

WRITING NON-EMPIRICAL ARTICLES FOR PUBLICATION

OLATAYO OLUSOLA FIDELIS

School of Education,
Department of General Studies,
The College of Education,
Lanlate, Oyo State,
Nigeria.

Abstract

This paper examined the technicalities of writing non-empirical articles suitable for publication in academic journals. The first part of the paper discussed the need for a lecturer to develop a sound knowledge of paper writing either empirical or non-empirical. The second part examined the concept of non-empirical articles as different from empirical ones. Three types of non-empirical articles - theory articles, substantive review articles and critiques were discussed. The process involved in choosing topics for non-empirical article was also discussed. The paper was concluded with a strong assertion that writing a non-empirical paper requires a great deal of academic exposure, mind of sound judgment and uncommon wit of creativity.

Introduction

Writing journal articles and other forms of publications are parts of the academic tasks mandatory for an average lecturer since he is a research fellow or research fellow in potential. In addition, academic publications are equally necessary for him because his promotion mainly depends on his acumen to author acceptable academic publications. For this reason, ability to write standard and acceptable journal articles, chapters in books, books and research reports are skills that a lecturer must acquire and master before he can operate comfortably in his career. In fact, the slogan is “publish or perish”.

It is also important to note that one of the ways through which a lecturer can contribute to knowledge is through his publication. This is so because most of the findings in academic publications provide blue prints for breakthrough in science, social sciences and humanities. Thus, even, for the wish of immortalizing his identity, a lecturer should strive to acquire and display expertise in academic paper writing. Broadly speaking, writing academic papers can take two forms: empirical and non-empirical. While empirical paper is based on collection of primary data and closely associated with science and social sciences, non-empirical papers are not primary data based and they are closely associated with arts and humanities. Each of the forms has its distinct features and formats of which a lecturer must have a sound knowledge. However, the purpose of this paper is to provide ample information on the features and formats of non-empirical papers.

Non- Empirical Paper Explained

One of the ways to explain a non-empirical paper is to call it a non-empirical research. This is more apt since this form of paper is quite different from feature writing. Though it is not based on empirical evidence but it is not only analytical but equally based on established facts. Though it is an opinion paper, it must be supported by already known facts. That is the reason why a good non-empirical paper must not be contemplative. It must not be turned into arm chair research. Another name for non-empirical paper is position paper.

Cropanzano (2009) simply defined non-empirical papers as 'review articles. He went further to identify these major types especially as related to journal of management. These are:

- (i) *Theory articles*: These types of articles seek to propose either new conceptual models or establish the effects of the existing ones when applying the theory to societal issues, educational problems or learning concepts. When an article to be written is theory oriented, the writer must have a particular theory in mind. His purpose is to examine how the application of such theory would solve or eliminate an educational problem, a set of learning problems or societal conflicts. It has to do with the application of an established theory to resolve issues. However, the writer may decide to propose a new theory or conceptual model. In this regard, he is making a new contribution to the already existing body of knowledge. This is highly demanding intellectually.
- (ii) *Substantive review articles*: These types attempt to summarize and explain an existing literature, a person writing article for publication in this area must be deeply rooted in the concepts he wants to explain or discuss. He must be able to point out the relevance or importance of the concept he explains or discusses to an aspect of human endeavor, most especially educational issues.
- (iii) *Critiques*: These seek to explain why an area of study is moving in the wrong direction. Writing article for publication in this regard, the writer must have observed critically and noticed elements of lapses or shortcomings in the area of study he wants

to criticize. His discussion must be analytical. There should be evidence of database critique rather than sentiment oriented discussion. He must be well grounded in the conceptual framework he wants to criticize.

Clark (2003) gave a comprehensive explanation on the concept of non-empirical research. According to him, it is a research that does not base on new evidence from the real world, that is, primary data, but could be on data previously gathered, possibly for another, quite distinct purpose, that is secondary data. To many people, it is often associated with the humanities and natural philosophy though, it is actually prevalent in many sciences as well. This definition given by Clarke is simple, comprehensive and adequate so it is upheld in this paper. That is, a non-empirical paper is the one that is not based on collection of primary data.

Choosing topics for non-empirical articles

There is no known rule governing the selection of topics in this type of article. However, this can be guided by the type of non-empirical paper at hand and the wit of the writer. The most important thing is that a good and appropriate topic must be formed because it is one of the things that will make the article acceptable. A good appropriate and adequate topic must reflect the theme of the whole article. It must serve as a topic sentence in a paragraph or a thesis sentence in a report, though a topic is not expected to be a sentence. The contents of the whole paper must be in total consonance with the topic. Let us consider the following:

1: *Theory articles:* Although, formulating or propounding new theories may be much more demanding but there are lot of already establish theories that can be applied to issues. Sample of possible topics in this area include the following:

- i. ...a better way of teaching comprehension in Nigerian Junior Secondary Schools.
- ii. ...an easy way of teaching grammar in L2 situation.
- iii. ...an effective model for greater achievement in language evaluation.
- iv. ...a way out of poor performance in comprehension in L2 situation.
- v. Olatayo O. F. (2014), The relevance of Spair-whorfian theory in the modern language classroom.

2. *Review Articles:* This is a very broad area where inexhaustible topics can be chosen consider the following:

- i. Olatayo O. F. (2006), Basic concepts in morphological productivity.
- ii. Adetuyi C. A and Olatayo O. F. (2015), Key concepts in transformational generative grammar.
- iii. Adetuyi C. A and Olatayo O. F. (2016), Intellectuality awareness as a tool for teaching effective comprehension.

3. *Critiques:* Among numerous possible topics in this area are the following:

- i. An appraisal of cooperative method of teaching English language in L2 situation.
- ii. Diary method of teaching English Language in L2 situation, a strategy begging for review.

The structure (lay out) of a non-empirical paper

The layout of a non-empirical paper is not totally different from the empirical paper. However, the structure is greatly influenced by the "rule of the house". That is, the lay out

will be determined by what is acceptable to the editorial board of the journal in which the paper is to be published. Primarily, a good non-empirical article will contain the following subheadings or parts:

1) *Abstract*: This is the summary of the whole work normally written on a separate sheet at the beginning of the article. An abstract must be written in italics without indentation. It must be a praise of the article and in most cases not exceeding 200 to 300 words. It must contain vital information such as the objective or purpose of writing the article, the method adopted, the instruments used, the findings, recommendations and the conclusion. In fact it must be a miniature of the write up. This sub-heading is imperative in all journal articles.

2) *Introductions*: This is a sort of mission statement of the author on the topic. He will need to establish the life situation that spurs him or that calls for research in the area he has chosen. The circumstance that is creating gap that the author is intending to fill and how he thinks he can go about it. The following sub sections may be parts of introduction in a non-empirical paper.

- (i) Background to the problem/study
- (ii) Statement of the problem
- (iii) Objective/purpose of the study
- (iv) Significance of the study
- (v) Scope of the study
- (vi) Limitation of the study

In non-empirical paper, the concepts of research question and hypotheses are hardly relevant.

3) *Literature Review*: This is the place where the author will need to examine the existing literature critically in order to situate his own idea within the frame work of the already existing body of knowledge in that academic realm. He must show the missing gap in the said body of knowledge and how his own contribution will appropriately and adequately fill the gap. The difference between his own work and those that had been done in that area must be clearly shown. It is the place where the conceptual frame work and/or theoretical frame work are/is discussed. While some people believe literature review should be a major subsection under the introduction, some do believe it must be a distinct chapter. However it should be noted that this subsection is equally optional in non-empirical paper.

4) *Concept Discussion/Analysis/Interpretation/Critique*

This is another mandatory part of non-empirical paper. It is the section where the author will show-case his idea. A section where he will clearly manifest the knowledge or values he wants to bring forth from his paper. This can be done in different ways:

(i) by discussing certain basic concepts and their relevance to the objective or the purpose of writing the article.

(ii) Presentation, analysis and discussion of a conceptual framework theoretical frame work or a model or a strategy with regards to how it can be applied to solve a particular life problem.

(iii) A critical assessment and evaluation of a given concept with a view to identify all its inadequacies; how such inadequacies constitute problems and how the inadequacies can be resolved.

Conclusion: This is the place where the author brings his discussion to an end. It must be a befitting end and the tone of home coming or final arrival must be obvious. In most cases, this is done by giving a compact summary of the whole article.

Recommendation(s): Here, the author itemizes some steps he will like the stakeholders in the issue discussed to take in order to eliminate the problem(s) he has identified in his paper using the new knowledge he has contributed.

References: At this point the writer acknowledges all the sources of data and information he has used in his write-up however this must be done in accordance with the rule of the house. The most common referencing style in Nigeria is APA-American Psychological Association. The following facts must be noted concerning referencing:

- (i) All cited works in the body of the article must be reflected in the reference section.
- (ii) Works that are not cited in the body of the work must not be cited under references.
- (iii) The author should note the differences among these terms and when each of them is used (a) references (b) bibliography (c) footnote.
 - (a) *References:* This is used when an author is citing only texts or other materials he has actually used in the body of his work. The evidence of all items cited under references must be seen in the body of the work. This is the most acceptable form of referencing in a serious academic work. It will normally come at the end of the write-up.
 - (b) *Bibliography:* This term is used when a writer cites materials he has actually used in the body of his work together with those that he has never used but that he considers relevant to the topic. Bibliography is equally writing at the end of the write-up.
 - (c) *Footnotes:* This term is used when referencing is done on page basis. At the bottom of a page, the material(s) used on that page is/are cited. Like references, footnotes, also deal with the actual materials used in the body of a write-up but unlike it, it is done at bottom of every page not at the end of the whole write-up. The practice of referencing through footnoting is dying fast.

The Issue of Language

The success of a non-empirical paper will depend to a large extent on effective communication. The writer of such paper must be a master of the language he uses to write his article. There is nothing that discourages assessors than blemish language while flawless expressions gladden their hearts. More importantly the writer must be able to convey his idea to his reader clearly. It is through this that people can grasp what he is trying to contribute to the body of existing knowledge.

Conclusion

Writing publishable papers is mandatory for a successful career in lecturing. Therefore, it is imperative for the new extract into the career to acquire and develop appropriate and adequate skills of writing acceptable academic papers. By so doing, he will be able to contribute to the body of the already existing knowledge and he will be able to

progress accordingly in his chosen career. Writing paper for academic purpose can come in two ways: empirical and non-empirical.

While empirical paper is primary data based, non-empirical paper may not require primary data. Each of the types has its own formats and pattern. However in this write up, detailed information has been provided on formats and pattern of non-empirical paper only. In our discussion of the concept, it has been established that writing a non-empirical paper is not less demanding intellectually. It requires a great deal of academic exposure, mind of sound judgment and uncommon wit of creativity.

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