

(Updated: 05.04.2012)

Information for MA Thesis Writers

Before you read this, please consult the general description of the MA thesis on the SEAS website [here](http://seaswiki.elte.hu/studies/MA/English/graduation) (<http://seaswiki.elte.hu/studies/MA/English/graduation>). The text below only contains further additions to the SEAS document **for thesis writers at the Department of English Applied Linguistics (DEAL)**.

A. What is a thesis?

A thesis at MA level is a serious academic challenge in the form of an *analytical rather than a purely summative or descriptive piece of writing* documenting research. The research involves planned and systematic investigation of a particular topic. The thesis paper should address an issue that is specifically related to a field of **English applied linguistics**.

In your thesis you need to:

- Identify a research area in which you are interested and formulate one or more research questions. The objective of the research question may be to identify and describe patterns and/or analyse relationships between variables. Alternatively, the aim of the research question may be to test particular hypotheses in the field to be investigated.
- Demonstrate familiarity with the most important literature related to the field of investigation.
- Demonstrate familiarity with analytical tools and justify their use in the research.
- Collect or select a well-defined and justified set of data on which the analysis is based (e.g., empirical quantitative or qualitative data, corpus of texts, set of documents.)
- Conduct an analysis by providing clear and convincing argumentation and presentation of results.
- Draw well-founded conclusions.
- Discuss the practical implications of the findings where applicable.
- Document all the sources used in the APA (6th ed.) format (see Section J below).

B. Submitting a thesis application

To get started in a timely fashion, the following steps need to be taken:

1. Contact the instructor you wish to work with as your Supervisor.
2. Decide on your topic, how you intend to investigate the topic, and the title (at this stage a working title is sufficient; a colon and subtitle can be added later to describe your work more accurately). For information on suggested topics and DEAL staff members' fields of expertise, see the professional details of our staff [here](http://ludens.elte.hu/~deal/pages/faculty_staff.html) (http://ludens.elte.hu/~deal/pages/faculty_staff.html).
3. Conduct substantial preliminary studies of the chosen field.
4. Discuss your planned research with your chosen Supervisor.
5. Submit an approximately 1½–2 page proposal (about 300–350 words) following this format:

- heading: your name, your consultant's name, the topic area of your thesis, the title of the thesis,
 - rationale for choosing the topic,
 - research question(s) and/or hypothesis/es,
 - planned approach to data collection and analysis, and
 - expected results.
6. Prepare and attach to the proposal an **annotated bibliography** of preliminary readings consisting of at least four books or eight journal articles in APA format.
7. Have your proposal read, approved and signed by your Supervisor. (NB Your Supervisor may ask you to re-write the proposal.) Make two copies: one for your Supervisor and one for yourself.
8. In order to have the MA Thesis Title Submission Form (Mesterképzésben [MA] részt vevő hallgatók diplomamunkájának címbejelentője) signed, submit the thesis form and the original copy of your proposal to the DEAL office (R5 306) **two weeks before the submission deadline specified by the Registrar's Office** (Tanulmányi Hivatal, henceforth: TH). (The Head of Department may ask you to re-write the proposal before accepting it. This explains the difference between the deadlines for handing in the proposal to the Head of Department and the TH.)
9. Submit the Thesis Title Submission Form at the TH.

C. Supervisors

Supervisors will offer the following support:

- provide a minimum of 4 office hours for consultation for ANGD C2 and ANGD C3 each,
- help drafting the research questions and/or hypothesis/es,
- suggest readings,
- give advice on research methodology, and
- read the first draft of each chapter of your thesis and advise on how to improve it.

The Supervisor may refer the student to other colleagues for field-specific, professional guidance concerning the investigation. However, students will be expected to use their own resources for accessing literature. They are also expected to use their knowledge acquired in the MA programme to carry out data analysis.

Please note that your Supervisor is not responsible for doing any part of the work for you. He/she will not be expected to edit language, punctuation or spelling because the dissertation must demonstrate your academic abilities; therefore, the quality of your thesis is exclusively your responsibility.

You are advised to draw up a schedule for the process of writing the thesis and have it approved by your Supervisor. It is your responsibility to ensure that the deadlines in the schedule are met. Consultants cannot be requested to do a final reading of the complete thesis **if the final copy is submitted to them less than two weeks prior to the official submission date.**

Supervisors keep a record sheet of consultations signed each time both for the ANGD C2 and the ANGD C3 course by the Supervisor and the thesis writer. These sheets are submitted to

and filed by the Department Secretary, who makes them available for the Thesis Markers' Meeting.

D. Marking

Referees are required to assign a mark and submit a report on the thesis. The referees' reports are normally 1–1½ typed pages and include a detailed evaluation of the main aspects of the thesis, following the marking criteria outlined in the next section. In deciding the final grade, the Supervisor has a say. In case of major disagreement, the Head of Department may assign the thesis to a third person. The final mark of your thesis will be decided at a Thesis Markers' Meeting. You will be informed about the final mark and receive a copy of the referee's report in the Department Office (R5 306) after the Thesis Markers' Meeting, usually around mid-December or mid-May.

The mark approved by the Department is not subject to appeal.

E. Thesis marking criteria

I. Form *Format (6 points)* (12 points, 40%)

- Layout: professional appearance (neatness, spacing, fonts, margins),
- Structure: division into main parts, clarity of organisation, subheadings, paragraphs, and
- APA reference and citation style.

Language (6 points)

- Accuracy (grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, etc.),
- Register (appropriate academic style, reader-friendliness), and
- Discourse (coherence, cohesion, unity, clarity of argumentation).

II. Content *Topic (2 points)* (18 points, 60%)

- Relevant, researchable, includes some original aspect.

Review of the literature (4 points)

- Clear relationship between the research question and the literature review, and
- Familiarity with relevant literature (min. 15 relevant academic sources) and existing research results (placing the research within the development of the field).

Analysis (12 points)

- Research question(s) and objectives: relevant to the topic and explicitly formulated,
- Data: an appropriate, well-specified and justified set of data (e.g., empirical quantitative or qualitative data, corpus of texts, set of

- course books),
- Research tool: evidence of ability to use academic research tools independently,
- Method (of data collection, data analysis and interpretation): clearly and systematically presented,
- Results clearly presented (e.g., in tables, figures, charts or graphs if necessary): and interpreted with convincing arguments/justification, and
- Conclusion: well-supported, convincingly related to the study as a whole, draws practical implications from the study where appropriate.

F. Content

Thesis papers are of two types: theoretical or empirical. A theoretical paper usually focuses on a theoretical problem. In this case, the main aim of the thesis is to present an overview of the theories addressing the particular problem in the field and provide a synthesis which enables the writer to find an original solution to the problem. The overview should be critical, and should be followed by an argumentative proposal of the writer's own opinion and the solution to the problem.

In applied linguistics empirical thesis papers are more common than theoretical ones. An empirical research paper also investigates a problem and is argumentative in nature, but unlike in the theoretical paper, the writer uses empirical data as support. Empirical research can be qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative research studies an individual case or a limited number of cases closely with the purpose of understanding the particular issue from the perspective of the participants. Quantitative studies usually take an outsider's perspective and involve a sufficient number of participants so that the findings become generalisable.

The topics of empirical thesis papers in this field can be chosen from the following broader areas of English Applied Linguistics:

1. The psychology of language learning and teaching,
2. English as a Lingua Franca/International Language,
3. Sociolinguistics (varieties of English, multilingualism, language and power, language and change, etc.),
4. Pragmatics,
5. Discourse analysis,
6. Error analysis, or
7. any other topic advertised on the DEAL website and approved by the Supervisor.

G. The structure of a theoretical thesis paper

Theoretical thesis papers usually follow an argumentative pattern and are organised around the solution of a problem. Depending on the nature of the problem, such papers may be structured in different ways. A typical pattern of organisation is presented below.

Preliminary pages: These will normally include the Certificate of Research, a title page (according to the format specified in the general description of the MA thesis on the SEAS website), an abstract and a table of contents, which includes the chapters of the paper and also the materials in the Appendices.

Abstract: A short summary of the research and the main findings (max. 100–150 words).

Introduction: The introduction normally starts by introducing the research area of the paper and its relevance, that is, the reason why it is problematic and interesting to explore. This is followed by the statement of the particular problem related to the research area and the author's suggestions regarding the solution to this problem. The aim of the paper and the main research question(s) should be clearly formulated here. The introduction generally ends with a brief overview of the analytical approach to be pursued and the outline of the thesis.

Review of literature: The aim of the literature review is to provide theoretical background to the solution of the problem outlined in the introduction. It offers a critical review of the various treatments of the problem under investigation and the selection and synthesis of the theory/ies which pertain(s) to the solution of the problem.

Analysis (Solution): The analysis (i.e., solution) section offers a thorough and disciplined presentation of the possible solution(s) as envisaged by the writer. It should be based on the work of other researchers in the field, but the writer is expected to offer an original solution. All arguments/claims put forward by the author must be accompanied by some form of supporting evidence (e.g., views of other researchers, examples). This section ends with an evaluation of the proposed solution(s).

Conclusion: Theoretical papers end by a restatement of the problem under investigation and a brief summary of the proposed solution(s) discussed. In the conclusion section, authors may indicate in what ways the study contributes to current achievements in the field, refer to the limitations of the paper, and point to possible areas for further investigation.

References: See empirical research papers.

Appendices: See empirical research papers.

H. The structure of an empirical thesis paper

Preliminary pages: These will normally include the Certificate of Research, a title page (according to the format specified in the general description of the MA thesis on the SEAS website), an abstract, and a table of contents, which includes the chapters of the paper and also the materials in the Appendices.

Abstract: A short summary of the research and the main findings (100–150 words).

Introduction: This should introduce the reader to the particular issue under analysis, explain the relevance of the investigation and identify the research approach/strategy.

Review of the literature: The purpose of the review is to develop the background, that is, to discuss the relevant literature in order to demonstrate the writer's knowledge of the field specifically related to the research question(s).

A literature review should be a very thorough and well-structured overview presented on the basis of an original organising principle. This means, for instance, that simply presenting a summary on what Dörnyei said about learner motivation, and then outlining Gardner's view of the same topic, does not qualify as a proper review of the literature. Everything in a good overview must be relevant to the research question(s). The use of a minimum of 15 academic sources is required. In the case of materials downloaded from the Internet, only those sources can be used which have a digital object identifier (DOI). For more information on the DOI System please refer to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition, pp. 187–192) and the DOI Foundation website (<http://www.doi.org/>).

This part of the thesis should be around one quarter of the total length of the thesis.

Research design and method: The *Introduction* and the *Review of the literature* are typically followed by a section in which the writer describes in detail how the investigation was conducted, that is, the technical aspects of the study. Depending on the type of investigation, this may involve the detailed description of the participants (including sampling procedures), the instruments (e.g., tests, questionnaires), the data collecting and processing procedures, or the corpus analysed. The method of data analysis must be described and its use justified.

A good method section describes the procedures in such a detailed way that anyone wishing to replicate the study will be able to do so. Samples of all the data collection materials (e.g., questionnaires, interview protocols, tasks) need to be included in the appendix.

This section will ideally be around one quarter of the total length of the complete thesis.

Results and discussion: The *Results* section will normally contain the results of the analysis, which will justify the conclusion. This section is often merged together with the discussion section, which includes the writer's interpretation and discussion of the results with respect to the original questions/hypotheses.

This section should be around one half of the complete thesis.

Conclusion: This section briefly summarises the main findings of the analysis, examines the practical implications (where appropriate), outlines the limitations of the research, and proposes directions for future investigations. All the conclusions have to be drawn on the basis of the data and not subjective speculations.

References: In this section the writer lists in APA format all the references that have been cited in the text (and only those). For a brief guideline see the Brief APA Citation Guidelines section below and for further details please consult the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition).

Appendices: The following materials are appropriate for an appendix: scales, tests, questionnaires, handouts, visual aids, less important tables or figures, or other kinds of illustrative materials. The appendix may contain a **short sample** of the raw data (e.g., a sample of completed questionnaires, parts of texts produced by the participants). If the

materials are in Hungarian, they have to be translated into English. All other data have to be made available if requested.

I. Form and language

The language of the thesis is English. The text must be written in an appropriate academic style. The thesis must be typed or printed, single or double sided. The left-hand margin should be 1.5 inches wide and the other three margins should be 1 inch wide. The required length is minimally 80,000 characters including spaces, i.e. approximately 40 pages. The certificate of research, title page, abstract, table of contents, notes, references and appendices are not included in this length. At DEAL, the body of the thesis should not exceed 60 pages.

The thesis must follow the APA format.

J. Brief APA citation guidelines

Based on:

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

For further details please consult the publication.

The APA format documents a paper's sources by both citing them in the text and describing them bibliographically in the paper's *References* list.

1. Reference citations in text: the author-date method

1.1 Integral and non-integral citation:

Integral:

Farmer (2009) found that the chicken came first.
According to Farmer (2009), the chicken came first.
The chicken-and-egg problem was solved by Farmer (2009).
Farmer and Lay (2009) showed that ...
The work of Farmer and Lay (2009) demonstrates that ...

Rare:

In 2009, Farmer presented his chicken-and-egg theory and ...

Non-integral:

It was the chicken that came first (Farmer, 2009).
Previous research showed that it was the chicken that came first (Farmer, 2009).
The findings were confirmed later (Farmer & Lay, 2009).

1.2 One work by one author:

Farmer (2009) pointed out that the chicken-and-egg question was considered impossible to answer. Furthermore, Farmer stated that ...

1.3 One work by multiple authors:

Two authors:

Farmer and Hatch (2009) compared free-range eggs ...

Three or more authors:

- As first citation in text:

Framer, Hatch, and Lay (2009) advocate that ...

- As subsequent first citation per paragraph thereafter:

Framer et al. (2009) furthermore explore ...

- Subsequent citations after first citation within a paragraph (omit year):

Framer et al. found ...

1.4 Works with no author:

The book *Free-range eggs* (2009) is ...

1.5 Authors with the same surname:

A. M. Farmer (2004) and P. M. Farmer (2006) studied ...

1.6 Secondary sources

Lay's observations (as cited in Farmer, 2009) ...

1.7 Personal communication

A. M. Farmer (personal communication, March 21, 2009)

1.8 Two or more works published in the same year and in-press works:

Several studies (Farmer, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Lay, 2005, in press-a, in press-b) discuss ...

1.9 Direct quotation (quotations of fewer than 40 words): incorporate into text, cite word by word, use double quotation marks, and indicate exact location

As Barn (2005) points out, “in the hands of an experimental scientist, the question is simple and straightforward” (p. 24).

or

Commenting on earlier research results, Barn (2005) points out that “in the hands of an experimental scientist, the question is simple and straightforward” (p. 24) and notes ...

or

It has been pointed out that “in the hands of an experimental scientist, the question is simple and straightforward” (Barn, 2005, p. 24).

1.10 Long quotations (usually those of 40 words or more): start on a new line, indent them about 1,27 cm from the left margin, use double spacing for the entire quotation, do not use quotation marks, put source after final punctuation mark.

Farmer (2007) questioned the validity of the results:

Xxx xxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxx xx xx x xxx xxx.
 XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXX XX XXXXXXXXXXXXX XX X XXXXXXXX XX XXXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXX XX XXXX XXXXX XXXX. Xx xx xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxx xxx
 xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx
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 xx xxxxxxxxxxxx xx xxxxx-xxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxx xx xxx xxxxxx,
 xxx xxxxxxxxxxxx, xx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx. XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXX
 xxxxxx xx xxxxxxxx xx xxxxxxxxxxxx. (p. 26)

Several studies questioned the validity of the results:

Xxx xxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxx xx xx x xxx xxx.
 XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXX XX XXXXXXXXXXXXX XX X XXXXXXXX XX XXXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXX XX XXXX XXXXX XXXX. Xx xx xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxx xxx
 xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx
 xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

xx xxxxxxxxxxxx xx xxxxx-xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxx xx xxx xxxxxx,
 xxx xxxxxxxxxxxx, xx xxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxx. Xxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxx xxxxx
 xxxxxx xx xxxxxxx xx xxxxxxxxxxx. (Farmer, 2009, pp. 25-26)

2. List of references items

References should be placed at the end of the paper on a new page, in the References section, listing each source cited in the text alphabetically by the author's name (or by a work's title when no author is given). Double space all reference entries and use hanging indent format (indent about seven spaces or 0.7 cm).

Entire book, print version, single author	Farmer, A. M. (2009). <i>The chicken-and-egg problem</i> . Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
Entire book, print version, joint authors	Farmer, A. M., & Farmer, P. M. (2009). <i>The chicken-and-egg problem: Mystery solved</i> (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Buck, Starr, & Winnipeg.
Electronic version of print book	Farmer, A. M. (2009). <i>The chicken-and-egg problem</i> . Retrieved from http://books.google.com/books
Edited book	Farmer, A. M., & Farmer, P. M. (Eds.). (2009). <i>The science of unsolvable problems</i> . New York, NY: Guilford Press.
Book chapter, print version	Mayhem, A. D. (2009). The conundrum. In A. M. Farmer & P. M. Farmer (Eds.), <i>The science of unsolvable problems</i> (pp. 25–47). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
Journal article/single author (Paginated by Volume)	Barn, I. (2006). The chicken issue revisited. <i>Annual Review of Bird Science</i> , 13, 24–36.
Journal article/single author (Paginated by Issue)	Lay, M. (2009). The egg issue revisited. <i>Bird Research</i> , 8(1), 47–58.

Journal article/multiple Authors	Farmer, P. M., & Farmer, A. M. (2007). Theoretical bases of the chicken-and-egg problem. <i>Applied Science</i> , 1(3), 1–47.
	Farmer, P. M., Barn, I., & Farmer, A. M. (2008). Which came first? The chicken or the egg? <i>Knowledge Management Research</i> , 2(9), 65–74.
Paper presented at a conference	Lay, M. (2007, February). <i>The chicken-and-egg debate: Which came first?</i> Paper presented at the Annual Conference of Philosophers, Denver, Colorado.
	Tollas, B. (2008, May). <i>Új eredmények a tyúk vagy tojás kérdéskör genetikai hátteréről. [New results concerning the genetic basis of the chicken or egg problem.]</i> . Paper presented at the Genetics Symposium, Madrid, Spain.
Unpublished doctoral dissertation	Farmer, A. M. (2004). <i>Revisiting the ‘Which came first — The chicken or the egg?’ problem</i> (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge.
Unpublished thesis	Farmer, A. M. (2004). <i>The chicken or the egg: A new perspective</i> (Unpublished master’s thesis). Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge.

Electronic sources

Journal article without DOI (when DOI is not available)	Kálmos, B. (2011). Language learner errors and dyslexia: A tale of unlikely parallels. <i>WoPaLP</i> , 5, 1-15. Retrieved from http://langped.elte.hu/WoPaLP.htm
Online magazine article	Troy, T. (2010, March). Tips for language learners: The AL perspective. <i>AL Review</i> , 11(5). Retrieved from http://www.al-review.org/AL/

Newsletter article, no author	Dyslexia in focus. (2012, January). <i>IATEFL-H Newsletter</i> . Retrieved from http://iatefl.hu/
Online newspaper article	Pickler, O. M. (2012, February 11). Look before you leap. <i>The New York Times</i> . Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com
Electronic-only book	Turin, R. (n.d.). <i>Pragmatics at work</i> . Retrieved from http://www.onlineling.com/showitem.245
Entry in an online reference work	Swine, E. (2006). Translation studies. In Z. E. Black (Ed.), <i>The Oxford encyclopaedia of translation</i> (Spring 2005 ed.). Retrieved from http://enciclopedia.ox.edu/entries/translation/
Podcast	Huron, D. (Producer). (2006. May 20). <i>Suggestopedia</i> [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from http://www.elf-radio.com/
Blog post	Silva, Z. (2010, June 27). The best approach to ESL? [Web log comment]. Retrieved from http://www.double.org.au/the1stESL
Video blog post	Hewitt, M. (2011, September 11). Using the Berlitz method. [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mjb83RDTUNy

3. Formatting tables and figures

Use Arabic numerals to number tables (Table 1, Table 2) and figures (Figure 1, Figure 2). The number of the table and the title go above the table (see Figure 1). The number of the figure and the title go below the figure (see Figure 2).

Measure	Younger group		Older group		<i>F</i> (1, 46)	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Years of education	13.92	1.28	16.33	2.43	18.62	<.001
Beck Anxiety Inventory	9.39	5.34	6.25	6.06	3.54	.066
BADS–DEX	20.79	7.58	13.38	8.29	10.46	.002
STAI–State	45.79	4.44	47.08	3.48	1.07	.306
STAI–Trait	45.64	4.50	45.58	3.15	0.02	.963
Digit Symbol Substitution	49.62	7.18	31.58	6.56	77.52	<.001
Generative naming	46.95	9.70	47.17	12.98	.004	.951
Vocabulary	33.00	3.52	35.25	3.70	4.33	.043
Digit Span–Backward	8.81	2.09	8.25	2.15	0.78	.383
Arithmetic	16.14	2.75	14.96	3.11	1.84	.182
Mental Control	32.32	3.82	23.75	5.13	40.60	<.001
Self-Ordered Pointing	1.73	2.53	9.25	9.40	13.18	.001
WCST perseverative errors	0.36	0.66	1.83	3.23	4.39	.042

Figure 1. Sample APA formatted table with a note.

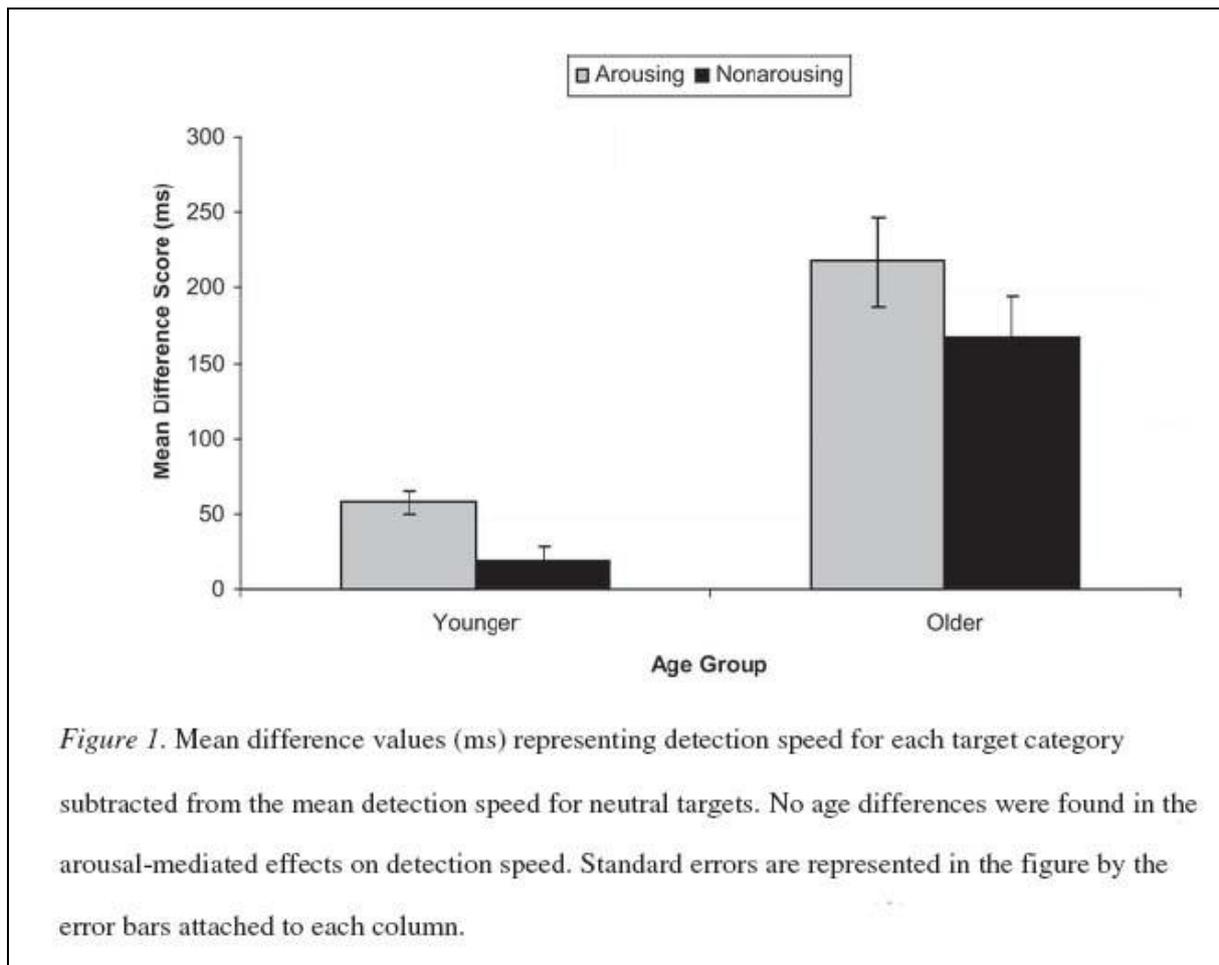


Figure 2 Sample APA formatted figure.

4. Formatting the text

Typeface: Times New Roman, 12-point font size.

Line spacing: double-space between all text lines; single-spacing or one-and-a-half spacing in tables and figures.

Margins: uniform margins of 2.54 cm*.

Indentation: indent the first line of every paragraph (5-7 spaces or ½ inch), left align all remaining lines**; exceptions: the abstract, block quotations, titles and headings, table titles and notes, figure captions.

* for BA and MA theses you should set the left margin at 3 cm because 0.5 cm is usually taken up when the thesis is bound

** for seminar papers and BA and MA theses you may choose to justify lines

For sample APA formatted papers visit the [APA homepage](http://www.apastyle.org) (http://www.apastyle.org) and study the following contents:

[APA Tutorial](http://flash1r.apa.org/apastyle/basics/index.htm)

<http://flash1r.apa.org/apastyle/basics/index.htm>

[APA Documentation Style](#) [see Social Sciences section/Documenting sources]
http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/#p04_c09_o

[APA Documentation Style](#)
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

[APA Instruction videos](#)
<http://library.nmu.edu/guides/userguides/apavideos.htm>

[APA Style Blog](#)
<http://blog.apastyle.org/>

[APA Supplemental Materials](#)
<http://apastyle.org/manual/supplement/index.aspx>

[APA Formatted Sample Papers](#)
<http://search.apastyle.org/?query=&facet=stylecontenttype:Sample%20paper>