

Writing a thesis in our group

How the work starts

There are different options to write a Bachelor's or Master's thesis in our group. You can come to us with an idea of your own or consult the websites of the PI and team members to get a sense of what we are working on and propose a topic related to that.

You can find an overview of the topics we work on here (and the websites from our team members):

<https://www.ikw.uni-osnabrueck.de/forschung/psycholinguistikneurolinguistik/overview.html>

<https://sites.google.com/view/nicolegotzner>

In general, we only supervise students who work on language. Doctoral students may supervise topics related to their theses, postdocs can supervise theses that are either related to their work or a topic they are interested in and the PI takes on further theses that are not directly related to the team member's work. A general advice for finding a supervisor is to try to connect to the group's interest and research agenda. In any scenario, the PI (or the PI from another group) needs to be involved for approval. For administrative questions, you should first contact my personal assistant Katja Ruge, our general administration head or the examination office.

Types of theses

There are two types of theses you can write: a theoretical literature review or an empirical paper. For both types you need to define a clear research question that you would like to address.

1. Theoretical paper/literature review

You can discuss one particular theory or model of a phenomenon or contrast different theories. Start by outlining the phenomenon and research question and why it is important. Then sketch the account (s) of the phenomenon and its potential problems. Finally you discuss the empirical evidence and conclude how the theory manages or fails to capture the phenomenon. Let's take an example: our research question is *How are scalar implicatures computed?*. You could contrast the Neo-Gricean and grammatical theory and outlines how each account derives scalar implicatures. Then discuss cases for which one theory fares better than the other. What are remaining challenges for each account?

2. Empirical paper

This type of paper would centered around the empirical evidence. You can either discuss existing experiments, make a proposal for an experiment design or present an experiment that you conducted. For this type of paper it is also important to lay out the theoretical background assumptions, the theory just takes up less space in your paper. For our example question, you could discuss the existing eyetracking studies on the online processing of scalar implicatures. What do the experiments show? What are the methodological challenges? The conclusion of your paper could summarize what we know and what we don't know about the processing of implicatures to date.

Planning

Please discuss the topic of your thesis with your advisor. You will get the most support if you choose a topic that your supervisor is interested in. There is an official time period to write a thesis but that does not prevent you from planning ahead. Start thinking about the topic and reading the relevant literature early on and make yourself a schedule for different milestones of writing the paper (e.g., reading, writing theory part, writing discussion). Please contact us early on, if you plan to conduct an experiment as this requires planning of lab space on our side.

Structure and table of contents

Please include the title of your paper and a table of contents at the start of your paper. In the following, you see two typical examples of the table of contents.

Theoretical paper/literature review

1. Introduction (relevance of the topic, research question)
2. Theory x
3. Theory y
4. Empirical evidence
5. Conclusions

Empirical paper

1. Introduction (relevance of the topic, research question)
2. Theoretical Background
3. Experiments
 - 3.1. Methods
 - 3.2. Results
 - 3.2. Discussion
4. General discussion and conclusions

Formatting of references

Use APA citation style and guidelines for formatting:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references>

Citation and ChatGPT3

Mind the distinction between literal quotes and indirect citation. You are not allowed to copy chunks of text from a paper. If you quote ideas or paragraphs indirectly, this also needs to be acknowledged. Any form of plagiarism causes damage to the academic system and will lead to failing. If you play around with ChatGPT3 (which can be fun and enlightening), make sure you use it in a smart way and don't just copy a mediocre essay or non-sense text.

FAQ

How many references should I include? For a thesis, a rule of thumb is to include 10-20 references, depending on the type of scope our thesis.

How do I find a topic/research question? Think about the topics that interested you in class, get inspired by reading a paper that was discussed during class, talk to your advisor or contact team members of the group.