Methods of Writing Research Papers

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Lecture Two

Topic Selection

Selecting the topic of the research paper is not that easy task. D Lester (2015: 30) points out that it is necessary "to choose a topic that will hold your interest throughout the entire research process". There are certain criteria that should be followed in choosing a topic, because the topic is like an umbrella which covers many premises that should be included in the paper. These are the followings:

1. **Relating Your Personal ideas to a Scholarly Problem**

   The most important premise in selecting a topic is that it should be interested for the researcher. Interest is the motivated notion that push the researcher forward to continue his study. However, interest comes from the personal ideas of the researcher. Personal ideas are important to connect the profession of the researcher with the scholarly problem that should be negotiated in the research. D Lester admits that the researcher should begin with the following activities:

   1. Relate your experiences to scholarly problems and academic disciplines.
   2. Speculate about the subject by listing issues, asking questions, engaging in free writing, and using other idea-generating techniques.

2. <u>Talking with Others to Refine the Topic</u>

Talking with others is very important to be acknowledged with information necessary to develop the topic. This is achieved in many ways, for example, to "ask people in your community for ideas and for their reactions to your general subject". Nowadays the internet provides a useful tool to, for example, participate with an online discussion groups, i.e., you'll discover what are other people saying about your subject? You might share ideas and messages with other scholars interested in your subject. Somebody may answer a question or point to an interesting aspect that has not occurred to you. With discussion groups, you have a choice:

a. Classroom e-mail groups that participate in online discussions of various issues.

b. Online courses that feature a discussion room.

c. Discussion groups on the Internet.

d. Real-time chatting with participants online—even with audio and video, in some cases.

3. <u>Using Online Searches to Refine Your Topic</u>

Many search engines have a subject directory that organizes sources by topic. For example, Yahoo! Directory organizes online sources in broad categories like arts and humanities, education, social sciences, and so forth. If you started with a topic such as "alternative medicine," you would quickly realize that your topic was too broad: Yahoo! Directory lists more than forty subtopics for "alternative medicine." The directory might help to identify a narrower topic, such as aromatherapy or meditation, that you might be able to research more effectively. Because you want to present an academic

study about your topic, you might also conduct an online search using Google Scholar. This Web program can direct your search across many disciplines through articles, theses, books, and abstracts that are presented by academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, universities, and other websites. Google Scholar helps you find relevant work across the world of scholarly research.

4. **<u>Using the library's electronic Databases</u>**

    to Find and Narrow a Topic College libraries have academic databases not found on general search engines. These database files are reliable because they refer you to thousands of articles found by using a keyword search for American history manuscripts. Topic Selection have been peer reviewed by experts or filtered through editorial processes. For now, examine various titles as you search for your own topic. If you see one of interest, click on it for more information. Follow these steps:

    1. Select a database. Some databases, such as InfoTrac and ProQuest, are general; use them to find a subject. Other databases focus on one discipline; for example, ERIC indexes search only specific educational sources. These databases will move you quickly to a list of articles on your topic.
    2. List keywords or a phrase to describe your topic, enclosed within quotation marks. Avoid using just one general word. For example, the word forestry on the Electronic Library database produced over 5,000 possible sites. The two-word phrase "forest conservation" produced a more manageable number of sites. Here is one of the entries: "A New Year for Forest Policy." Jami Westerhold. American Forests.

3. Examine the various entries for possible topics. Look for relevant articles, browse the descriptions, read the abstracts, and—when you find something valuable—print the full text, if it is available.