UNIT 05

Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

Reading critically and building your foundation

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5.1 What is a literature review?

A literature review is a critical examination of existing academic research related to your topic. It involves identifying, reading, comparing, and analyzing previous studies to understand what is already known. It answers:

- What have other researchers discovered?
- What theories have been used?
- What methods have been employed?
- What aspects remain unclear?
- How does my proposed study relate to previous research?

5.2 Why is it important?

Build knowledge About your research topic.	**Find concepts** Identify relevant theories and concepts.	**Spot gaps** Discover what has not been explored.
Avoid repetition Do not repeat previous studies unnecessarily.	**Justify** Show the importance of your proposed research.	**Plan method** Develop a suitable methodology.

5.3 Where to find academic sources

Google Scholar · ERIC · ScienceDirect · JSTOR · ResearchGate · University repositories · Peer-reviewed journals and scholarly books

Prioritize credible, relevant, and recent research while also consulting foundational works when necessary.

5.4 How to search for academic literature

Start with keywords related to your topic. For “Digital feedback in EFL writing”, possible keywords are: digital feedback, EFL writing instruction, automated written corrective feedback, technology-assisted language learning, writing revision, EFL students' perceptions.

Technique	How it works
“ Quotation marks ”	Search for an exact phrase.
AND	Combines concepts.

Technique	How it works
OR	Searches for alternatives.
NOT	Excludes a concept.

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"digital feedback" AND EFL
EFL AND writing AND ("digital feedback" OR "automated feedback")
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5.5 How to read and analyze previous studies

Do not read articles just to collect quotations. For every relevant study, identify:

Element	What to look for
Author and year	Who conducted the study and when?
Purpose	What did the study investigate?
Participants	Who participated?
Methodology	How was the research conducted?
Findings	What were the main results?
Limitations	What limitations were identified?
Relevance	How does this study relate to your research?

5.6 What is a theoretical framework?

A theoretical framework identifies the theories or perspectives that provide the foundation for interpreting a research problem. For example, a study on learner autonomy may draw on theories of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning; a study on feedback in writing may draw on theories of formative assessment, feedback, or second language writing.

5.7 Literature review vs. theoretical framework

Literature Review	Theoretical Framework
Examines previous research.	Presents the theories guiding the study.
Identifies what is already known.	Explains the theoretical foundation.
Helps identify research gaps.	Helps interpret the research problem and findings.

A proposal may present these as separate sections or integrate them, depending on institutional requirements.

5.8 Avoid a descriptive literature review

A weak review summarizes one study after another. A stronger review compares and connects studies.

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× DESCRIPTIVE APPROACH

Study A investigated digital feedback. Study B examined writing performance. Study C explored students' perceptions.

✓ CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Previous studies have examined digital feedback from different perspectives. While some have focused on its influence on writing accuracy, others have investigated students' perceptions of its usefulness. These different approaches suggest that digital feedback can be examined not only as a corrective tool but also as part of the broader writing and revision process.

REMEMBER

A literature review is not a collection of summaries. It is a **connected discussion** of existing knowledge.

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