

Bridging Theory and Practice: A Strategic Approach to Writing the Literature Review

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Abstract:

This article presents strategies for KMUTT postgraduate students to write effective literature reviews. It emphasizes using credible sources such as Google Scholar, TCI, and Scopus, alongside the CARS model for structure. Three organizational approaches are introduced: theme-based, chronology-based, and methodology-based. The article underscores the significance of research methods and proper citation, bridging theory and practice to help students create critical, coherent, and ethical literature reviews.

Writing a literature review is not merely about summarizing previous studies; it requires critically engaging with existing knowledge to position and contextualize one's own research. As an English lecturer at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), where I taught Academic Skills to MA students in Applied English Studies under the School of Liberal Arts, I guided my students through the process of writing effective literature reviews. This process involved selecting relevant studies, synthesizing their findings, and presenting the academic conversation (see Table 1). In this reflection, I share the strategies I employed to help students navigate these tasks successfully.

Table 1

Key Steps of the Implementation Process

Steps	Main Focus
Identifying Sources	Using academic databases like Google Scholar, university library databases, and specialized databases such as TCI and Scopus to find peer-reviewed articles.
Organizing Information	Understanding and using the CARS model.

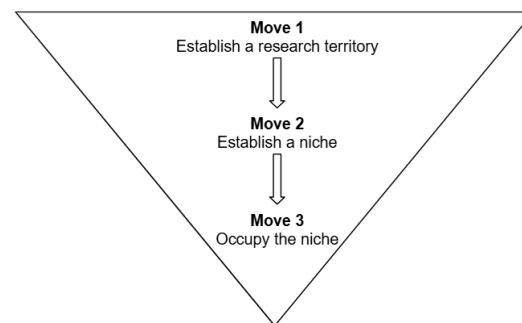
using the CARS Model	
Understanding Research Methodologies	Recognizing the differences between quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches is crucial for critically analyzing the literature.
Mastering Citation Practices	Understanding and practicing proper citations for academic integrity.

The first step in crafting a literature review is identifying high-quality sources. Many students might initially make the mistake of relying on general web searches, which often lead to unreliable sources. To address this, I emphasized the importance of using Google Scholar, the university library database, and academic databases like TCI and Scopus, which provide access to peer-reviewed articles essential for establishing a solid research foundation. It is crucial not only to gather studies but also to evaluate their relevance and quality, ensuring a meaningful synthesis of findings.

Once relevant literature has been gathered, organizing it coherently is the next challenge. I introduced my students to Swales’s (1990) CARS model, guiding them through the process of establishing the research territory, identifying gaps or controversies, and positioning their work as a contribution to

the field (see Figure 1). This model encourages students to move beyond merely summarizing literature and instead frame their research as filling gaps identified in previous studies (Ammon, 2023; Swales, 1990).

Figure 1
Swales’s CARS Model



Additionally, I provided students with three organizational strategies for structuring their reviews: theme-based, chronology-based, and methodology-based approaches. The theme-based approach organizes studies by central themes, the chronology-based approach arranges them by publication date, and the methodology-based approach compares different research designs. By encouraging students to select the approach that best aligns with their research questions, I helped them ensure a coherent review structure.

Another critical aspect of writing a literature review is understanding the various research methodologies and their implications. I focused on helping students distinguish between quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches, as understanding these

differences allowed them to engage more critically with the methodologies used in the studies they reviewed and to compare findings more effectively. Moreover, mastering citation practices is essential for maintaining academic integrity and accurately conveying an author's stance. These citation practices helped students integrate sources responsibly and maintain academic ethics.

In conclusion, a well-crafted literature review is essential to the research process, providing a foundation for future studies and positioning the researcher within the broader academic discourse. By employing effective search strategies, applying the CARS model, organizing their reviews thoughtfully, engaging critically with methodologies, and mastering citation practices, students are equipped to write comprehensive and analytical literature reviews. Ultimately, a successful literature review bridges theory and practice, paving the way for innovative and impactful research.

References:

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