

How to write a literature review

July 14

Day 1: 9:00-12:00

- **What is your goal for this workshop?**

- What are the purposes of literature review?**
- In other words, what does the researcher need to do in conducting or writing a good literature review?**

The purposes of a literature review

- What is already known about the topic? Are there inconsistencies in previous findings? Will your study fill a **gap** in the existing literature?
- What are the **controversies** surrounding the topic? Are there unanswered research questions?
- Are there **research strategies** and specific data collection approaches that have or have not been productive in investigations of topics similar to yours?
- Can previous studies help **interpret** your study results

The literature review should be critical as well as descriptive

- What is the **relation** of one article to another?
- What are the **methods** used by the authors?
- What **theories/previous authors** influenced this author?
- Identify **major reference sources** and work outwards to lesser ones.

Objectives of the workshop

- **To understand the purposes of doing a literature review**
- **To learn and practice the process of writing a literature review:**
 - **to identify key information in previous studies**
 - **to analyze and compare previous studies**
 - **to identify the best pattern to organize the review**
 - **to write the review, highlighting the similarities and differences among the studies**
 - **to summarize the key information which leads to the present study / research questions**

Day 1 (July 14)

Objectives/Contents	Time
What is your goal for this workshop? (Ling Shi)	9:00-9:10
Literature review analysis (Luxin Yang)	9:10-10:00
Steps of doing a literature review (Ling Shi)	10:20-12:00
Searching the literature (Luxin Yang) Analyzing and comparing previous studies (Ling Shi)	14:00-15:30
Arranging and organizing the literature review (Ling Shi)	15:50-17:20
撰写反思日记	17:20-17:30
小班讨论	19:00-20:30

Literature Review

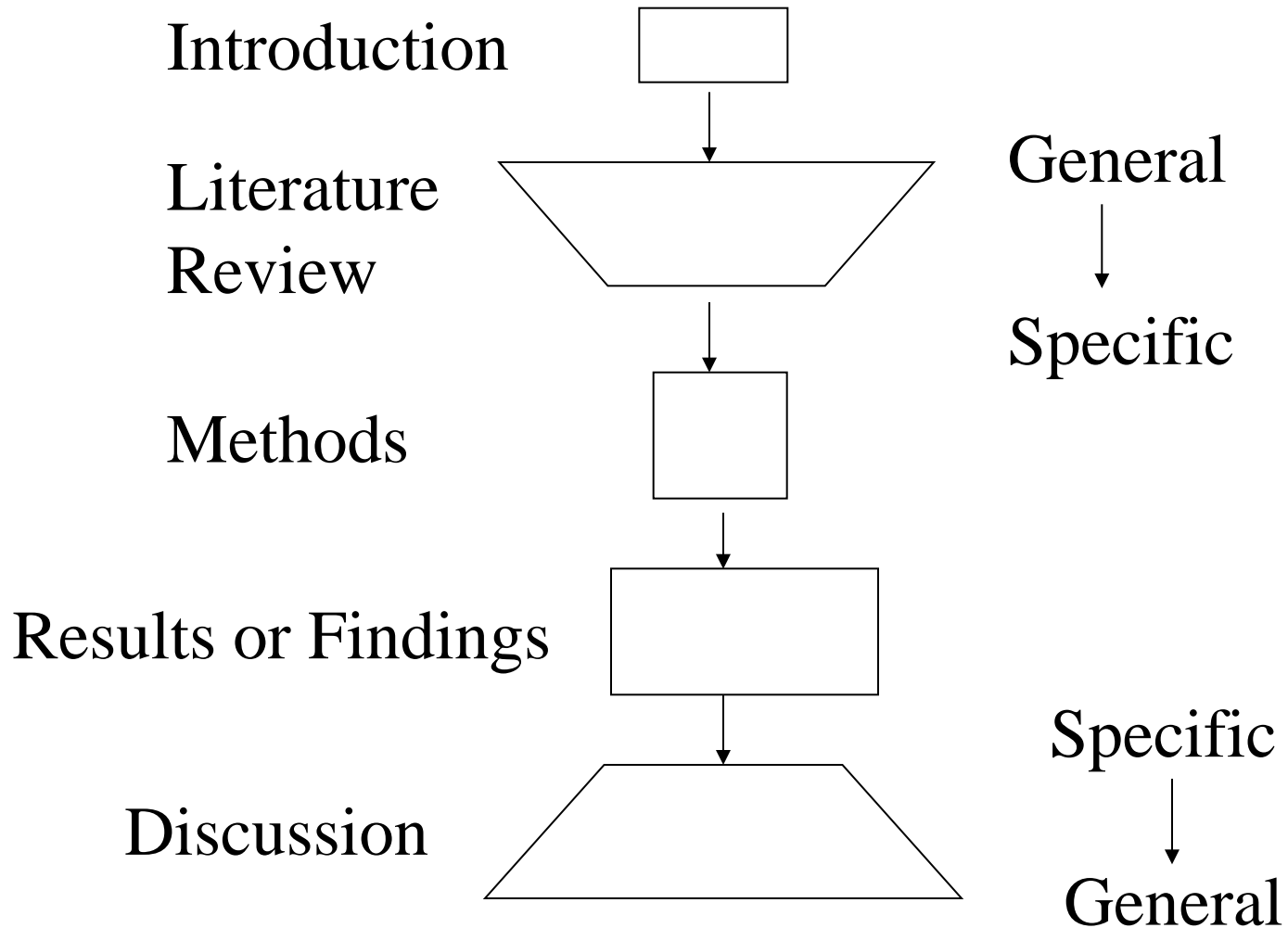
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A typical research paper or thesis



the create-a-research-space (or CARS) model

Task 1: complete the table about Shi (2006)

Source	Focus	Participants	Methods	Findings
Shi (2006)				

What is a review of the literature?

A literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers.

A literature review is not a list describing or summarizing one piece of literature after another

What to include in literature review?

- Review the related theory (optional)
- Critically review the related studies
- Indicate the gap in the existing research and lead to your research questions

You are not trying to list all the material published, but to synthesize and evaluate it according to the guiding concept of your thesis or research question.

Moves in literature review

Move 1 Establishing a research territory

Move 2 Establishing a niche

Move 3 Occupying the niche

Move 1 Establishing a research territory

- a. By showing that the general research area is important, central, interesting, problematic, or relevant in some way (optional)
- b. By introducing and reviewing items of previous research in the area (obligatory)

Move 2 Establishing a niche

- a. indicating a gap in the previous research,
- b. extending previous knowledge in some way (obligatory)

Move 3 Occupying the niche

- a. By outlining purposes or stating the nature of the present research (obligatory)
- b. By listing research questions or hypotheses
- c. By announcing principal findings
- d. By stating the value of the present research
- e. By indicating the structure of the RP

Task 2

Read Shi (2006), find out how many sections are included in Literature Review, and then figure out the moves in the first section of Literature Review.

Task 3

Read the first section of Literature Review in Shi (2006) and find out how the author organizes the previous studies.

Synthesizing and critically analyzing the literature

Do not simply describe - synthesize

- look for patterns, explanations for different findings**

Evaluate critically

- consider conceptual/methodological strengths & weaknesses**
- point to issues that future studies should address**

Use a professional tone

- be even-handed; do not overstate criticisms; remember that all research has strengths and weaknesses**

Shape this as a logical precursor to your study

Task 4: Read Shi's (2006) literature review

Section	Paragraph	Key clause	Main ideas	Moves	Maintain the flow of information
	P1 (S1-7) P2 P3				

Maintaining the flow of information

F1: Establishing an old to new pattern of information flow

F1a: Exact or almost exact repetition

F1b: Repetition through synonyms

F1c: Repetition through *this*+NOUN

F2: Using linking phrases

10:20-12:00

- **Steps of doing a literature review**

Group discussion (B)

–Have you done a literature review? Compare your experiences and challenges in small groups.

Literature review: Two rounds

- **Before the study**
 - **To narrow down the topic and identify research questions**
- **After data collection and analyses**
 - **To update the review to cover issues emerged from data analyses**

The process of writing a literature review

- 1. Selecting a research topic/question**
- 2. Identifying the key concepts**
- 3. Searching for published studies**
- 4. Analyzing to identify patterns
(annotated bibliography)**
- 5. Arranging and organizing**
- 6. Write**

Step 1. Identify a research topic/question

- **Research topic**
- **E.g., Effectiveness of peer review in writing classes**
- **Research question**
- **E.g., How do ESL students in the participating high school use peer feedback in revising their writing?**

Your research (C)

- **What kind of research would you like to do?**
- **What is the research **topic**?**
- **What is your research **question**?**
- **Please write down and share your research question in pairs or small groups**

- **How do you evaluate a research question?**

Research question

- **Research questions should:**
 - Be clear
 - Be neither too broad nor too narrow; **Be researchable**
 - **Be important** or relate to established theory and research and allow the researcher to make a contribution to existing knowledge
 - Indicate **the type of research** and **specify the sample**

Research question

1. A research question should **be researchable.**

Compare:

- Should the TOEFL admission scores be over 600?
- Do you students with a TOEFL score below 600 have problems with their studies?

Research question

2. A research question should be **important and create new knowledge**

Compare:

- Do children like stories?
- Do children like stories write better?

Research question

3. A research question **should indicate the type of research**

- How many fourth graders have a computer? (**descriptive**)
- What is the relationship between children's computer experiences and their reading ability? (**relationship**)
- How do native and non-native English speaking students differ in their attitudes to peer review? (**comparison**)

Research question

4. A research question should **specify the sample**

- Do children with computer experiences write better?

In groups (D)

- Now review the research question developed by each other.
- Do you think it is a good one? If not, how can you improve it?
- Research questions should:
 - Be clear
 - Be neither too broad nor too narrow; **Be researchable**
 - **Be important** or relate to established theory and research and allow the researcher to make a contribution to existing knowledge
 - Indicate **the type of research** and **specify the sample**

Step Two

1. Selecting a research topic/question
2. Identifying the key concepts
3. Searching for published studies
4. Analyzing to identify patterns (annotated bibliography)
5. Arranging and organizing
6. Write

Step 2. Identifying Key Concepts

- **Observation:** We noticed that some ESL students get low scores when responding to writing prompts (for LPI) that require specific knowledge
- **Research topic:** Topical knowledge in ESL writing test
- What are the **major and minor concepts** associated with the observation / research topic?

Examples of the concepts (Topical knowledge in ESL writing test)

- specific knowledge required by the prompt;
- general knowledge required by the prompt;
- ESL students;
- international students;
- university students;
- writing prompts;
- standardized language proficiency tests;
- testing scores;
- writing performance

Concepts (Topical knowledge in ESL writing test)

Topical knowledge	Writing tests	Students/test takers
specific	Standardized English writing tests: LPI	ESL
general	Writing prompts	International
	Writing performance	University students
	Test scores	

The above keywords can be used as searchable terms to investigate the literature.

Research topic and lit review

- The effects of topical knowledge on ESL students' writing performance in standardized writing tests
- **Literature review**: Studies that directly investigated the effects of topical knowledge on ESL writing at the university level

Your research topic and concepts (See E in handout)

Research topic or question:

Major concept	Major concept	Major concept
Minor concepts	Minor concepts	Minor concepts
Minor concepts	Minor concepts	Minor concepts
Minor concepts	Minor concepts	Minor concepts

- **This is how you prepare for library search to write a literature review.**

Steps

- 1. Selecting a research topic/question**
- 2. Identifying the key concepts**
- 3. Searching for published studies**
- 4. Analyzing to identify patterns**
- 5. Arranging and organizing**
- 6. Write**