



Aalto University
School of Business

Master's Thesis Seminar

26E99905

Session #3

Literature Review & Writing

Spring 2019
January 30, 2019

Virpi Outila & Max Dike

Some feedback on Assignment 2

- Again, well done!
- Valuable practice, even if the final theme is not yet clear.
- Justifications had different emphases: personal interest, experiences, career goals, past research driven.
- It appears that tighter focus could be valuable in many proposals.
- Some had more edited “flow” than others – good practice for final thesis. Metatext is important in linking thoughts.
- Theoretical anchoring understandably often still rather thin.
- Mostly qualitative approach: often single cases.
- Schedulings appeared realistic.

Reflection points (~ 20 minutes)

Split into groups of 4-5 people and discuss the following questions with regard to the research plan you have written:

- 1. What was your approach to formulate your research questions?***
- 2. How did you choose the methodology for your study?***
- 3. What did you learn from writing the research plan?***

So where are we?

- Now you have an idea of what a good thesis looks like
- You have written a provisional research plan
 - Remember it's an iterative thing!

Next steps in the process:

- Literature review
 - Continue scanning/reading → start analyzing, writing & synthesizing
- Planning the empirical work
 - Securing access and deciding on your research design
- One-on-one work with your supervisor



Aalto University
School of Business

Literature review

Why literature review?

- It helps the author to:
 - Identify your academic audience; i.e. Who am I talking to? Who is talking to me? No academic research should exist in a void.
 - Understand what has been done previously in the field; how has it evolved and why, and what is the current state-of-art.
 - Explore and refine your research question vis-a-vis your academic field. Do this until you 'get' what you are doing.
- It helps the reader to:
 - Recognize that you are qualified to talk about your research questions as a part of the academic knowledge-creating community. Show what you know!
 - Understand how your research question relates to existing bodies of knowledge. Show us what novel knowledge you create!
 - Familiarize him/herself with your research tradition in case it is novel

Remember this

- Literature review is a very time consuming phase of thesis writing process
 - The more time you spend upfront, the more time & problems will be saved at the end
- Literature review is also at times the most frustrating phase:
 - Lots of new information;
 - Lots of avenues for further development;
 - Slow advance and risk of getting lost...
 - Conceptual confusion
 - This is particularly true for you, as you (likely) may lack the cognitive scripts through which professional researchers handle large quantities of academic knowledge
 - But it can also be quite exciting, as you get to really read into stuff that matters for you

A Literature Review is a *Work Process*

1. Identify and read! (Relevant journal articles, academic books and book chapters)
2. Understand what you read! (You can't write about things you don't understand. This can be hard. Discuss with others, make frequent conceptual notes).
3. Make connections to your research! (How does what you read relate to your research questions?)
4. Analyze the importance of the connections! (Different texts are more/less central to your research. You can make a list if you like)
5. Evaluate the literature! (What are the strengths/weaknesses of theories, frameworks, research designs vis-à-vis your research)
6. Create your gap/position! (Knowing the literature, you can now argue for the importance of what you intend to do in a convincing manner)

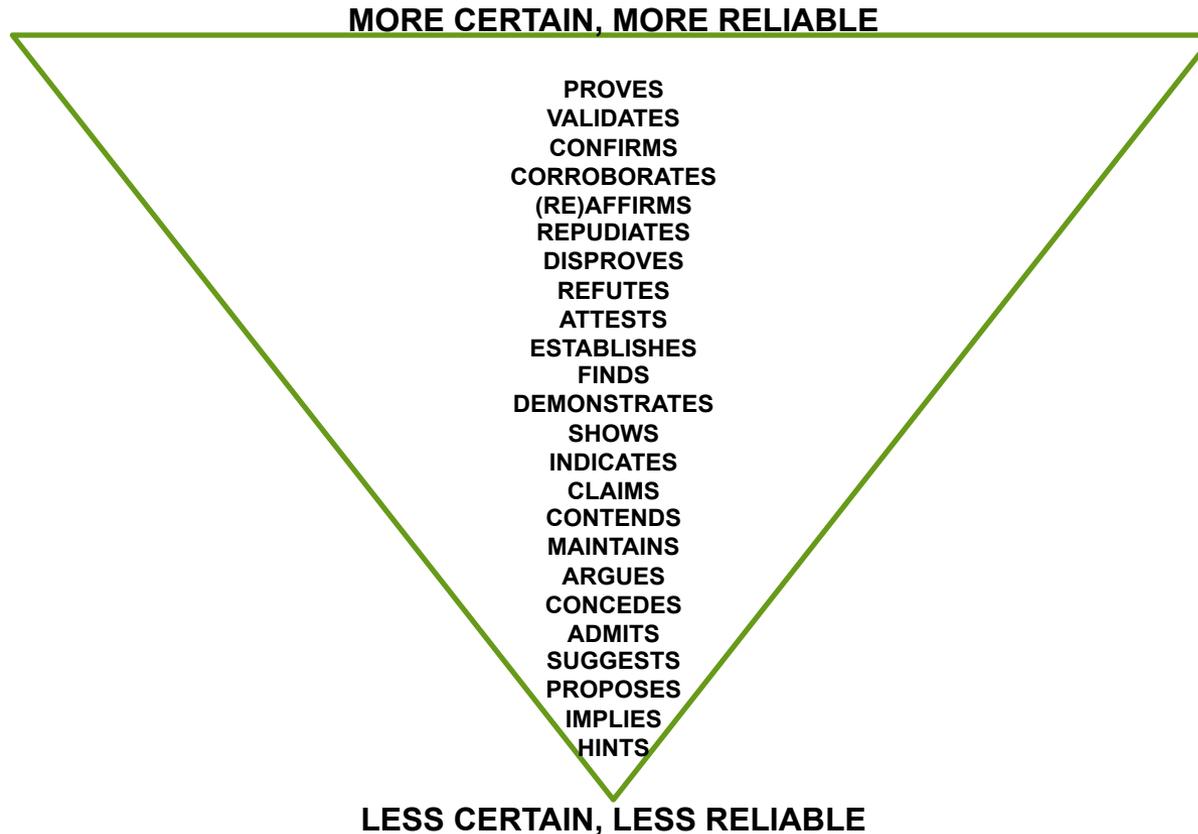
Group discussion (~ 5 minutes)

**Split into groups of 4-5 people,
discuss what makes for a good literature review?**

What makes for a good literature review?

- **Focused:** Put weight on the literature that you've identified as most relevant for exploring your research questions. Also remember that a literature review analyzes the current state of your field; this is not the section to talk (extensively) about *your* ideas.
- Not just review but a **synthesis**. Remember to explore both connections between the different texts, and between the texts and your research questions.
- The use of **figures, models and summary tables** tends to increase the readability of a literature review
- Include both **classics** and **recent research articles**; but most likely you will have a heavier focus on recent research (avoid pursuing dead leads)
- **Avoid referring to single article or book** as center of review; pursue a dialogue between several key sources.
- In a Master's thesis, the literature review is important for **building your credibility**. You need to show that you understand your chosen area to a degree that makes you qualified to talk about it.

Strategies to reduce the strength of claim (Swales & Feak, 1997)



Three functions of referencing

Comments on the reporting style

- Propose, suggest, put forward, claim, maintain, attest, point out, highlight, summarize, mention, argue for, argue against, report, accentuate, belittle, value, hypothesize

Conveys information about the research activity

- Compare, contrast, contradict, add (to), continue from, deny, extend, complement, supplement, question, depart from, deviate from, follow, support, align with, analyze, observe, examine, investigate, define, determine, select, choose, survey

Conveys information about the present researcher's attitude

- Fail, ignore, succeed (in), manage (to), explain, show, corroborate, confirm, provide evidence (for), prove, validate, attest, establish, imply

Useful conjunctions...

Sequence	Result	Emphasis
First, second, third Next, last, finally Another Also In conclusion To summarize	So As a result As a consequence (of) Therefore Thus Consequently Hence Due to Thereby	Undoubtedly Indeed Obviously Generally Admittedly In fact Particularly / in particular Especially Clearly
Addition	Reason	Example
In addition Moreover Further / furthermore What is more	For Because Since As Because of	For example, for instance That is (i.e.) Such as Including Namely
Contrast	Comparison	Cause and effect
However, nevertheless Nonetheless Although / even though But Yet Despite / in spite of In contrast (to) In comparison While Whereas On the other hand On the contrary	Similarly Likewise Also Like Just as Just like Similar to Same as Compared to / with	Since So that Because Owing to... As

If (when) you get lost...

... remember to step back

Go back to your research plan and RQ

Keep it updated, it reminds you of the big picture

And then just use the funnel approach

Remember that the 'how' is at least as important as the 'what':

- How am I working
- What I am writing about

Too many concepts, etc.?

Remedy

**Link everything together
into one storyline**

And guide the reader
from start to finish

Benchmark / learn from articles/
dissertations/theses



Aalto University
School of Business

Reading & Writing

When reading

- **Don't just read the content**
- **But also pay attention to and make notes on how the authors write (make some use of your diary here!)**
 - How they build the story (phrases, arguments, structure of the content)
 - How they synthesize literature & reference
 - How they build their own argument & theoretical framework
 - How they build a contribution

→ **A GREAT WAY TO LEARN TO WRITE**

How to read research articles critically (1/2)

Introduction

- Identify research aims/questions? How are they argued for?
- Identify nature/type of study (scholarly review, empirical work, new or secondary analysis)
- Identify ontological position, epistemological & methodological assumptions.
- Is researcher's value position explicit?

Literature Review

- Summary of previous literature; what theories and concepts are used? Are the meanings of the concepts the same in different articles?
- Point of critique
- Rationale for the study

Methodology

- Context, data, sample, methods; arguments for the choices made?
- Are analysis methods clearly explained? Why is a particular analysis used? Note article format does not often give sufficient room for elaboration!
- Are data and analysis in line with theoretical assumptions?

How to read research articles critically (2/2)

Results

- Results of findings – abstract, (introduction), results section, conclusions
- Rationale for the interpretations

Discussion

- Results consistent with literature
- Results to the contrary

Conclusions

- What did they do?
- Are conclusions appropriately supported by evidence?
- Recommendation for policy/practice/future works

Evaluation

- Are the points argued well? Is the argumentation logically consistent?
Convincing? Does the argument contribute to the discipline?
 - How can I use the text in creating my own argument?
-

Practical advice: Follow the line of argumentation

Argumentation

- What arguments does the author use to support her or his main point?
- How do(es) the author(s) develop their ideas? What is the internal logic of the article?
- What is the scope of application of the argument? Where do the ideas apply?
 - E.g., one country or industry context, type of firm, problem faced, etc.
 - Maybe useful to find one good academic example that you like and more or less follow it as a sort of ‘best practice’

Practical advice: Reading an article

- There are different types of articles
- Quality level varies
- Some ways to position a journal is to check the established rankings
- Sources to consult:
 - Academic Journal Guide
 - <https://charteredabs.org/academic-journal-guide-2015/>
 - Harzing's journal quality list
 - <https://harzing.com/download/jql-2018-07-title.pdf>
 - Julkaisufoorumi (Level 1, 2 & 3)
 - <http://www.tsv.fi/julkaisufoorumi/english.php?lang=en>
 - Aalto University Learning Centre: Journal Assessment
 - <http://libguides.aalto.fi/c.php?g=410651&p=2796760>

There are plenty of interesting articles that do not make to these lists!
Remember to read critically.

Unattributed borrowing or plagiarism

- Purchasing a pre-written paper (either by mail or electronically); letting someone else write a paper/thesis for you or paying someone else to write for you; submitting as your own someone else's unpublished work, either with or without permission
- Quotations or word-for-word citing without clear indication
- Minor changes to the source text, for instance, changing a few words or the word order
- Inadequacies in citing and referencing
- Copy and paste
- Direct translation from the original without indicating the direct quotation
- Autoplagerism – copying your own work
- **NOTE! Do not use snipping tool to copy pictures/tables from other publications! Redo them yourself.**

Paraphrasing & synthesizing

- Paraphrasing = writing the essence of the original text in your own words.
 - As with quotations, paraphrases should be used sparingly – a paper should be a balance between thoughts of other scholars and your original ideas.
- A paper composed mostly or entirely of paraphrases from other authors is very likely to be described as 'patchworking'. Even if you have cited every paraphrase correctly, you've forgotten to include your own analysis!
- Read → Synthesize in your mind → Write in your own words

Paraphrasing & synthesizing

Original

•"Management is a process that is used to accomplish organizational goals; that is, a process that is used to achieve what an organization wants to achieve. An organization could be a business, a school, a city, a group of volunteers, or any governmental entity. Managers are the people to whom this management task is assigned, and it is generally thought that they achieve the desired goals through the key functions of (1) planning, (2) organizing, (3) directing, and (4) controlling."

Luft, R.L., 2000. "Management". In MALONIS, J., ed., "Encyclopedia of Business", 2nd. ed., Detroit: Gale Group.

Paraphrasing

•Luft (2000, p. xx) defines management as “a process that is used to accomplish organizational goals”, and suggests that organizations and groups largely achieve their goals through managerial action. He consequently divides the key roles of management into those of 'planning', 'organising', 'directing' and 'controlling' (Luft, 2000).

Other forms of academic dishonesty

- Fabrication - reporting invented observations or results
- Misrepresentation (falsification)
 - Falsification (misrepresentation) refers to modifying and presenting original observations deliberately so that the results based on those observations are distorted (Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity 2012, p. 33)
- Misappropriation
 - Misappropriation refers to the unlawful presentation of another person's result, idea, plan, observation or data as one's own research (Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity 2012, p 33).

Guidelines for good academic referencing (source: Harzing, 2002)

1. Reproduce the correct reference
2. Refer to the correct publication
3. Do not use 'empty' references
4. Use reliable sources
5. Use generalizable sources for generalized statements
6. Do not misrepresent the content of the reference
7. Make clear which statement references support
8. Check out the original – do not copy some else's references
9. Do not cite out-of-date references
10. Do not be unduly impressed by top journals
11. Do not try to reason away conflicting evidence
12. Actively search for counter evidence

One possible strategy

Three steps approach

1. “Get all in” – collect all the info and ideas that you found / have in the document
2. “Create a story” – cut unnecessary stuff and build a coherent story
3. “Finalize it” – clarify, improve & polish

How to get started with your writing and plan your schedule

How to get started with your writing

- **Freewriting**

- Freewriting is the easiest way to get words on paper
- Force yourself to write without stopping for ten minutes

- **Benefits**

- Getting unblocked
- Warming up
- Finding out what you have to say
- Finding your own words: discovering and developing your personal voice
- Improving your writing
- Maintaining and strengthening your writing practice

Let's practice

- **Freewrite for 5 minutes about your thesis topic**
 - What do you know and/or think about your topic
 - Write without breaks
 - Let your ideas flow without controlling or censoring

Creating a writing habit: Time and place

- Where do you write?
- When do you write? (time of the day)
- What and how to write?
- After writing, reward yourself
- Plan each night the tasks for the next day

Not waiting for inspiration

-> feelings follow action

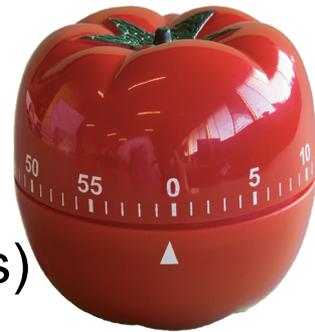
Ways to set daily writing goals

Time-based goals

- Amount of time every day
- Useful to break into small units (4x15 minutes; 3x30 minutes, etc)
- Pros: easy to plan, likely to start producing something eventually (combined with freewriting technique)
- Cons: difficult to anticipate how much text you will produce each day

Pomodoro-technique

- Idea: to use a timer to break your work into focused time blocks
- Pomodoro: Italian word for “tomato”, kitchen timer
- Choose a task you need to accomplish (e.g. read an article)
- Concentrate on the task for 25 minutes (one pomodoro)
- Work until the timer rings
- Take a short, five-minute break
- Make a new pomodoro
- After few pomodoros, have a longer break (20-30 minutes)
- Your main goal might be 6 tomatoes of work



Ways to set daily writing goals

Text-based goals

- A certain amount of text each day
 - E.g. 300 words, 2 pages
- Pros: rewards fast writing, guarantees you produce something every day
 - Freewriting also useful here
- Cons: difficult to anticipate how long it will take each day

Three types of days

- **Focus days: productivity**
 - At least 80 % of time used for activity that is essential for reaching important goals (writing, data collection, making notes on literature)
 - Freedom from non-productive tasks and details
- **Buffer days: preparation**
 - Dedicated to tasks that make focus days possible (meetings, searching for literature)
 - And other “musts”: emails, phone calls, catching up on other things
- **Free days: recharging**
 - No work; time with family, friends, exercise, fun, relaxation
- **Recommended weekly ratio? E.g. 3:2:2**

Next steps

Meet with your supervisor

- Research plan
- Mind map of the field(s)
- Come with specific questions and timetable in mind

Assignment #3: Memo of supervisor meeting

The student is to contact the supervisor and present the first draft of the research proposal to her/him, and then write a memo of

- 1) what was discussed,
- 2) what you learned,
- 3) what kind of steps you intend to do to improve your proposal,
- 4) what is the timeframe for the improvements.

Assignment #4: Full length research proposal (1/2)

Cover page

Introduction (600-1000 words)

- Make an intriguing start
- Argue why your study is important and interesting.
- Link your study with a specific academic discussion and concepts.
- Clearly indicate what are the academic and non-academic objectives of the study
- Position your study within a specific academic discussion(s)

Literature review (2500-3000)

- Provide the reader with a coherent and focused overview of the current state of the research that is immediately connected to your study. Do a critical literature review
 - Show how the concepts and theories link to your RQs and justifications and how you are going to use them.
-

Assignment #4: Full length research proposal (2/2)

Methodology (400-800 words)

- Briefly describe the general research tradition you will follow in your research design
- Define the sample of your research
- Make sure your research strategies are in line with your research questions and the onto-epistemological starting points of your theoretical frame.

Timetable (100-150 words)

- Make it realistic!
- Table of contents
- Imagine what your research will look like in the end and write a table of contents for the study.

Responsibilities in a supervisory relationship

Student:	Supervisor:
<p>Yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-conducting research <u>independently</u> and according to the highest ethical standards-is being proactive-sends the thesis for comments at least one week before the agreed meeting-sticks to the timetables and deadlines common to everyone for the submission of the thesis	<p>Yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-discusses the choices of theory and methodology, research questions as well as analysis-reads and provides comments max 3 times during the thesis work process-sticks to the timetables and deadlines common to everyone
<p>No:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-works for the supervisor's own research project (unless agreed separately)-demands flexibility and time from the supervisor without fulfilling one's own responsibilities	<p>No:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-writes or re-writes the thesis!-responsible for the corrections made in response to comments-assures that the quality of the thesis is according to student's expectations-is considered as a library or a control body

Literature

- Bosley, Lisa. 2008. “I Don’t Teach Reading’: Critical Reading Instruction in Composition Courses,” *Literacy Research and Instruction* 47:4 (January 2008): 285–308.
- Metcalfe, Mike. 2006. *Reading critically at university*. Sage.
- Shon, Philip. 2012 *How to Read Journal Articles in the Social Sciences: A Very Practical Guide for Students* (SAGE Study Skills Series)
- Wallace, Mike & Wray, Alison. 2006. *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates*. Sage.

What happens when you submit your thesis

- Follow the instructions
- Submit your maturity test
 - And if required, your language exemption
- Submit your thesis to your supervisor via email
- Submit your thesis to mycourses
 - Turnitin check
 - Your supervisor and a second examiner grade your thesis

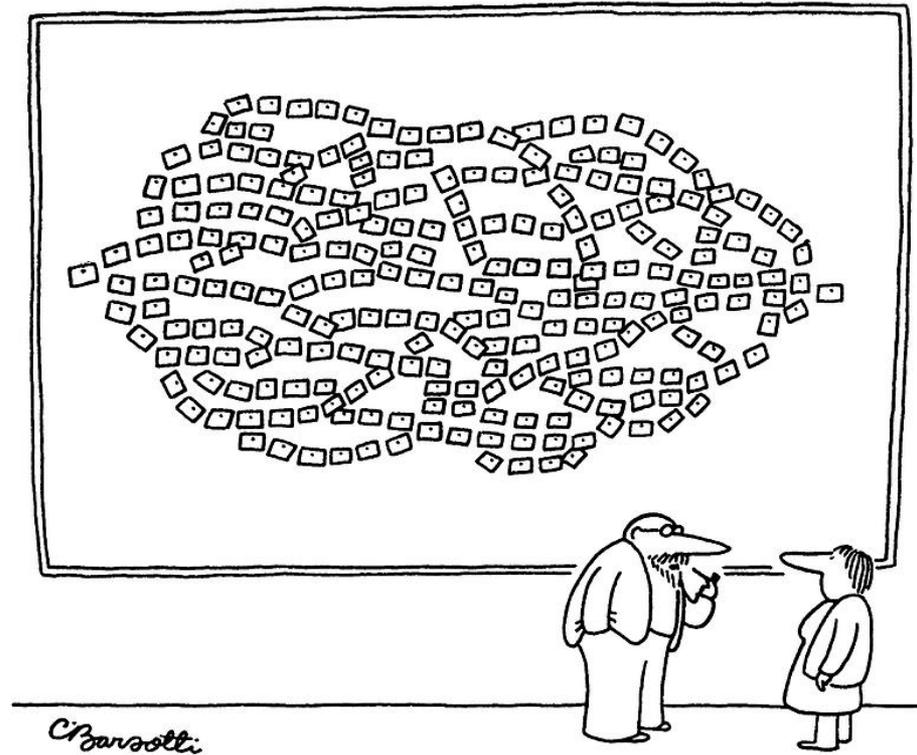
Support for your thesis writing

Thesis writing workshop 77E23000 (3 credits)

- Three meetings 26.2., 19.3. & 2.4.
- Topics:
 - Textual flow, structure, headings and internal linkages
 - Academic style incl. acknowledging sources
 - Principles of drafting different chapters of the thesis incl. Literature review, Methodology, Findings and Conclusion

As to most the materials presented in the seminar, special thanks to Dr. Rilana Riikkinen, who has built it in previous years.

Good luck with your thesis writing!



"It's plotted out. I just have to write it."