

A Reflection on Literature Review: Transforming Teaching Observations into Research

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Abstract:

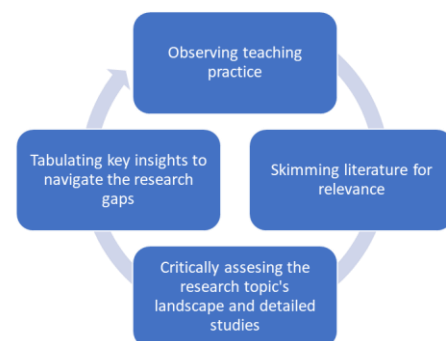
This reflection details a practical approach to literature review, emphasizing observation-driven curiosity and structured synthesis. A time-bound, strategic reading methodology, coupled with meticulous tabulation, facilitated the identification of research gaps and the articulation of a coherent narrative, transforming a complex task into an insightful research foundation.

As a research-based Master graduate in TESOL and presently independent researcher, I have consistently found that navigating the inherent gaps within the vast landscape of established theories and studies demands both informational sensitivity and intellectual rigor. The iterative process of literature review extends beyond the pre-study phase, continuing throughout the entire research journey, and even after implementation has commenced.

For me, I have observed that initiating research from a point of genuine curiosity derived from real-world teaching practice, rather than solely from initial literature immersion, might fuel more motivation for one to inquire and resolve. This belief underpins my reflection on the silent but pivotal journey that I have been through to conduct literature review for my Masters'

Thesis and recently published research papers.

Based on my humble knowledge and personal experience in research, I would like to propose a practical four-step literature review process that helps transform insights of teaching practice observation into academic research ideas.



First, I self-imposed a virtual urgency by setting stringent deadlines to rapidly sift through as many articles as possible in a limited period of time to determine the relevance of each paper to my research topic. This involved a strategic skimming of

abstracts, headings, sub-headings, and conclusions during the initial reading, which helped me grasp a quick comprehension of the paper’s core content and filter them for deeper analysis in the second reading.

After screening, I spent more time deliberately reading the filtered papers ensued, prioritizing comprehension and analytical engagement. I challenged my understanding of the broader discourse and sparked my curiosity about every single study. I tracked the chronological progression and evolution of the research topic to understand its overall landscape while evaluating the methodologies, findings, and limitations of each study.

In my experience, developing a comprehensive table for literature review is a key to success. This table serves as a repository for key insights of each paper, including similarities and connections between studies, inconsistencies and divergences, and my own interpretations and critical analyses. This structured approach not only facilitated the synthesis of disparate findings but also allowed the identification of potential research gaps and the articulation of a coherent research narrative.

Here is an example of the literature review tabulation that I have developed for my Master’s Thesis topic - silence in learning (Thanh-My, 2020)

Table 2.1: Summary table of authors and sources interacting with silent engagement pedagogy

No.	References	Pedagogical principles from theorists	Pedagogical discussion from authors who quote the pedagogy	Classification of key points	Comments on usefulness and connection with SEP	Questions posed by the researcher of the current study
1	Tomlinson, B. (2015). Key concepts in applied linguistics: Key issues in EFL Coursebook. <i>ELLA</i> 15, pp. 171-180.	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A valued coursebook is a teaching resource which not only allows reinforcement and revision but also provides facilitation of language acquisition. - Coursebook should be used flexibly to cater each individual and should be designed in such a way allowing learners to autonomously choose which activities to do and which sequence to do them. - The flexibility in adapting coursebook should be in aim of stimulating and engaging students emotionally and cognitively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criteria of a good coursebook - How coursebook should be used and designed - Aim of a coursebook 	The study shows that the coursebook should facilitate the different learning styles. This idea coincides with the criteria of designing teaching resources in SEP (connected to Review step in RADAR)	What are teacher’s roles in conducting the activities designed to facilitate different learning styles?

In conclusion, literature review is a dynamic and iterative process, demanding not only active consumption of existing knowledge, but also active engagement and critical analysis, and a commitment to synthesizing diverse perspectives from readings. The technique that I have learnt and practised might consume time and require meticulous note-taking and tabulation. However, it shapes the foundation of my understanding on my research topic and also reinforces my observation-driven curiosity and critical thinking skills in the pursuit of the gap in literature for my potential and meaningful research.

Reference

Thanh-My, N. (2020). *How silence assists verbal practice in English: Learner perspectives* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam.



My Thanh Nguyen is presently a Teaching Quality Manager at Vietnam-USA Society English Centers (VUS) and a visiting lecturer of English and Medical English at the Faculty of Medicine, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, HCMC. She was involved in presenter, keynote speaker, and reviewer roles for different academic conferences locally and internationally. Her academic interests lie in the domain of silence and solitude, cognition and emotion in language learning, and teacher leadership and management.