on the effectiveness of online language learning platforms in improving communicative competence in diverse populations. This topic would be particularly pertinent given the rapid shift towards digital learning environments in recent years.

Consider your resources and constraints

Be realistic about the resources you have access to and the constraints you might face, including time, access to participants, and material resources. Your topic should be something you can feasibly research within your given circumstances.

Seek feedback

Discuss your ideas with mentors, peers, and experts in the field. They can provide valuable insights, suggest resources, and help you refine your topic to ensure it is relevant and researchable.

Scope and specificity

Narrow down your topic to make it more specific and manageable. Broad topics can be overwhelming and difficult to address thoroughly. A focused research question allows for deeper analysis and more meaningful conclusions.

Potential impact

Consider the potential impact of your research on the field of ELT. Ideally, your study should aim to fill a gap in the literature, address a pressing issue, or contribute to the development of teaching practices, policy, or theory.

Examples of ELT Research Topics

Here are a few examples of specific research topics in ELT to inspire your selection process: a) The effectiveness of game-based learning in improving vocabulary acquisition



among elementary ESL learners. b) Investigating the impact of online feedback on the writing skills of Secondary level EFL/ESL students.

Selecting a research topic in ELT requires careful consideration of your interests, an understanding of current trends and gaps in the field, realistic assessment of your resources and constraints, and the potential impact of your work. By following these guidelines, you can choose a meaningful and feasible research topic that contributes valuable insights to the field of English Language Teaching.

Deciding the Background of the Study

The background section provides an overview of the broader context in which the topic under investigation exists. It establishes the context and significance of the investigation. That is, the background presents the ‘big picture,’ identifying the context of the problem to be investigated and sets the stage for the relevance and purpose of the study. As [Paltridge and Starfield \(2007\)](#) emphasize, "the background chapters should lead to the gap (or gaps) in the field that the thesis or dissertation is aiming to fill" (p. 100).

This section sets the stage for the research by providing a detailed context, demonstrating the relevance of the study, and justifying its necessity. This part provides a comprehensive account of the historical background of the topic under investigation, including an analysis of how it was previously addressed and resolved. The background aims to "provide a state-of-the-art review of the field, including current developments, controversies, breakthroughs, previous research, and relevant background theory" ([Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 100](#)). The background provides a discussion of how the problem developed over time, trends related to the issue, and unresolved elements and/or social concerns.

In this section, the researcher should reference established authors and researchers to demonstrate that their ideas are not merely personal opinions. This serves to bolster and reinforce the arguments being presented. Conducting a thorough search of resources is crucial in order to determine the appropriate individuals and sources to cite. As noted by Paltridge and Starfield, "this backgrounding of the project is essential to lead into what is being researched and why" ([2007, p. 100](#)). The background emphasizes the importance of doing your study within the framework of prior research. This reveals a problem or issue that necessitates additional inquiry. It expands on the statement, “While studies have shown . . . there is a need to . . .” The background part, as well as the entire study, is driven by the objective of your research, which is to determine what you, as the researcher, aim to uncover.

Specifying the Objectives and Purpose

Objectives are the aims you seek to achieve in your research. As these objectives communicate your intended outcomes for the study, it is crucial to articulate them with clarity and specificity. Objectives must be categorized under two headings: primary objectives and secondary objectives. The primary aim is a comprehensive declaration of the focus of your research. It is a declaration of the primary linkages and relationships you aim to uncover or develop. The sub-objectives are the particular elements of the subject that you intend to examine inside the overarching framework of your research. The purpose of the research is “to



present a clear and concise statement of the overall purpose of the research" ([Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 61](#)).

The objectives of the study should be clear and explicit. Each sub-objective should only address one issue. Use action-oriented verbs like 'to decide', 'to find out', and 'to ascertain' when creating sub-objectives, which should be numbered stated. If the goal is to test a hypothesis, the precise objectives must be written in accordance with hypothesis formation conventions.

In qualitative investigations, the statement of objectives is less specific than in quantitative studies. In qualitative investigations, you should just explain the study's overarching objective, as your goal is to learn as much as possible as you proceed. Qualitative research's strength is its flexibility of method and capacity to absorb new ideas while gathering data.

A research study should not be conducted to prove a point; rather, it should represent honesty and report frankly, even if the results are not as expected. A qualitative scoping statement might read: "The purpose of this qualitative study is to discover, through the perceptions and experiences of teachers who work with peer tutoring programs, the advantages and disadvantages of such programs and key strategies for developing and maintaining the programs." A quantitative purpose statement could read, "The objective of this quantitative study is to determine the relationship between...

Postulating Research Questions

Research questions in this field are specifically designed to explore complex phenomena related to language learning, teaching methods, language use, and the psychological and sociocultural aspects of language acquisition. These questions must be clearly defined, focused, and researchable, typically emerging from gaps in the existing literature or practical challenges observed in language education contexts. "The central issues of research can be posited as research questions which are questions that you will try to answer in the study" (Brown & Rogers, 2002, p.215). According to [Mackey and Gass \(2022\)](#)

Research questions need to be relevant, meaning they address current issues in the field; at the same time, they need to be sufficiently narrow and constrained that they can be answered. Broad questions can be difficult, if not impossible, to address without breaking them down into smaller, answerable questions. (p. 60)

[Mackey and Gass \(2022, p. 438\)](#) emphasize that well-constructed research questions should address the following: "Are the research questions driven by the literature review or your discussion of the literature? Are they clearly formulated and free of ambiguity? Are the research questions suitable for the theoretical framework?"

Research questions in ELT and Applied Linguistics often begin with exploratory queries that seek to understand "how" or "why" certain phenomena occur. For example, a researcher might ask, "How does the use of mobile applications affect vocabulary acquisition among ESL learners?" This question aims to investigate the impact of digital tools on learning outcomes, a topic of significant interest given the increasing integration of technology in education. Another example might be, "What are the effects of bilingual education on students' cognitive development?" which explores deeper cognitive processes and outcomes associated



with learning through two languages. These questions typically require a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to thoroughly explore the phenomena in question.

The development of these questions should be informed by a robust review of the literature, ensuring that they are not only relevant but also contribute new insights to the field. For instance, if previous studies have focused primarily on younger learners, a novel research question might involve examining similar teaching methods but with adult learners or in a different cultural context. Furthermore, the specificity of research questions can significantly influence the research design, affecting choices regarding methodology, data collection techniques, and analytical strategies. Clear and well-formulated questions can help in designing a study that is methodologically sound and capable of addressing the intended research goals effectively.

Overall, in ELT and Applied Linguistics, well-defined research questions serve as the backbone of impactful studies, guiding researchers in a systematic exploration of key issues that influence language teaching and learning. They enable researchers to contribute to theoretical debates and offer practical recommendations for educators and policy-makers, thereby advancing the field and enhancing educational practices.

Quantitative Research in ELT and Applied Linguistics

Quantitative research questions in ELT and Applied Linguistics are typically structured to investigate relationships between variables or to determine differences between groups. These questions are often specific, measurable, and designed to be tested through statistical methods. For example, a researcher might ask: "Does the use of mobile apps for vocabulary learning significantly improve the vocabulary test scores of ESL learners compared to traditional flashcards?". Such a question aims to quantify the impact of technology-enhanced learning tools compared to more traditional methods, allowing for empirical testing and statistical analysis. Quantitative questions might also explore correlational relationships, such as, "What is the relationship between students' attitudes towards English and their academic achievement in ESL programs?" This type of question would require data on attitudes and achievement scores, which could be analyzed to determine if a relationship exists ([Dornyei, 2007](#)).

Qualitative Research in ELT and Applied Linguistics

Qualitative research questions, on the other hand, are generally more exploratory and aim to gain a deeper understanding of phenomena. These questions are often broad and open-ended, intended to explore how or why certain phenomena occur. An example of a qualitative research question in ELT could be: "How do ESL learners perceive the challenges of online language learning environments?" Such a question invites a detailed exploration of personal experiences and perceptions, which can be gathered through methods like interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic observations. Another example might be, "What strategies do successful ESL learners use to enhance their language learning outside the classroom?" This question would guide a researcher to investigate processes and strategies through a case study



approach, potentially leading to a rich, contextual understanding of learner behaviors ([Mackey & Gass, 2022](#)).

Both types of research questions require careful formulation to ensure that they are clear, focused, and aligned with the overall objectives of the study. In quantitative research, the questions need to be closely tied to the measurement capabilities and statistical methods available, whereas qualitative questions should be open enough to allow for comprehensive narrative descriptions but focused enough to guide the study towards meaningful conclusions.

The Significance of the Study

This section elucidates the significance, or the ‘so what?’ of the study. It elucidates the significance of the research and its relevance to the intended audience. It makes clear why the research is important and to whom it is important. The significance of the research is its relevance to the intended audience. It makes clear why the research is important and to whom it is important. This section presents “why the study is worth carrying out” ([Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 61](#)). In this section: a) Explain the significance of the research and its potential to enhance practical applications b) Who will it help and how? c) Will it provide a stepping-stone for others to go further? d) What benefits would occur if definitive answers were found to the research question? e) If you find a gap in the literature about the topic, describe the contribution the study will make.

The Research Problem

In general, a research problem or topic of study can be any question you want answered, any assumption or claim you wish to explore or challenge, or both. But it's crucial to keep in mind that not every issue can be turned into a research problem, and some can even prove to be quite challenging to investigate.

A problem statement describes any issue or problem that has to be addressed and requires action for improvement and resolution. The statement of problem, which is the focal point of any investigation, should be brief and concise. There are several scenarios in which we may need to write a problem statement. Formulating research questions is a hard undertaking that needs understanding of both the subject matter and research methods.

The importance of formulating a research problem

The formulation of a research problem is the first and most crucial step in the research process, serving as the foundation for a study. It is likened to the foundation of a building, where the type and design depend on the foundation. A well-formulated research problem leads to a good study. A research problem can take various forms, from simple to complex. The way we formulate a problem determines the type of study design, sampling strategy, research instrument, and analysis.

The formulation of a research problem determines all subsequent steps during the research journey. The output, such as the quality of the research report and validity of associations or causation, is entirely dependent on it. The famous saying "garbage in, garbage out" applies to a research problem.



Initially, confusion may occur, but it is a sign of progress. Take time over formulating your problem to become clearer about your research problem/question, as this is the most crucial step. The major guiding questions for identifying the research problem according to According to [Mackey and Gass \(2022\)](#) are:

Why is the central research problem worth investigating? Is the argument for why the study is interesting clear? Does the study fill a gap in the literature by addressing a relatively under-researched area or an unresolved problem? Does the study address a methodological concern observed in previous research? Does the study replicate previous research? If it is a partial replication, is the new element clear and well-motivated (e.g., a replication with a different population of learners, in a new context, or with different measures of learning)? (pp. 438-439)

Sources of research problems

The four Ps are at the center of most research in the humanities and social sciences: people, problems, programs, and phenomena ([Kumar, 2014, p.65](#)). Research in academic and occupational fields typically revolves around the four Ps: People, Problems, Problems, Phenomena, and Programmes. These studies focus on individuals, groups, communities, or organizations to examine issues, attitudes, regularities, or interventions. The focus may be on an issue, association, or phenomenon, such as teacher motivation, or learning. Information collected from individuals, groups, communities, or organizations is used to explore associations or causation. Programs can be studied for their effectiveness, structure, need, and consumer satisfaction, all based on information collected from people.

Research studies consist of a study population (individuals, groups, and communities) and a subject area (problem, program, or phenomenon), with the study population representing the people from whom information is collected. A well-crafted problem statement will answer the following questions: a) What is the problem? b) Where does the problem occur? c) Who is affected by the problem? d) Why is it important to solve the problem?

Identifying Key Terms and Defining them

This section delineates the definitions of terminology utilized in the study that lack a universally accepted meaning or possess the potential for misinterpretation. These terminology must be operationally defined or elucidated; specifically, you must specify their usage in your study. When utilizing terminologies from other sources, ensure to cite the reliable references that substantiate these meanings. The selection of terminology for definition and clarification is a matter of discretion. These are the terms that are fundamental to your research and are consistently utilized. Explicitly defining terminology enhances precision and guarantees the clarity of comprehension.

Thus, in this section researchers define words that have special meaning for their study or words that may be unclear. As a researcher you consider the audience who may read your study, and include terminology that will assist in their understanding. This section could be introduced with a statement such as: "The following terms are defined to clarify their meaning and use in the study." Consider defining:



Key terms. For example, “Networking is . . . ” or “Social and emotional learning (SEL) is defined in this study as . . . ”

Terms specific to their use in the study. For example, “Group membership refers to whether a student was in the treatment group or in the control group.”

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the specific ways in which the researcher will restrict the scope of the investigation. Delimitations are predetermined boundaries set by the researcher to narrow the scope of the study and make it more focused and controllable. While it is necessary to establish boundaries, researchers must be aware of how these constraints can affect the applicability of their study's findings. Some examples of delimitations are:

The uniqueness of the setting, for example, “The study will be confined to interviewing and observing at one school that has specific demographic characteristics.”

The nature and size of the sample, for example “For this research, six schools will be chosen to be part of the study.” (rather than trying to include a much larger number of schools that might be available)

“This study describes the influence of the program through the eyes of five high school students.” Note that in this latter example, the researcher has chosen not to interview teachers, administrators, or a greater number of students.

Delimitations are, fundamentally, the constraints intentionally established by the writers. They are apprehensive about the definitions established by researchers that delineate the parameters of their work, ensuring that the study's aims and objectives remain attainable. In this regard, it might be contended that delimitations are under the researcher's control. Consequently, delimitations mostly pertain to the theoretical framework, aims, research inquiries, variables examined, and the study sample. The alternatives to these options and the rationale for their rejection, such as the specific sampling strategy selected from numerous possibilities, must be explicitly articulated to ensure the reader is thoroughly informed. Delimitations pertain more to "why I did not pursue this approach" than to "why I chose this one." Reasons for dismissing a specific course of action during the research process, together with the alternatives accessible, should also be referenced. A concise justification should be presented. Common factors influencing the selection of a specific sampling approach include resource availability, local conditions (practical accessibility), ethical and permitting issues, and time limitations. In this context, delimitations are neither positive nor negative; instead, they provide a comprehensive rationale that clarifies the extent of the study's primary focus in relation to the research methodology and foundational philosophical framework.

Consequently, delimitations specify the manner in which the researcher will constrain the scope of the study. Delimitations establish boundaries selected by the researcher to enhance the focus and manageability of the investigation. Such constraints are frequently necessary; nonetheless, the researcher must acknowledge the implications of the delimitations on the generalizability of the study's findings.



Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the tools and processes involved in developing a research proposal for English Language Teaching (ELT), focusing on effective planning, structuring, and writing practices. The study was grounded in constructivist learning theory and sociocultural theory, and it employed a qualitative approach that synthesized existing literature and expert guidelines. The primary research questions explored how ELT researchers can best approach research proposal development, specifically in terms of selecting a topic, formulating research questions, conducting a literature review, and determining appropriate methodologies. The paper revealed that a systematic approach to proposal development, coupled with clearly defined research objectives, significantly enhances the coherence and relevance of ELT research. The alignment of personal interests with current trends was identified as a key factor in maintaining researcher motivation throughout the process. Furthermore, theoretical grounding in frameworks like constructivist learning and sociocultural theory provided a robust foundation for the development of research questions and methodologies.

The study contributes to the development of theory by integrating these theoretical frameworks into a practical guideline for research proposal development. It highlights the importance of aligning research questions with both theoretical perspectives and practical challenges in ELT. However, one limitation of the study is its reliance on existing literature without empirical testing of the proposed framework. Future research could focus on testing the effectiveness of these guidelines through longitudinal studies with novice researchers.

In terms of practical applications, this study offers valuable insights for novice ELT researchers and educators involved in mentoring students through the research proposal process. It emphasizes the importance of peer feedback, mentorship, and adaptability in the research process. Finally, future research could expand on this study by empirically evaluating the impact of these tools on the quality of research proposals. Further exploration of how technological tools can assist in proposal development is also recommended.

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