



## Book Review

**Bitchener, J. (2009). Writing an Applied Linguistics Thesis or Dissertation: A Guide to Presenting Empirical Research.**

**Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.**

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Oftentimes, graduate students are uncertain about how to write a thesis or a dissertation since they lack experience in academic writing. *Writing an Applied Linguistics Thesis or Dissertation* is a practical book which can be used by graduate students particularly in the field of applied linguistics as a guide to develop skills in writing academic research or composing a dissertation. Author of the text, John Bitchener, is well qualified to compose such a work as he serves as professor of Applied Linguistics at the Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Augmenting this suitability, from 2004 to 2009 Bitchener was president of the Applied Linguistics Association in New Zealand, during which time he was also editor of the journal, *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics*.

Appearing in a convenient pocketbook size, it was published in 2010. Though the title clearly delineates the book's focus on the area of applied linguistics, the content can be applied to guide researchers in other research disciplines as well. The main target readers of this book are first time research writers, and the training units in higher education that aim to train their students or researchers for research writing tasks. There are eight chapters namely:

background, abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion of results, and conclusion.

Chapter 1 introduces the overview of the book and how each of the following chapters are organized. The following chapters are structured symmetrically, with each chapter organized to represent one part-genre of a research. The author describes each part-genre of a piece of research (i.e. each chapter) in a very straightforward style by explaining its functions, organizations, and key linguistic features. He also applies the genre analysis approach of Swales (1990) to uncover move and sub-move structures in each part-genre of research. For instance, in chapters 2 and 3, the functions of a thesis abstract and introduction are explained, then their move structures are explicated. Take move construction of a thesis literature review presented in chapter 4 as an example, it is structured in three major moves: 1) building an area of relevant research, 2) uncovering research gap, and 3) introducing how the present research will potentially fill the gap. Following this, there is a demonstration of analyzing moves in an authentic master's thesis sample. Furthermore, detailed recommendations regarding English usage are provided, such as in chapters 6 and 7, when suggestions regarding appropriate tense usage and hedging are offered.

Other features of the book, which I found particularly helpful, include a list of frequently asked questions and answers, and some suggestions for further activities and further reading. The list of moves and sub-moves of the part-genre of writing for research provided in the appendix includes essential frameworks of research writing which readers can apply when writing or analyzing a research paper.

In my view the book does contain a few minor drawbacks, chiefly the frameworks of move and sub-move is static: it could be prescriptive rather than descriptive; and it also risks hindering creativity and variety in research writing. If the author provided a larger corpus of research as a resource for analyzing and describing varieties in research structure, it may well contribute more effectively to a fuller development of analytic skills among readers. Perhaps, though, this inclusion of only one single piece of a thesis as a sample has been intentional as the author believes it would serve novice writers sufficiently. Nevertheless, Bitchener has overall provided a great deal of helpful information in *Writing an Applied Linguistics Thesis or Dissertation* that first time researchers will find invaluable in overcoming barriers to their successful pursuit of academic research writing.