

**BARRIERS IN SUCCESSFUL DISSERTATION WRITING IN SOCIAL SCIENCES:
A THEORETICAL PAPER ON REASONS AND REMEDIES****Allah Dad**

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Abstract:

Completing a dissertation in social sciences research can be daunting for graduate students. This theoretical paper reviews the studies dealing with the difficulties researchers face in conducting social sciences research. It particularly refers to the vital role of the CARS (Create a Research Space) Model for research scholars after identifying the problems highlighted in past studies. We have examined how effective supervision, mentoring practices, research design development, methodology considerations, and writing/publication strategies can be handled. Our review also highlights the importance of institutional support, student motivation, and resilience in overcoming obstacles. We conclude with recommendations for students, supervisors, and institutions to promote dissertation success.

Keywords: social sciences research; dissertation; framework; The CARS model

Issues, Barriers and Reasons

Pursuing a graduate degree in social sciences requires original research that must contribute to the field. This theoretical paper aims to overview strategies for enhancing dissertation success. Dissertation writing success in social sciences research requires a multifaceted approach. By addressing challenges, implementing effective strategies, and fostering supportive environments, graduate students can overcome obstacles and produce high-quality research. The earlier research identifies various challenges the novice social science researchers face, including methodological challenges like reselecting the right methodology and tools, sampling issues and validity and reliability issues related to the research tools; theoretical and conceptual challenges like developing a theoretical framework and integrating theory and methodology, and ethical issues like informed consent and avoiding bias and ensuring objectivity. There are ample sources available online to sort out these issues. However, understanding the materials, and the practical application of the solutions seem the biggest challenge due to the language barriers.

Language barriers have been identified as basic in conducting social sciences research. Squires et al. (2020) conducted research on strategies to overcome language barriers in conducting research. Due to language barriers, accessing the data and authentic sources becomes a challenge. Researchers struggle to access relevant and quality literature, as questionnaires, interviews, or data collection through surveys need clarity. In particular, in qualitative research, there is a need to collect secondary data, and its relevancy may be affected when not communicated and understood well.

Language barriers also become obstacles in developing a convincing research design and methodology: selecting appropriate methods, sampling, and data analysis. McGorry (2000) researched the challenges in data collection for research. He states that there is a need to

translate the questionnaire and other tools. The lack of language proficiency may completely change the sense and aim of the research. When the data collection tool is not well translated, it may challenge the validity of the research. Gile (1991) reveals that there may be the challenge of misinterpretation of data. Language barriers may be due to cultural nuances. During data collection and interpretation, there is a need to have an equal understanding of language based on context, culture, and values. A researcher might misinterpret the collected data. There are also cultural idiomatic expressions, including idioms, slang, or colloquial expressions. It may be difficult to understand and translate them accurately, leading to misinterpretation.

Language barriers also become a grave issue during the writing-up stage leading to publishing. Producing quality writing and navigating publication processes often gets on the nerves of the researchers in social sciences. Lyytinen et al. (2007) researched writing and publishing challenges in research. Study findings reveal various challenges for academic writing and publishing, particularly in a second language. Non-native researchers may struggle with writing and publishing as they face language barriers. Peer review and feedback may also pose problems as the language barrier may mislead the researchers in grasping review comments and feedback, and chances of rejection for publication may increase.

Learning a second language can be challenging, and the applications and resources needed to achieve linguistic competence are not affordable for all researchers. Cummings (2005) points out that language barriers hinder collaboration across different linguistic backgrounds, making communication difficult with international reviewers, researchers, and experts. Engaging with individuals from diverse language backgrounds or those not fluent in a primary language presents challenges. Various technical terms may differ across generations and regions, leading to misunderstandings among researchers. Such linguistic confusion can result in miscommunication.

Squires (2008) explored the ethical considerations of language barriers, highlighting the importance of obtaining informed consent for data collection and the findings and conclusions. Language barriers can lead to misleading conclusions and recommendations in research. Additionally, miscommunication may introduce biases in the research due to these language obstacles.

Bossu et al. (2012) argue that some languages do not have the liberty to provide material at a large level. They have highlighted many issues, including the unavailability of fonts, limited words, limited academic journals, fewer databases, and fewer research sources and resources. There is a lack of language-specific research tools, analysis applications, software, and presentations. Chidarikire et al. (2018) share that there are language barriers to analyzing and converting data to processed information. Due to the language barrier, there is a chance of inconsistency and less accuracy in research. In many languages, qualitative data cannot be grouped to have machine translation. As a result, there is a chance of errors in data and findings.

Language barriers present significant challenges for academic researchers engaged in international projects. These barriers affect research data collection, review processes, and analysis. It can ultimately impact collaboration, publication, and dissemination. Non-native researchers often struggle with high-quality academic writing in English. Such language barriers can lead to misunderstandings and compromise the research's validity and reliability. Efforts must provide language training, enhance collaboration, offer exposure to rich linguistic environments, and implement institutional policies that promote quality research.

Researchers have come up with some recommendations to overcome barriers in conducting research. Melo-Pfeifer (2020) shares that there is a need to plan research to avoid the language barrier. It can be possible through developing a diverse team to conduct research that is only possible with strong communication and coordination. There may also be language exchange learning programs on campus and in a virtual set-up. This initiative may be taken from researchers on their own. Students and researchers may also learn about cultures and the context of research. Grbić and Kujamäki (2018) argue that there are many solutions to avoid language barriers in research, including purchasing or hiring professional translation tools and software services. There is the option of a customized translator and interpreter to conduct quality research.

Mushtaque et al. (2022) suggest investing in research in various ways. There may be language courses and training programs for students and researchers. The language course may fill language barrier gaps and improve coordinated efforts for research. There may be online resources and learning courses to minimize the English language barriers researchers face. Artificial intelligence and vocabulary software are trends in the current era. Allan (2015) argues that there should be training programs for academia and research institutions. There is a need to translate jargon, quotations, and local language examples per their context. These sensitive things in research may be rightly stated and interpreted through culturally sensitive training programs. The services of local advisors and consultants may be acquired to conduct the research.

Correa et al. (2020) emphasize simplifying research language to minimize language barriers. There is a need for simple and clear language in data collection tools, guidelines, and research aims/objectives. There may be an option for a back-translation method that compares two document versions. Marsden & Kasprovicz (2017) share that language barriers in research may be avoided by engaging researchers in international events like workshops, conferences and exposure visits for exchange learning. Multilingual conferences may provide an opportunity to learn various languages and improve research gaps. Research may also be improved by publishing research work in multilingual journals. Journals may also provide the ability to translate abstracts into various languages to enhance the impact of the research. Hall et al. (2019) highlight that non-verbal and audio research may also be very useful in avoiding language barriers. By using visual aids, diagrams and other learning material, the research may be spread to illiterate people and as per context. Klein et al. (1994) opine that during data collection, challenges due to language barriers may be reduced by effective planning to ensure data accuracy and reliability. Language barriers for data collection through surveys, interviews, focused group discussions, and questionnaires may be reduced when data collection tools and techniques are developed while keeping culture and context in the background. Data collection may also be improved by ensuring unbiased data. Researchers must keep in mind the language of the population and sample. Data collection will be accurate when data is collected from the right sample through the right tools and techniques. Data collection for local quotations, terminologies and specific cultural examples may be collected accurately when designed and developed well.

The study findings reveal that language barriers in research can hinder knowledge exchange and research. There is a need to invest in research to have more authentic sources for data collection, peer learning opportunities for review and feedback, software and applications for data collection and analysis and sources for publication in multiple languages. There may be paid services for research review, language translation and analysis in various languages. Adanlawo et al. (2021) point out that due to language barriers, researchers may be unable to improve data analysis and interpretation. Language proficiency may make it easy to analyze

and present data. Cross-language analysis is also possible when data collection is done using multilingual tools. In the same way, Squires et al. (2020) argue that even a literature review can be more specific and up to the mark when language is a priority.

Language barriers to research may be reduced when literature is reviewed working with Knowledgeable Other (KO). This will help capture the context and background very well. Data of many kinds, including published material, audio-visual data, documentaries and periodicals, may be reviewed and internalized with the help of a seasoned research partner. Hwang (2013) also suggests that collaboration in research can help minimize language barriers. Collaboration among academia, research institutions, and multinational projects must be improved to address language differences. Munjuri (2011) suggests that novice researchers participate in international events, conferences, and publications to gain the required growth. Academic and research networks leading to joint publications, multinational projects, and cross-learning opportunities must be encouraged. Such cross-cultural teams can reduce language barriers and enhance collaborative research efforts.

Ethical considerations, informed consent, in particular, are critical to successful research. Cagliero (2020) believes that informed consent is vital as it engages the stakeholders realistically. Thus, it helps overcome language barriers. Ensuring clear inclusion criteria and unambiguous communication with the research participants is vital. Communication without language barriers and a strong link between the population and the sample can significantly enhance research quality. Once language barriers are removed, it can lead to less biased research and foster a culture of effective peer learning in conducting research. Adhering to ethical considerations while accessing international publications and quality data can further improve the research landscape and its global impact. Clarke et al. (2001) highlight the importance of obtaining informed consent in participants' native languages to make them aware of the research aim and their right to withdraw in clear terms. Clear briefings about the research objectives and data collection processes can minimize language barriers.

Conclusion: Remedies and Recommendations

The literature review above identifies barriers in social science research. Researchers frequently encounter various obstacles, but language barriers pose grave challenges. Careful planning and training are recommended to address these challenges.

Several solutions can be suggested to address language barriers in research:

- Adopting multilingual communication strategies and utilizing software and applications for translation
- Ensuring open access to data collection sources and publication channels is also important.
- Developing cross-cultural research teams and offering language training programs are vital steps.
- Having access to customized applications that help reduce language barriers in academic research.
- Integrating advanced AI-driven translation tools and fostering global networking among academia, research institutions, and researchers to ensure that research findings are universally understood and effectively applied.

In the social sciences, research often involves complex language issues. Non-natives often face challenges in conducting, publishing, and communicating their research effectively. They do not have international coordination and collaboration, which hinders their pace and progress in research. They tend to overlook important research areas in global discourse. It may lead to limited diversity of perspectives and slow the advancement of research and knowledge dissemination.

The researchers need to get experts at the micro level, too, when the above-mentioned macro issues are addressed well. The CARS Model by John Swales (1990) assists scholars in clearly articulating the importance of their research at the micro level by situating it within the broader academic landscape. This model helps scholars develop dissertations by using three distinct moves: establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche. The CARS framework is structured as follows:

- a. Claim: It articulates the researcher's claim.
- b. Act: It analyzes their reasoning, evidence, and assumptions.
- c. Respond: It presents the researcher's perspective and counterarguments.
- d. Summarize: It combines the researcher's arguments with his/her response.

This structured approach enhances the coherence and persuasiveness of the dissertation and supports the researcher in establishing the significance of the research. This also increases the impact and recognition of the work within the academic community. Establishing a territory is the starting point. The researcher demonstrates the relevance and scope of the topic here. The second move, establishing a niche, helps identify the gaps in existing literature. It justifies the need for conducting research. The last move, occupying the niche, allows the researcher to state the objectives, questions, and approach. It positions the dissertation as a valuable contribution to the field and existing body of knowledge and research. The effective implementation of this model requires a high level of language proficiency. Landa (2006) indicates that language barriers are the main obstacles to research, potentially impacting research objectives, participant engagement, data expression, and overall clarity of communication.

The following recommendations are provided based on this review paper:

- Institutional Support: The institutions must provide researchers with adequate resources. They should arrange workshops and form writing groups to support the development of the researchers in the right direction.
- Supervision and Mentoring: The researchers must be offered effective supervision and a mentoring system. The mentors and supervisors must conduct regular meetings, set clear expectations, and provide constructive feedback.
- Research Design and Methodology: Researchers must ensure that research design and methodology are clearly defined right at the outset. They need to be clear-headed about the research roadmap through proper guidance. This can be done through careful planning, pilot studies, and methodological training.
- Writing Strategies: Social science researchers must enhance their writing skills by participating in regular writing schedules, peer review opportunities, and editing support from each other.
- Motivation and Resilience: To be successful in social science research, researchers must foster motivation and resilience in themselves by getting assistance in goal-setting, self-reflection, and stress management techniques.
- Understanding Publication Processes: Help researchers understand publication processes and timelines.
- Targeting Journals and Conferences: Support researchers in identifying appropriate journals and conferences for their work.

Once the project is complete, refer to the following detailed review checklist to refine and standardize the draft for final submission:

1. Problem Statement vs. Research Elements: How does your statement of the problem differentiate itself from other key elements of your research, such as the research gaps, scope,

significance, aim, and objectives of your study? Consider providing specific examples to clarify these distinctions.

2. Aim and Variables: How does your research's overall aim address the variables outlined in your study's title? Additionally, how do the specific objectives correspond to the sub-variables identified? Provide a clear explanation linking these components.

3. Research Questions Alignment: How do your research questions fit under the overarching themes of the problem statement, aim, and objectives? Discuss the relationship between these elements and ensure it is cohesive.

4. Identifying Research Gaps: How does your literature review effectively identify the research gaps relevant to your study's objectives? Elaborate on the methods used in your literature review that support this identification.

5. Building a Theoretical Framework: How does your literature review contribute to developing a strong theoretical framework for your research? Detail how this framework is structured and its relevance to your study.

6. Conceptual Framework Generation: How does the established theoretical framework evolve into a conceptual framework? Describe the transition process and its significance in guiding your research.

7. Justifying Research Design: How would you justify your chosen research design, particularly regarding clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria? Provide evidence or rationale that supports your design choices.

8. Establishing Reliability and Validity: How did you ensure the reliability and validity of your research tools and analytical frameworks? Discuss the steps taken to assess and confirm these critical aspects of your research methodology.

9. Addressing Research Questions Systematically: How do your research tools distinctly and systematically address the research questions and objectives? Provide specific examples of how these tools are designed to facilitate this process.

10. Sampling Techniques and Sample Frame: What sampling techniques did you employ, and what sample frame did you use for your data sets? Discuss the rationale behind your choices and how they contribute to the robustness of your findings.

11. Systematic Data Analysis: How is your data analysis systematic and controlled by the conceptual and analytical frameworks you have established? Describe the analytical processes in detail to illustrate their effectiveness.

12. Significant Findings and Thematic Links: What notable findings emerge from your research, and how are these findings thematically linked to the previous research discussed in your literature review? Provide a thorough discussion of these connections.

13. Recommendations Based on Findings: What recommendations can you propose in light of your significant findings? Discuss the implications of these recommendations for future research or practice in the field.

14. Study Implications: What are the broader implications of your study? Elaborate on how your research contributes to the field and its potential impact on relevant stakeholders.

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