



N+23: Report writing and case study methods

- Teaching by (ice-)breaking & expanding**
- Learning by doing field study**
- Developing by co-writing/co-thinking**

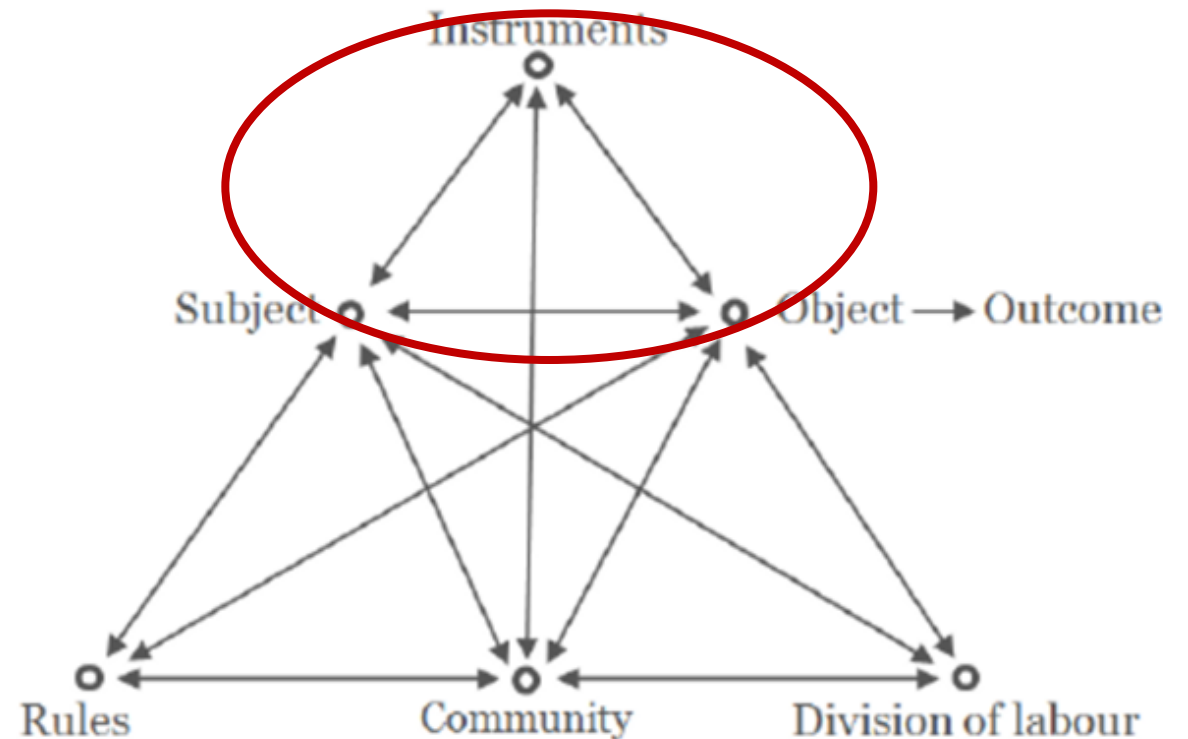
Ilkka Pyy, NordPlus HE IP, LT/LV, Daugavpils, May 4, 2023



Teaching/learning/developing - (ice-)breaking/doing/expanding



(Cf. Gibson-Graham et al. 2013)



(Engeström 1987/2015)



(Ice-)breaking by mixing teaching cultures and common wisdoms in local/regional development

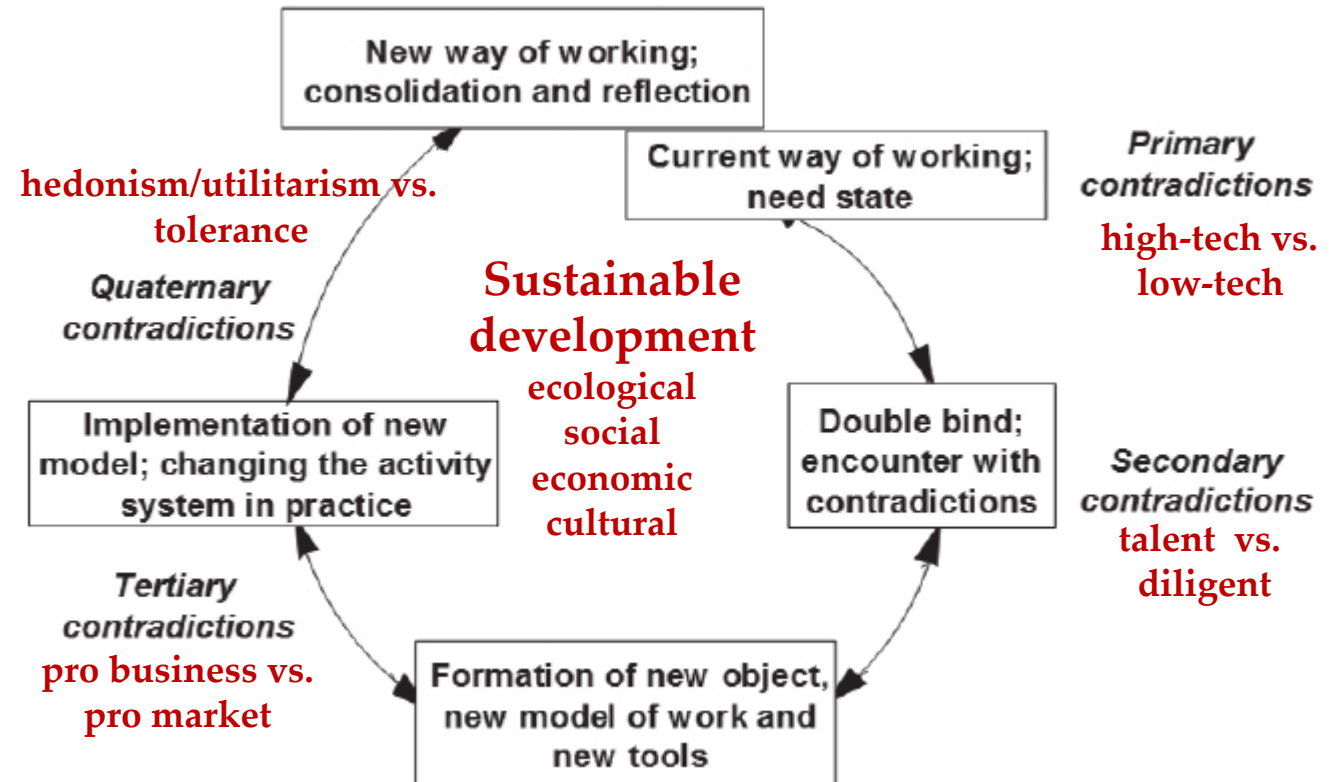
Teaching culture

- diligent-based (behaviouralist)
- phenomena-based (humanistic)
- inquiry-based (constructivist)
- experiment-based (socio-constructivist)

Local/regional development

- actor/stakeholder-oriented
- problem-oriented
- reform-oriented
- process-oriented

→ **16-grid matrix ?**



Contradictions in the cycle of expansive learning (Engeström 1994; modified)



Arild Holt-Jensen 1937-2022

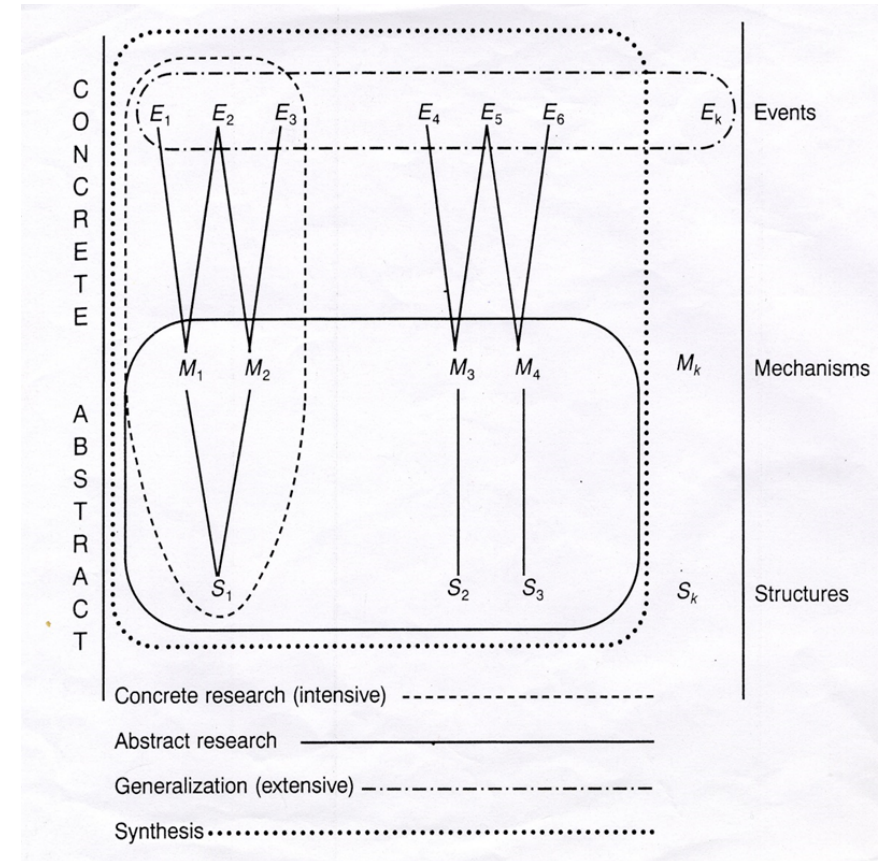


Learning by doing case study



What is a case study?

- **'An intensive analysis of an individual unit stressing environmental factors in relation to environment'** (Webster dictionary 2009)
- Today we see case studies as a main approach to social scientific knowledge, but still many scientists think case studies cannot provide reliable information about general laws and structures.
- Case studies are, however, the main focus in what Sayer (1984) calls **'intensive concrete research'** and recommends as a major approach in human geography



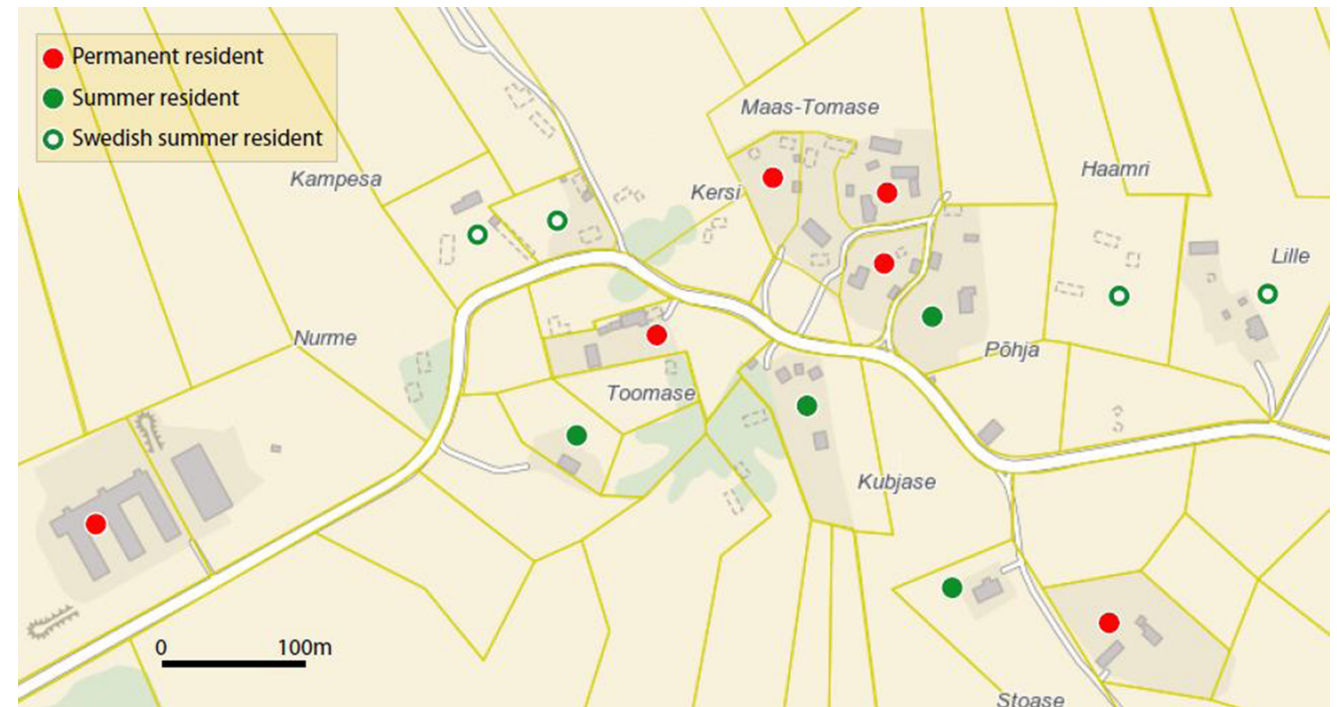
Types of research (Sayer 1984)



Both quantitative and qualitative methods are needed in case studies



- The case study approach often lead to falsification of preconceived notions rather than theory verification, but there is danger of subjectivism (f.ex in selection of informants).
- There is complementarity between case studies and statistical methods like there is between extensive 'generalisation' and intensive 'concrete research' in Sayer's model.
- Start with some empirical facts



Kärrslet 2014 type of mapping overview (key informant)

Kindel & Raagmaa (2015): Recreational home owners in the leadership and governance of peripheral recreational communities

<https://ojs.mtak.hu/index.php/hungeobull/article/view/2794>



Which methods should we use? Oral, textual, observational



- We must use the tools most appropriate for the research questions of the case
- Often we have to use a **combination of methods** in case investigations, but with **main focus on the oral tools**
- **Interviews** gives direct access to informants. In contrast to **questionnaires** they **do not intend to be representative; but to understand individuals.**



Semi-structured interviews



- **Aim:** Not to be representative – but to understand how individual people (informants) experience the problem you focus on.
- **Interviewing:** Face to face conversation with a purpose
- **Objectivism critics:** Interviewers bias the respondents answers by 'leading questions'. This is a problem we have to deal with!



Interview techniques, interview guide



- **Interview guide:** Used in semi-structured interviews to remind the researcher on issues to cover – topics and key concepts to cover – but **flexibility** in progress so that it works as a conversation between equals/ create trust to avoid biased answers.
- **Formulate appropriate and good questions:**
 - **Language:** use neutral, commonly understood concepts – problems in daily speech with scientific defined concepts
 - Avoid ambiguity/double meanings / be neutral and non-offensive
 - **Avoid leading questions**



Interview guide – things to consider



- **If you ask a question they will answer it.** But this means that the 'evidence' you are gathering may not accurately reflect real opinions. The respondent may not have understood the question.
- **Research questions** are usually too broad to serve as productive interview questions. So focus on the local context in which the locals are the specialists.
- **Therefore:** Prepare follow-up questions
- Address topics from 'the side' (compare with similar cases)
- **People's espoused theories** (the things they believe they believe) differ from the theories they use. So to avoid this trap: ask about concrete examples (what they have done rather than about general principles)
- **Interviews are social occasions.** The interviewed will want to put his best foot forward. Don't take the first answer as final.
 - **Therefore: Ask for elaboration**
 - **Ask for opposing ideas**
 - **Ask about other influencing conditions**



Interviewing practices



Preparations:

- **Decide how many you need to interview**, which groups of **key informants** and **respondents** you need to meet (considering the time at disposal).
- **Agree on formulations in the interview guide**
- **Take contact** by phone /internet as early as possible **to arrange time of interview meetings** with key informants and respondents
- **Decide division of work within group**

After the interviews:

- **Write down your notes – immediately**: Write all you remember; behaviour, non-textual responses, what possibly can have biased the answers you got
- **Transcribe** from recording device as soon as possible.
- **Interpretation of the data collected** (Hermeneutic approach) - 'reduce your data'
- **Write the report** – divide the work between you and decide how to present it.



Structure of report

- Problem formulation (aims of study)
- Case study area (based on maps, statistics, written and internet sources)
- Theory that is relevant
- Methods used and weaknesses in fieldwork situation/ interviews done/ problems with translation Icelandic-English
- Results of fieldwork (presentation of your work)
- Conclusions (playback to problem formulation - aims of study)

TWO LAST BULLPOINTS ca 50% of report

Order in the report:

- title page
- contents
- executive summary
- introduction
- sources and methods of analysis
- analysis and interpretations
- conclusions
- appendices
- reference list

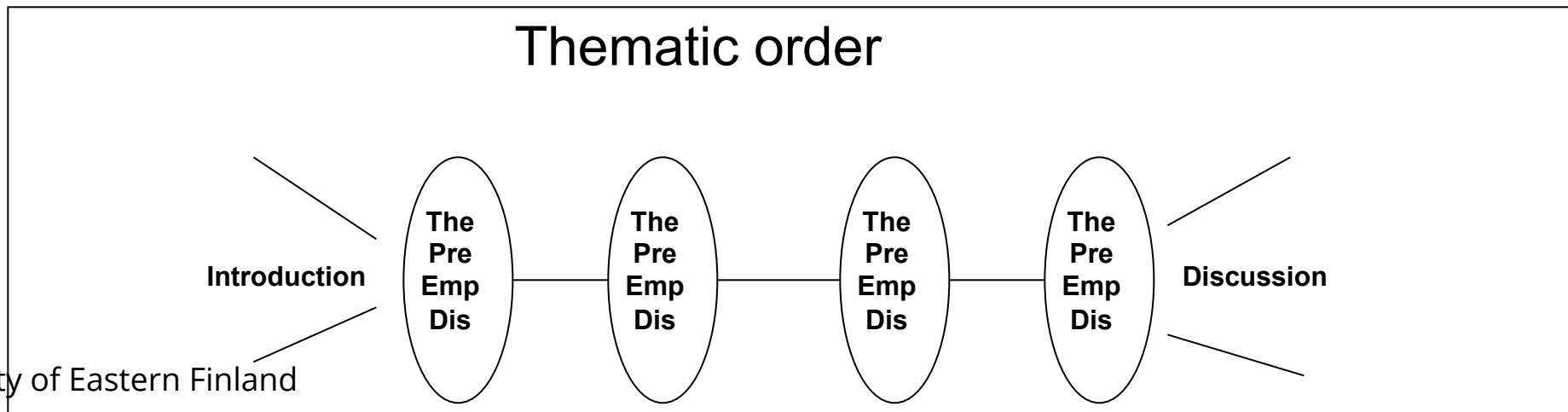
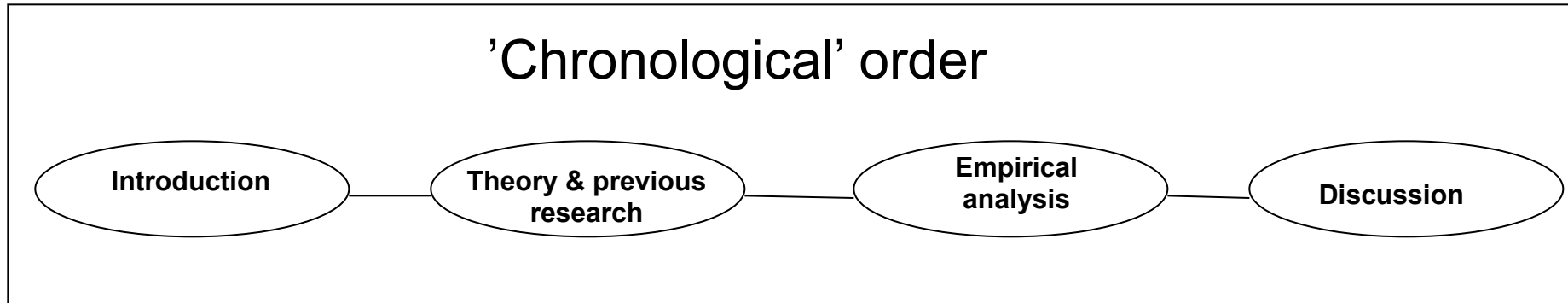
Order for writing:

- analysis and interpretations
- methods
- conclusions
- introduction
- appendices
- contents
- references
- title page
- executive summary



Theory & structure of the thesis

- necessary elements of a research report:
 - theory - previous research - empirical analysis - discussion





The importance of a team 1

- As a team, you should be supportive to each other and be able to give constructive criticism for the project and work of the others
- You need to recognize the best use of your talents and work in well-divided and organized way. The successful outcome of a good teamwork will be more than a sum of its parts and individual efforts



The importance of a team 2

- When you have completed your individual reading you must meet as a team and discuss the key issues of your report. You must remember that report writing is a continuous process of decision-making. Your initial decisions will include:
 - identification of the specific topic
 - aims of your report
 - precise message your team wishes to convey
 - appropriate structure and format
 - correct vocabulary, style and tone
- Writing a report encompasses a number of autonomous activities. You will find it easier if you break the whole process down into a number of tasks:
 - Collection and analysis of evidence can be organized according to the source or the subsection of the report
 - The writing process can be organized into writing subsections and presentation of evidence into graphs, tables, maps and quotations



The importance of a team 3

- Allocate the tasks of report writing among team members:
 - According to chapters/sub-chapters
 - According to data sources used
 - According to literature you have read
 - ...



Style and language

- Even though written by a team, the report should read as though one person has written it. So careful **editing is needed**.
- Focus on the specific purpose of the report. **Every part of the report should relate to it** and this will help to keep the report concise and coherent
- Clarity and accuracy are vitally important. You must know precisely what you want to say in each paragraph and sentence. Each paragraph should contain one significant point.
- Sentences must be grammatically correct and well punctuated. Spell check and proofread the final document
- **Keep sentences short and simple**. Long complex sentences low the reader down, confuse and impede understanding. The same applies paragraphs.



Layout

- Adequate headings and numbering make it easier for the reader to comprehend what you are saying
- The presentation of statistics is often more informative and eye-catching if they are shown visually – for example, by using graphs, pie charts or histograms. Remember that you should always discuss any tables or diagrams you use in the text
- Layout is important. A crowded page with dense blocks of print and little space looks unattractive and is off-putting → margins, line spacing, headings stand out (table/figure headings above tables and below figures) → detailed instructions, see e.g. FENNIA International Journal of Geography <http://www.helsinki.fi/maantiede/geofi/fennia/instruction.html>



Scientific writing . . .

- . . . is in many respects about balancing between
 - strange and own
 - secure and unsecure
 - market orientation and modesty
 - community voice and own voice
 - tradition and creativeness
 - critical and discreet



The structure of scientific text

- Composition of a report text dominates a tension between **reconstruction** and **argument**
 - **Reconstruction** means the description of the research object, something which already has been happened, but of which researcher builds up once again in her/his text
 - **Argumentation** is a relationship between the author and the audience, a process, in which the author transfers knowledge reconstructed through the text to the audience
- Relationship between description (targeted to research object) and argumentation (targeted to reading audience) is tensional since the former is defined by “**say the truth**” -doctrine and the latter by “**say it well**” -doctrine.



Writing a literature review

Relate various sources to each other:

- **Bear research question in mind**
- **Thematic grouping:**
 - group together sources which take similar approaches or which discuss similar material
- **Cumulative discussion:**
 - try to link each source to previous one: e.g. comment how it develops/criticises already discussed argument
- **Chronological or thematic order or progression from general to specific?**



The use of references

- APA (publication manuals of American Psychological Association)
- Nowadays it is more common to cite by using in-text references than to use footnotes or endnotes
- Harvard System = in brackets: (surname/s year,/: page/s)
 - if there is three names or more, mention all at the first time and then first name et al.
 - references without author [name of the publication + year/organization + year]
 - personally given information [only in text, surname + first name's first letter + date]
 - referring one sentence [full stop after brackets]; many sentences [full stop before brackets and before closing the brackets]
 - secondhand reference (X year, according Y, page)
- In many cases the use of references at the end of entire paragraph is not an exact/recommended way of quotation
- It is not always possible to include the page number in the reference, but direct quotations, figures, tables and singular/particular arguments need also the accurate page reference

What are the differences among quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing?

These three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing differ according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

- **Quotations** must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.
- **Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.
- **Summarizing** involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

Creswell 1994

The original passage:

Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. Lester, James D. Writing Research Papers. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.

A legitimate paraphrase:

In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

An acceptable summary:

Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 46-47).

A plagiarized version:

Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.

(Creswell 1994)



List of bibliography

- There must be tight correspondence between the use of references and the list of bibliography
- Books
- Articles in edited books
- Journal articles
- Archived materials
- Variety of quality and ways to refer to internet sources (full address and the date of retrieving) ← DOI
- Mass media as reference source
- Oral information and related materials (e.g. power point presentations)
- Be systematic through the list



Practical aspects

- **Be organised:** make notes, write down bibliographical information immediately
- **Getting started:** it is easy to find reasons for putting off the process of writing
- **Print drafts:** work through several drafts of a paper rather than to try to polish the first draft
 - The “brick-layer”, who makes every paragraph just right before going on to the next paragraph
 - The “let-it-all-hang-out-the-first-draft” writer, who writes an entire first draft not caring how sloppy it looks and how badly it is written
 - → in between would be better: one should go through the iterative process of writing, reviewing and rewriting
- **Writing is thinking:** establish the writing process and habits – the discipline of writing on a continuous and regular basis



Last but not least ... research ethics etc.

- Ethical guidelines for teaching and studying (UEF): <https://kamu.uef.fi/en/tietopankki/students-rights-and-obligations/ethical-guidelines-for-teaching-and-studying/>
- Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland (TENK): https://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK_ohje_2012.pdf
- **TEMPLATES AND GUIDELINES**
 - UEF word template (UEF/Kamu) & Instructions: How to use **an accessible document** template? (pdf at Teams)
 - Data management guidelines (FSD) <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/en/services/data-management-guidelines/>
 - Find out whether you need a permit for your research, since the permit practices vary depending on the discipline and the type of research concerned.



HOME > RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

Research data management

We offer support for research data management to researchers of University of Eastern Finland. We help with creating data management plans, comment data management plans and offer support with DMPTuuli. We write guidelines to data management in collaboration with other specialists. We advise and train with issues related to data management and opening of research data. We gather the metadata of the research data produced by the researchers of the University of Eastern Finland from different national and international services to [UEF eRepository](#). We promote reuse and data citation of research data with guidance and training.



More information

Support for Research (Heimo, UEFians)



- > Research data management
- > Ethical and juridical aspects in research data management
- > Secondary use of health and social data
- > Documentation and metadata
- > Storing and processing of research data during the research
- > Opening and preserving data after the research





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Kiitos!



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