

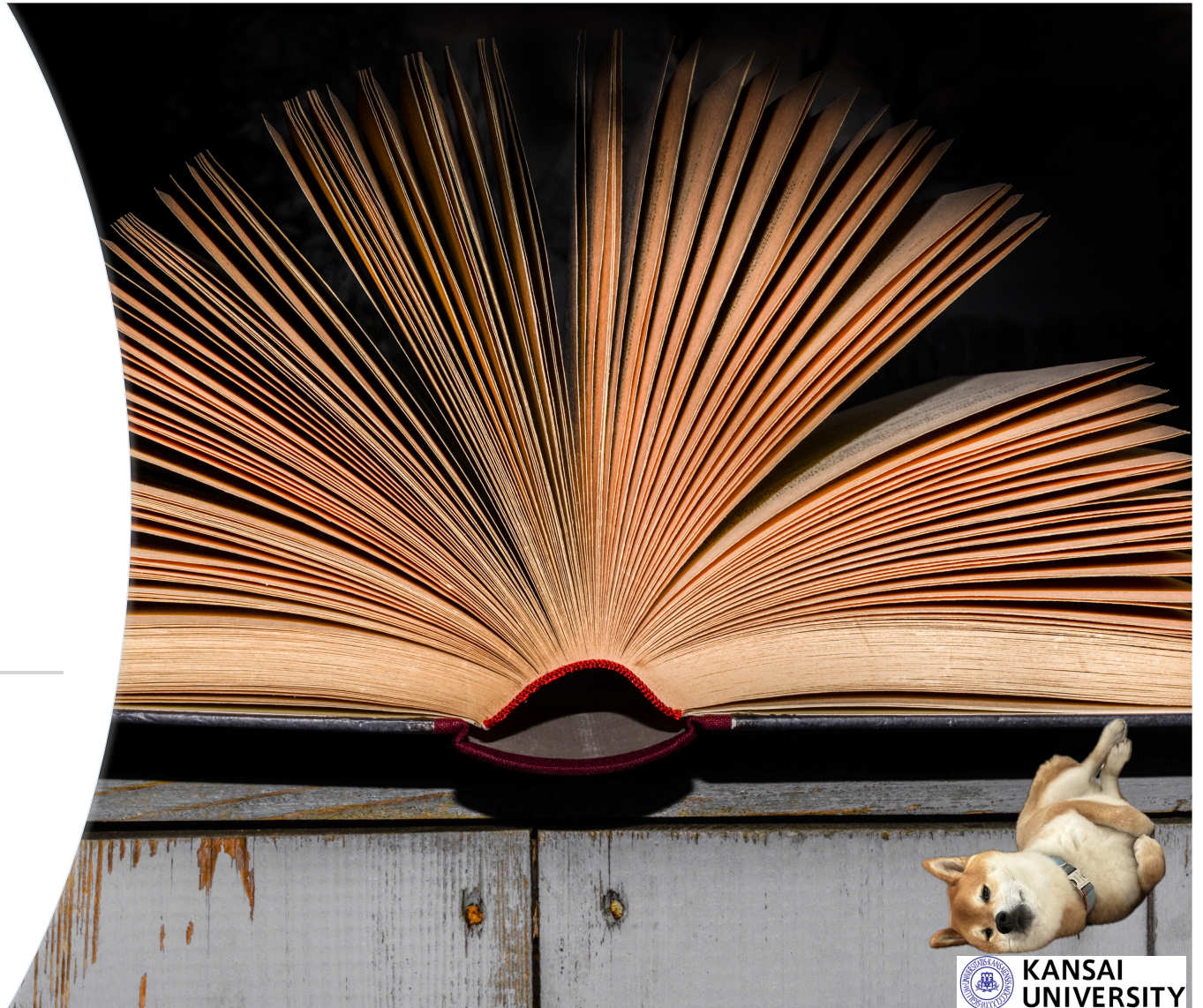


“Doing” the Literature Review

Todd J. Allen, PhD

Kansai University

tjallen@kansai-u.ac.jp



Today's Plan

- **Session 1:**

- What are literature reviews?
- The functions of literature reviews;
- Synthesising and organising the literature review;
- The critical nature of literature reviews
- Activity

- **Session 2**

- Composing
- Summarising and paraphrasing;
- Referencing;
- AI Use
- Introductions and conclusions to your review;
- Activity





Session One



Stop & Think: What are Literature Reviews?

- Write your own definition of a literature review. Don't overthink — just write what comes to mind.
- Exchange definitions with your neighbour. Together, refine your answers:
 - What's clear?
 - What's missing?
 - Which words or phrases seem important?



What are Literature Reviews?

- “A literature review has an organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis. A summary is a recap of the important information of the source, but a synthesis is a re-organization, or a reshuffling, of that information. It might give a new interpretation of old material or combine new with old interpretations. Or it might trace the intellectual progression of the field, including major debates” (UNC College of Arts & Sciences, Writing Center).



What are literature reviews?

- **Discusses** and **critiques** published work on a particular subject area (or subject areas).
- A literature review should:
 - Organise
 - Interpret/evaluate
 - Identify patterns and trends
 - Synthesize research



What does a literature review do?

Learn about	Understand	Demonstrate	Offer
Learn about prior research on your topic	Understand the evolution of your field or area of study	Demonstrate competence by showing awareness of: • Significant works • Points of agreement (consensus) • Points of disagreement (controversy) • Gaps and areas for future research	Offer intellectual context for your own study, showing motivation and positioning

Functions

- A critique of research that:
 - Identifies arguments for and against issues and controversies related to the previous functions (listed above)
 - Assess the value of theories, ideas, claims, research designs, methods and conclusions, including an identification of the strengths and weaknesses
- Identification of gaps or shortcomings in already established knowledge

(Bitchener, 2010, p. 60)

Functions

- A rationale justifying why the gap in research is important
- An explanation of how the research design of your project was informed by the previous steps. This will explain how the literature provided:
 - A focus for the research questions or hypotheses that were investigated and
 - Guidelines for an appropriate methodology and research design

(Bitchener, 2010, p. 60)

Types of literature reviews

Chapter in a thesis or dissertation

A section in an article or book chapter

A section in a research proposal

A section in a grant proposal

Section in a research report

Full-length, stand-alone review article

Thesis Example

Allen, 2018

Chapter 2: Literature Review	34
2.1 Introduction and Chapter Outline	34
2.2 Listener Behaviour	35
2.2.1 Forms and Locations	36
2.2.2 Frequency	41
2.2.3 Functions	44
2.2.4 Gender and Listener Behaviour	56
2.2.5 The Role of the Listener	58
2.2.6 Concluding Remarks and Summary	59
2.3 Non-Verbal Listener Behaviour	60
2.3.1 Head Nodding	61
2.4 Emic and Conversation Analytic Perspectives of Listener Behaviour ..	67
2.4.1 Emic Perspectives	68
2.4.2 Conversation Analytic Perspectives	75
2.4.3 Summary	76
2.5 The Kantō and Kansai Regions of Japan	77
2.5.1 Linguistic Variation	79
2.5.2 Cultural Variation	85
2.5.3 Listener Behaviour Variation	88
2.5.4 Summary	91
2.6 Perception and Awareness of Language and Culture	92
2.6.1 Listening Behaviour, Perception and Awareness	96
2.6.2 Expectancy and Deviancy	99
2.6.3 Summary	100
2.7 Summary and Concluding Remarks	101

Literature reviews VS. other forms of writing



Not just a summary → goes beyond describing what has been written



Not an annotated bibliography → integrates and synthesises sources rather than listing them separately



Not a research paper → does not present new data or experiments (focus is on existing work)



Not an essay → the goal is not to argue your own position directly, but to position your study in relation to existing knowledge



Not a methods section → it doesn't just describe how something was done, but evaluates and compares approaches across studies

Activity 1: Genre Comparison

Instructions:

- Read the three short excerpts in the worksheet. Each one comes from a different part of a research article (Introduction, Literature Review, or Discussion).
- Decide which section each excerpt belongs to.
- Underline the clues that helped you decide (e.g., key phrases, purpose of the section, type of information).
- Write your reasoning in the space provided.

Questions to reflect on:

- What signals helped you distinguish between sections?
- How does each section serve a different function in an academic paper?
- How will you apply this to your own thesis or article?

Answers

- **Excerpt A → Literature Review**

- Clues: References to multiple studies, comparison of findings, highlighting inconsistencies. Purpose is to situate current research in existing scholarship.

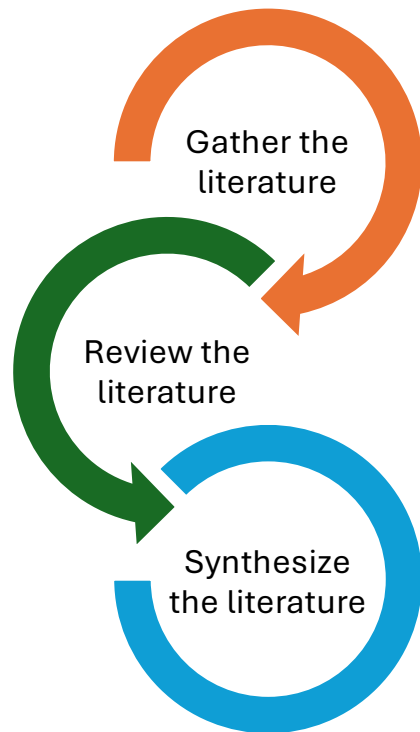
- **Excerpt B → Introduction**

- Clues: Broad background, statement of problem, “the present study investigates...” — signals the set-up of the study.

- **Excerpt C → Discussion**

- Clues: Interprets *this study*’s findings, compares them to past research, identifies implications and new directions.

Literature review process



Gather: use library and other resources to search for and collect appropriate materials

Review: describe, summarize, analyse, and identify key concepts

Synthesize: compare and contrast, critically evaluate and interpret, so that you can articulate a new conclusion

Being Critical

Critical writing involves:

- The analysis of the merits and limitations of existing work
- Detailed and scholarly commentary on theories, methods, and findings
- The objective evaluation of evidence in order to form a reasoned judgement

Key elements include:

- Identifying strengths, weaknesses, and limitations
- Accounting for differences in findings (e.g., theoretical or methodological)
- Highlighting unresolved issues, ambiguities, and research gaps
- Discussing implications and the relevance to your own study

Activity 2: Being Critical

Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses

Descriptive:

“Smith (2019) examined the impact of study abroad on language learning and found positive effects.”

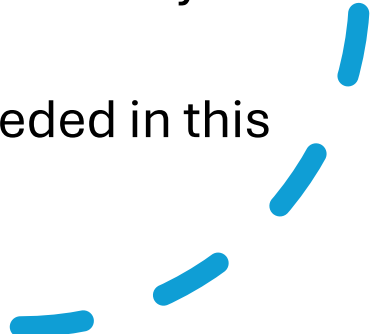
Critical:

“Smith (2019) provides valuable evidence of the benefits of study abroad, but the study relied on a small, homogenous sample, which limits the generalisability of the findings.”

Answers

1. Critical (model answer): While Jones (2020) found significant gains in intercultural competence, Brown (2021) reported no measurable change. This discrepancy may be due to differences in assessment tools, highlighting the importance of methodological choices in evaluating outcomes.
2. Critical (model answer): Although numerous studies have examined short-term study abroad (Kim, 2018; Liu, 2019; Sato, 2021), few have investigated long-term impacts beyond the first year post-return, leaving questions about sustained learning unanswered.
3. Critical (model answer): While previous studies highlight the communal role of small hospitality establishments (Farrer, 2019; Allen, 2023), little attention has been paid to how language use in these spaces negotiates cultural identity. My study addresses this gap.

Critical Checklist

- Ask yourself:
 - **Am I comparing** different studies rather than just describing them?
 - **Am I evaluating** strengths and weaknesses of theories, methods, or findings?
 - **Am I explaining** why results may differ (e.g., due to theory or methodology)?
 - **Am I identifying** gaps, problems, or unresolved questions?
 - **Am I connecting** the literature back to my own research questions?
 - **Am I showing** why my study is needed in this context?
- 

Synthesizing literature

- The word *synthesize* means to combine two or more elements to form a new whole. In the literature review, the “elements” are the findings of the literature you gather and read; the “new whole” is the conclusion you draw from those findings or the critical analysis you provide in your review.



Stop & Think: How do you synthesize literature?

Is it effective?

Time consuming?

Use of computer or
manually?

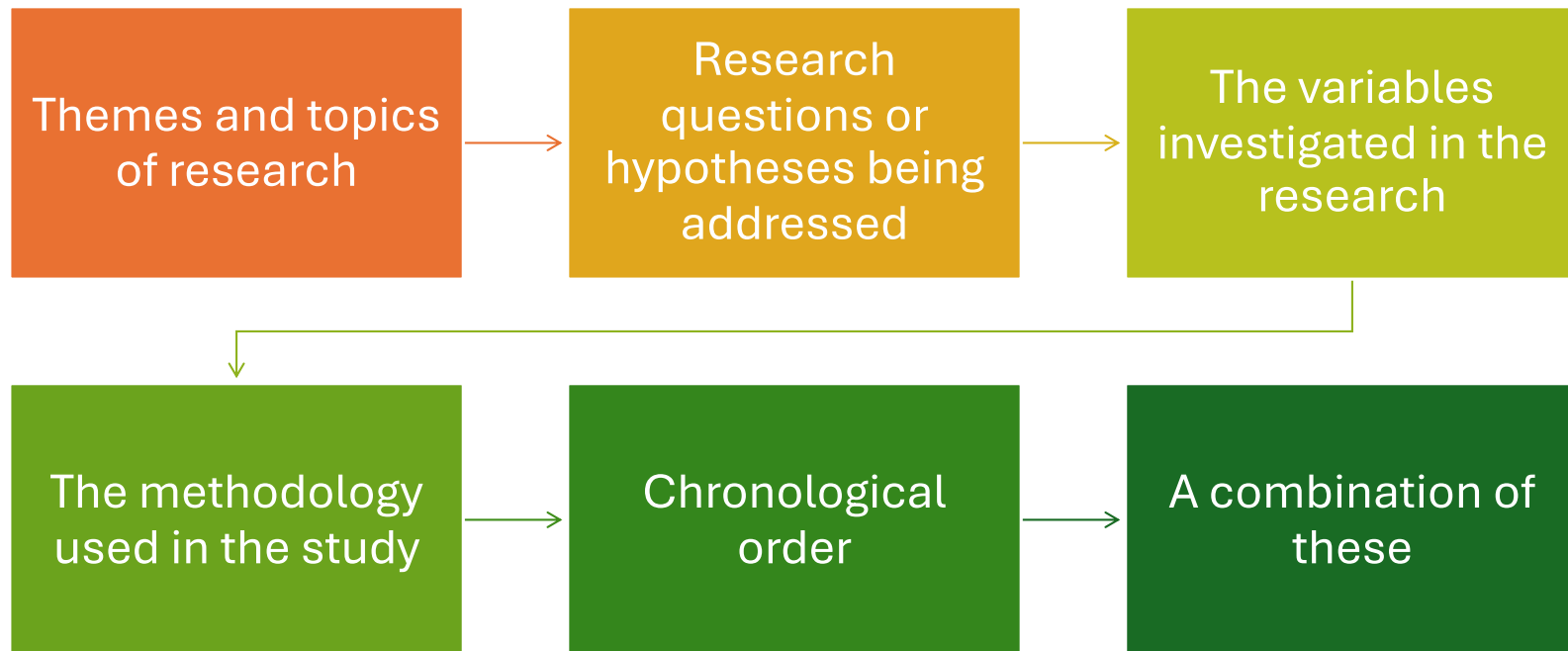


Complete Reference	Problem Statement/Key Questions	Methods	Findings	Remarks

(Bitchener, 2010, p. 63)

Author/Date	Full Reference 1	Full Reference 2	Full Reference 3
Focus/Topic			
Research Design			
Participants/Context			
Key Findings			
Limitations			
Similarities/Differences to other literature			

Organising your literature review



Thesis Example

Thematic Organisation (Table of contents)

2.2 Listener Behaviour	35
2.2.1 Forms and Locations	36
2.2.2 Frequency	41
2.2.3 Functions	44
2.2.4 Gender and Listener Behaviour	56
2.2.5 The Role of the Listener	58
2.2.6 Concluding Remarks and Summary	59

Chronological Organisation (Writing)

Although a number of studies that have investigated listener behaviour (including listener responses, backchanneling, and reactive tokens) have claimed that the body of work began with Fries (1952), the psycholinguist and natural language professor Victor Yngve (1970) has been credited with coining the term 'backchannel' to name and describe the behaviour of listeners during interaction. His description portrays backchannels as short messages such as 'yeah', 'yes' and 'uh-huh' verbalised by listeners. Yngve (1970) also asserts:

Allen, 2018



Activity 3

- Read the handout provided, and with your neighbor discuss the ways in which the author has organised the literature review in the journal article.
- **Reference:** Allen, T. J., & Liu, X. (2025). From Stranger to Regular Member: How the Mamasan Facilitates Introductions and Warmth in a Neighborhood Bar in Japan. *East Asian Pragmatics*, 10(2), 135-161.
<https://doi.org/10.3138/EAP-2025-0006>

Session 1 Wrap Up



You learned about:

- Defining and understanding the functions of literature reviews
- Being critical in your literature reviews
- Synthesizing and organising the literature in logical ways



Session Two



Advice From Elsevier

- “This section should extend (but not repeat) the background to the article already dealt with in the Introduction and lay the foundation for the work being reported. It should identify the most relevant previous literature on the topic (but not in excessive detail) in order to position the paper and demonstrate how it will make a significant contribution. It (or a separate section) should set out (and justify) the theoretical or conceptual framework adopted in the paper. It may identify a number of hypotheses to be tested or research questions to be explored. In short, this section (or sections) should explain what is the motivation for the paper and why its contribution is original and significant” (Journal of Policy Studies).

Advice From Elsevier

- “State the objectives of the work and provide an adequate background, avoiding a detailed literature survey or a summary of the results” (Journal of Pragmatics).

Advice From Elsevier

- “Clearly state the purpose of the article. Summarize the rationale for the study or observation. Give only pertinent references and do not review the subject extensively; the introduction should serve only to introduce what was done and why it was done. End introduction by stating the specific purpose, research objective, or hypothesis tested by the study (typically found at the end of the introduction section)” (Journal of Chiropractic Humanities).

Advice From Elsevier

- “State the objectives of the work and provide an adequate background, avoiding a detailed literature survey or a summary of the results”. (Obesity Medicine and Preventative Medicine).

Establishing the importance of the topic (time frame given)

One of the most important events of the 1970s was
Traditionally, Xs have subscribed to the belief that
Recent developments in X have heightened the need for
In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in
Recent trends in X have led to a proliferation of studies that
Recent developments in the field of X have led to a renewed interest in
Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in
The past decade has seen the rapid development of X in many
The past thirty years have seen increasingly rapid advances in the field of
Over the past century there has been a dramatic increase in
X proved an important literary genre in the early Y community.
The changes experienced by Xs over the past decade remain unprecedented.
Xs are one of the most widely used groups of Y and have been extensively used for

Synopsis of literature

Previous studies have reported
Recent evidence suggests that
Several attempts have been made to
Studies of X show the importance of
A number of researchers have reported
Recently investigators have examined the effects of X on Y.
Factors found to be influencing X have been explored in several studies.
In the past two decades a number of researchers have sought to determine
A considerable amount of literature has been published on X. These studies
Surveys such as that conducted by Smith (1988) showed that
The first serious discussions and analyses of X emerged during the 1970s with
There have been a number of longitudinal studies involving X that have reported
Xs were reported in the first models of Y (e.g., Smith, 1977; Smith and Patel, 1977).
What we know about X is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate how
Smith (1984: 217) shows how, in the past, research into X was mainly concerned with

Word/Phrase lists

(Morley, 2014, p. 8)

Q: How do you compose your literature review?

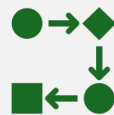
- With the people around you, discuss the ways in which you compose your literature review.
- Write down the strategies that you find helpful.



Composing your literature review



The first step is to settle on a general pattern of organisation



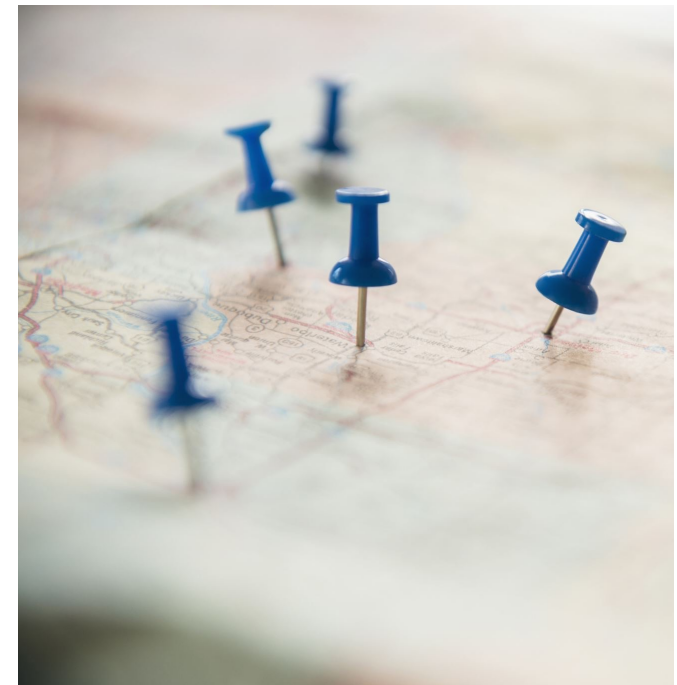
Once you have established your organisational pattern, begin composing



Try formulating questions, rather than statements.

Further Advice

- **Narrow your topic:** the narrower your topic, the easier it is
- **Find models:** look at other reviews to see how others do it
- **Explain it to your reader:** tell your readers what to expect (road map, discussed in next session)
- **Consider whether your sources are current:** use up to date material (rule of thumb is no older than 5-10 years*)
- **Keep your own voice:** while the focus is on other researchers/authors, you should keep your ideas and words in focus
- **Use evidence:** your evaluation must be supported with evidence



Q: Is your topic narrow enough?

- Think about your research questions, and discuss the specificity of the question.
- Can they be answered?
- What about them needs further information?



Summarising

- You should summarise **each** source – this involves finding the most important and relevant information from each piece of literature. This can include the findings, particular theories, adopted methodologies or the researcher's methodological perspectives
- **Annotated bibliographies** can be a good way to summarise sources. But remember, when you do an annotated bibliography, you should include an evaluation of the literature in terms of the argument, intended audience, evidence, and methods

An annotated bibliography is a summary AND evaluation of each source

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrasing involves creating your own conceptualization of necessary information and/or ideas articulated by another;
- It is presented in a new form;
- One legitimate way to borrow from a source (if accompanied with appropriate documentation and acknowledgement).
- A more detailed restatement than a summary, which focuses on a single main idea.

Paraphrasing is a valuable skill because it allows you to synthesize material more effectively, avoids over-quotation, and allows the writer to fully understand the ideas expressed by the author.

6 Steps to help

1. Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.
2. Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase on a note card.
3. Jot down a few words below your paraphrase to remind you later how you envision using this material. At the top of the note card, write a key word or phrase to indicate the subject of your paraphrase.
4. Check your rendition with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form.
5. Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or phraseology you have borrowed exactly from the source.
6. Record the source (including the page) on your note card so that you can credit it easily if you decide to incorporate the material into your paper.

Activity 4: Paraphrasing

Original Text (from Swales & Feak, 2012, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*)

“Academic writing is generally considered to be cautious. Writers often avoid making broad claims and instead use hedging expressions, such as ‘may,’ ‘might,’ or ‘could,’ to show that their conclusions are limited or open to interpretation.”

Activity 4: Paraphrasing

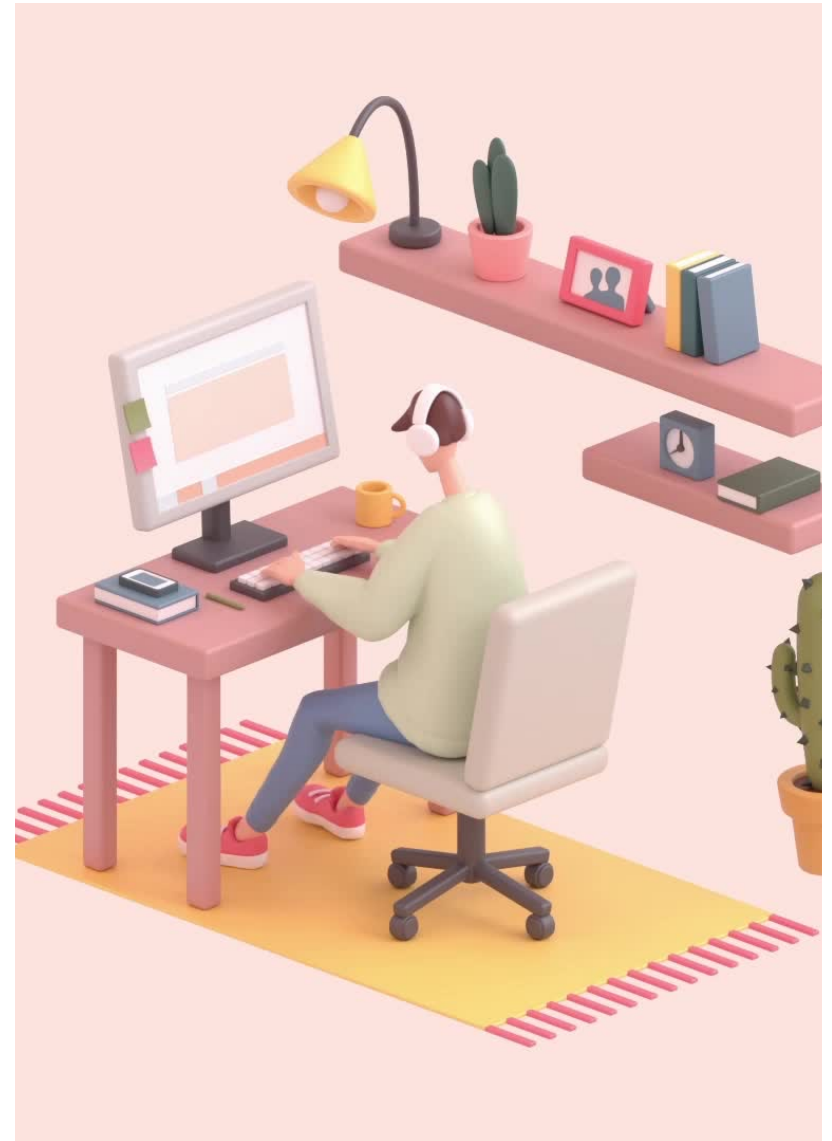
1. Rank the three paraphrases from weakest to strongest.
2. Discuss:
 - Why is one too close to the original?
 - How does one change the meaning too much?
 - What makes the “good” version effective?
3. Write your own paraphrase of the original text.
 - Try one for background/context.
 - Try one for critique/evaluation.

Referencing

- APA style is a type of referencing that comes from the American Psychological Association. While referencing is a major part of APA, the system refers to a style of writing that outlines how documents should be formatted for scientific/academic writing. In other words, APA refers to “when we talk about style-the rules that govern scientific communication...” (APA Concise Rules, 2010, p. 3). This includes:
 - Which numbers are expressed as numerals or letters
 - Which words are capitalized
 - Tables and footnotes
 - Credit for sources and formatting an accurate reference list

Avoiding plagiarism

- Plagiarism applies to online and print materials. It also applies to your own work (**self plagiarism**).
- Paraphrase ideas clearly, or become more familiar with referencing conventions (e.g., APA7).
- If you synthesize your work carefully, use appropriate referencing software and keep track of your sources, then you will be less likely to plagiarize.
- Such software includes: Endnote, Mendeley, RefWorks and others.

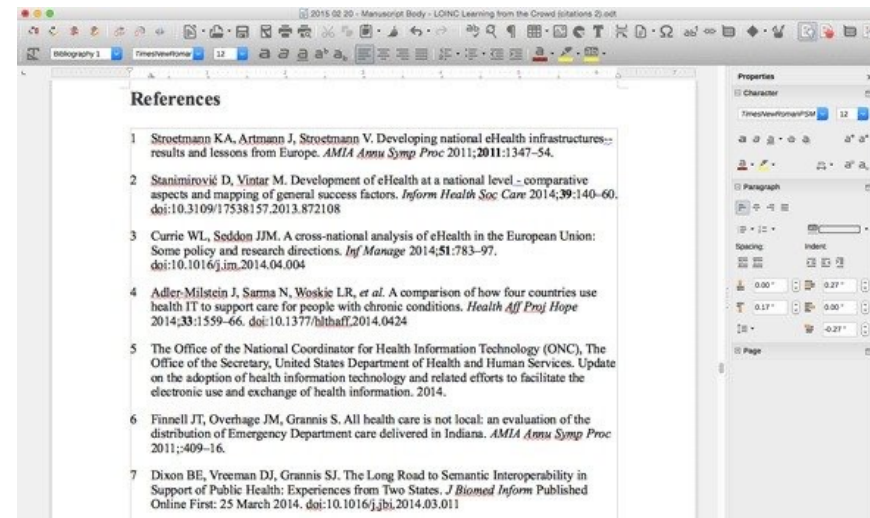
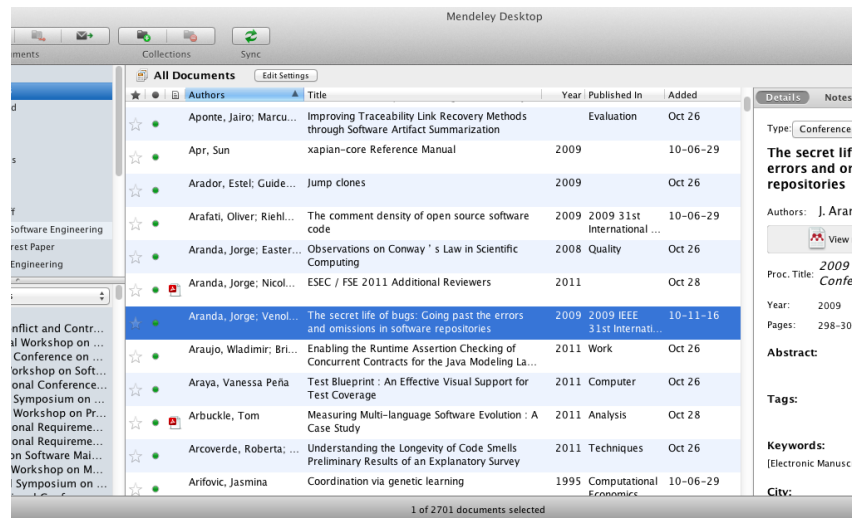




EndNote



Referencing Software



Referencing Software

Quick Quiz

- I am going to show you five examples of APA referencing (in-text citations and reference list entries). Each one contains at least one error. Identify the error(s) and write the correct version.



Question 1

- In-text citation: (smith, 2020)
- Error: Incorrect capitalization of author's name.
- Correct: (Smith, 2020)

Question 2

- In-text citation: (Johnson & Li & Kumar, 2019)
- Error: Incorrect use of ampersands. APA requires commas and ampersand before the final author.
- Correct: (Johnson, Li, & Kumar, 2019)

Question 3

- Reference: Brown, A. (2015). Language learning in context
Routledge.
- Errors: Missing colon before publisher, italics missing for book
title.
- Correct: Brown, A. (2015). *Language learning in context*.
Routledge.

Question 4

- Reference: Lee, C. (2018). Pragmatics and second language learning. Applied Linguistics 39(2) 123-145
- Errors: Missing italics for journal title and volume, missing comma before issue, incorrect page range formatting.
- Correct: Lee, C. (2018). Pragmatics and second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 39 (2), 123–145.

Question 5

- Reference: (Miller, 2017 p. 56)
- Errors: Missing comma before page, abbreviation incorrect.
- Correct: (Miller, 2017, p. 56)

Introductions



Devise a very clear “road map” or “advanced organiser” for your readers (particularly for larger documents).

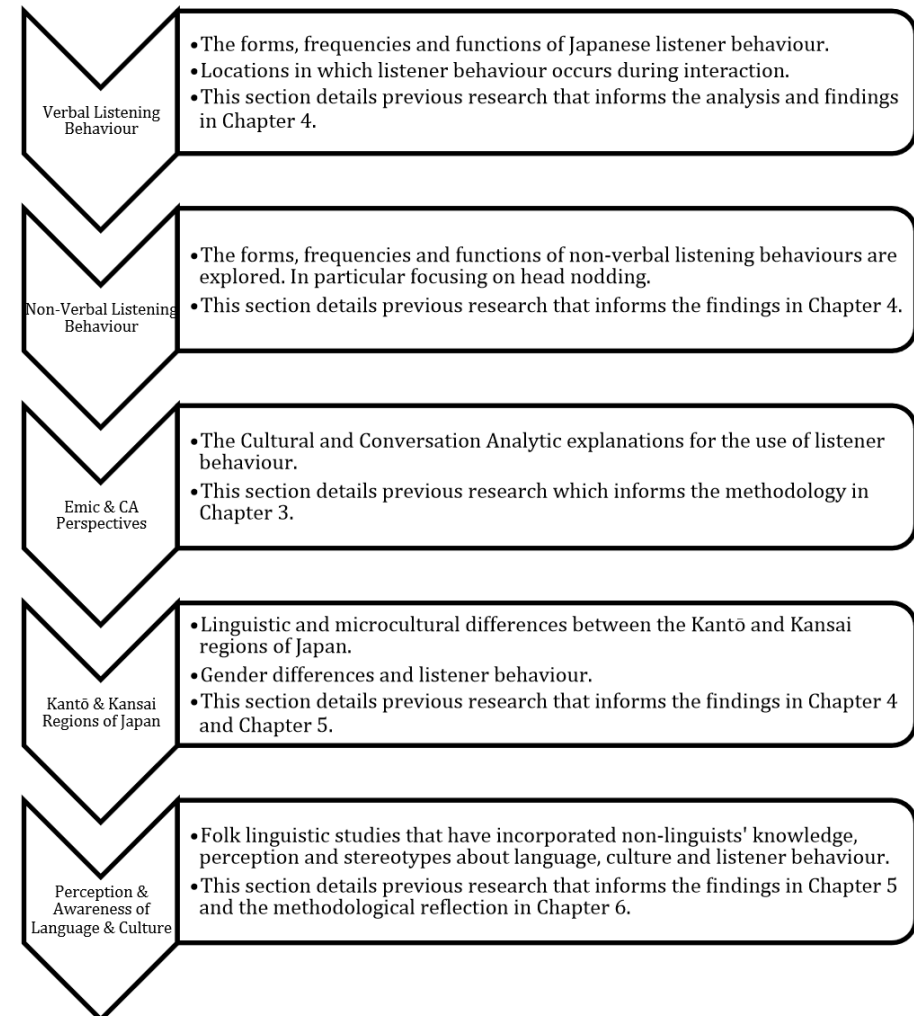


Remember to explicitly show where these items relate to your overall work and where you discuss them in the thesis/paper (e.g., section XX).



Introduce specific sections of the review, and explicitly detail what the reader should expect as well as the relationship between the subject and the overall thesis topic.

Thesis Example



Conclusions

Remind your reader about the importance of what you have just reviewed – explicitly show how this relates to the overall thesis topic.

Draw out the gaps/under-developed research areas. Explicitly tell the reader where your study fits.

You may introduce your research questions to highlight the under-developed areas.

If your review is long, provide summary sections after each major section.

You may wish to conclude particular sections if they are long.

Activity 5: Organisation Practice Task

- **Reorganise Sources**

- Take 3–4 articles you've read.
- Arrange them into a logical order for a literature review.
- Justify your choice: Why does this order make sense? What story does it tell?

- **Sharing Activity**

- Share your outline/order with your neighbor.
- Ask: Does the organisation make sense to them? Would they order it differently?

How do you use
AI?



AI & Literature Reviews



Why Use AI for Literature Reviews?



Saves time in summarizing and synthesizing research.



Helps in organizing ideas and structuring arguments.



Enhances clarity and coherence in academic writing.

Finding Relevant Literature



Generating Search Queries

Example: Suggest search terms for studies on intercultural communication in Japan.



Summarizing Abstracts

Quickly condense multiple article abstracts for a quick review.



Identifying Key Papers

AI can help suggest key studies (but always verify sources).

Synthesizing Key Themes and Trends

Identifying Patterns in Research

What common themes emerge across studies?

- Example: Summarize recent findings on short-term study abroad programs.

Comparing Theories and Frameworks

- Example: Contrast theoretical perspectives on sociopragmatics in hospitality.

Creating a Coherent Outline

I can help generate a structured outline based on relevant sources.



Example Prompt: *Generate an outline for a literature review on multilingualism in Japan.*



Example Output:

Introduction:
Definition & importance of multilingualism

Historical Context:
Language policies in Japan

Current Trends:
Multilingualism in education, business, and tourism

Challenges & Opportunities:
Attitudes, policies, and implementation issues

Conclusion & Future Research Directions

Organizing Sections & Subsections

AI can help break down large sections into logical subsections.

Example:

- Main Section: The Role of Study Abroad in Language Learning
- Subsection 1: Impact of short-term vs. long-term programs
- Subsection 2: Cultural adaptation and identity shifts
- Subsection 3: Post-study abroad language maintenance

Ensuring Logical Flow Between Sections

AI can suggest transition sentences to improve readability.

- Example: "While many studies focus on language gains during study abroad, fewer explore the long-term retention of these skills."

AI can rephrase section summaries for coherence.

- Example: "This section outlined the key factors influencing study abroad outcomes. The next section examines how institutional support can enhance these experiences."

Writing and Paraphrasing



Drafting Summaries & Syntheses

Example: *Summarize findings from recent studies on study abroad outcomes.*



Paraphrasing for Clarity & Coherence

Example: *Rewrite this excerpt in a more concise academic style.*

Editing and Proofreading

Checking

Checking Flow & Coherence

- Example: Suggest a transition between sections on study abroad outcomes and pedagogical implications.

Improving

Improving Grammar & Academic Style

- Example: Make this paragraph more formal and aligned with APA style.

Referencing

1

Checking & Formatting References

- Example: Convert this reference into correct APA 7 style.
- Input: Brown A 2015 Language learning in context, Routledge, London
- Output: Brown, A. (2015). *Language learning in context*. Routledge.

2

Generating In-text Citations

- Example: Create correct in-text citations for these sources.
- Input: (Brown, 2015), (Lee, 2018), (Kim & Tanaka, 2020)
- Output: (Brown, 2015; Lee, 2018; Kim & Tanaka, 2020)

3

Detecting Errors in References

- Example: Identify mistakes in this journal reference and correct them.
- Input: Lee, C. (2018). Pragmatics and second language learning, *Applied Linguistics* 39(2) 123-145.
- Output: Lee, C. (2018). Pragmatics and second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(2), 123–145. <https://doi.org/xxxxx>

Limitations & Best Practices



Use AI for brainstorming, but verify with primary sources.



Manually check all citations—AI does not have direct access to academic databases.



Engage critically—AI should assist, not replace analytical thinking.



Review and edit AI-generated text for accuracy and clarity.

Questions?

