

Methods of Writing Research Papers

A Lecture by: Prof. Ziyad Ahmed Dahaam
University of Tikrit
College of Arts
Department of Translation
3rd Stage

Lecture Three

Developing a Thesis Statement, Enthymeme, or Hypothesis

It is important to understand these three notion before we begin with the research paper. According to D Lester:

- a. A thesis statement advances a conclusion the writer will defend, e.g., contrary to what some philosophers have advanced, human beings have always participated in wars.
- b. An enthymeme uses a because clause to make a claim the writer will defend, e.g., there has never been a “noble savage,” as such, because even prehistoric human beings fought frequent wars for numerous reasons.
- c. A hypothesis is a theory that must be tested in the lab, in the literature, and/or by field research to prove its validity, e.g., human beings are motivated by biological instincts toward the physical overthrow of perceived enemies.

1. Thesis

A thesis statement expands your topic into a scholarly proposal, one that you will try to prove and defend in your paper. It does not state the obvious, such as “Langston Hughes was a great poet from Harlem.” That sentence will not provoke an academic discussion because your readers know that any published poet has talent. The writer must narrow and isolate one issue by finding a critical focus,

such as this one that a student considered for her essay. Thesis statement advances an idea the writer can develop fully and defend with evidence. The writer has made a connection between the subject and the ideas presented in his paper. Your thesis anticipates your conclusion by setting in motion the examination of facts and pointing the reader toward the special idea of your paper.

2. **Enthymeme**

Your instructor might want the research paper to develop an argument expressed as an enthymeme, which is a claim supported with a because clause. Examples:

Enthymeme: Hyperactive children need medication because ADHD is a medical disorder, not a behavioral problem.

The claim that children need medication is supported by the stated reason that the condition is a medical problem, not one of behavior. This writer will need to address any unstated assumptions—for example, that medication alone will solve the problem.

3. **Hypothesis**

A hypothesis proposes a theory or suggests an explanation for something. Here are the various types of hypotheses.

- a. **The Theoretical Hypothesis**, e.g., discrimination against young women in the classroom, known as “shortchanging,” harms the women academically, socially, and psychologically.

Here the student will produce a theoretical study by citing literature on “shortchanging”.

- b. **The Conditional Hypothesis**, e.g., diabetes can be controlled by medication, monitoring, diet, and exercise.

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- d. **The Relational Hypothesis**, e.g., class size affects the number of written assignments by writing instructors.

This type of hypothesis claims that as one variable changes, so does another, or it claims that something is more or less than another. It could be tested by examining and correlating class size and assignments, a type of field research.

- e. **The Causal Hypothesis**, e.g., a child's toy is determined by television commercials.

This causal hypothesis assumes the mutual occurrence of two factors and asserts that one factor is responsible for the other. The student who is a parent could conduct research to prove or disprove the supposition. A review of the literature might also serve the writer.