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Literature Review



L3 Research Methodology

Groups: 3/4/5

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What is literature review?

Literature review comprises of going through prior knowledge about a specific topic for the aims of:

- ▶ informing oneself about the existing theories and findings related to the topic.
- ▶ placing the research within the existing body of knowledge
- ▶ Establishing the research purpose and significance.

Functions of literature review

- It brings clarity and focus to the research problem

Reading about the literature available on a specific topic helps the researcher to identify what aspects have been examined by other researchers, the gaps they identify and their suggestions for further research. This leads to working out the research problem again with more clarity and relevance to the existing body of knowledge.

- It improves the research methodology

Going through literature gets the researcher acquainted with methods and procedures used by other researchers, their advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, they make an informed decision and selection for the appropriate method for their research.

- It contextualize the findings of the research

After obtaining the results of the research, they need to be compared with the findings of others to see how they contribute the existing body of knowledge.

How to Do a Literature Review

➤ Searching the existing literature.

Books, journals and the internet can serve as resources for selecting appropriate bibliography for one's research. Examining the list of contents of the books and the journals as well as reading the abstracts of relevant articles help the researcher to avoid reading the whole works to find out at the end that they do not discuss the target topic. After that, the researcher selects their reading list that consists of relevant and up-to-date information. On the internet, using key words to search in search engines such as *Yahoo* or *Google* or academic databases such as *JSTOR* (multidisciplinary) and *ERIC* (education sciences) can offer scholarly published material with immense speed.

➤ Reviewing the selected literature

After selecting the appropriate resources, the researcher needs to read them critically to gather themes and issues related to the topic. The information gathered should be divided into themes. While reading, the following elements should be noted:

- The theories related to the topic and their criticism.
- The methodologies used by other researchers and their criticism
- The differences of opinion among researchers.
- The confirmed findings.
- The extent the findings of a specific research can be generalised into othersituations.
- The gaps in information and the areas where little or nothing is known



► **Developing a theoretical framework**

After sorting out information obtained from resources into main themes and theories, a number of them could be related directly or indirectly to the target research topic and constitute the background upon which it is based. Therefore, they constitute the theoretical framework of one's research. A theoretical framework is a general framework that describes all the theories and the issues in which a study is rooted.

► **Developing a conceptual framework**

A conceptual framework describes the aspects selected from the theoretical framework to become the basis for research. It is specific and it is related only to the investigated problem. The theoretical framework constitute all the theories put forward to describe or explain a phenomenon whereas the conceptual framework provides specific definite structure related directly to the research topic.

Notice the following figure that represents *A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO EXPLORE THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA*

The researcher constructs a conceptual framework to be used as a guide for the data collection and analysis. This conceptual framework is not created out nowhere, but rather it is rooted and inspired by major theories in the field of second language learning. These theories represent the theoretical framework of the work.

