



HOW TO WRITE A LITERATURE REVIEW?

N. Zarrinabadi

Nur.zarrinabadi@gmail.com



Lit Rev.

The key skill is to provide readers with just the right amount of literature regarding the sequence of events leading up to the current situation - not too much to make it tedious, nor too little so that the context of your research is not meaningful to them.

- · Systematically elaborate the achievements and limitations of other studies
- · Relate your new facts and data to these studies

Intro

A Literature Review generally answers the following questions, and generally in the following order. You can use the answers to these questions to structure your Literature Review.

1. What are the seminal works on my topic? Do I need to mention these?
2. What progress has been made since these seminal works?
3. What are the most relevant recent works? What is the best order to mention these works?
4. What are the achievements and limitations of these recent works?
5. What gap do these limitations reveal?
6. How does my work intend to fill this gap?

How to Structure a section in your Lit. Rev.

- 1. introduction to topic
- 2. support from the literature
- 3. mini summary
- 4. introduction to next topic. And so on.

What is the clearest way to refer to other authors? Should I focus on the authors or their ideas?

style 1 *Blinco [1992] found* that Japanese elementary school children showed ...

style 2 *In [5] Blinco found* that Japanese elementary school children showed ...

style 3 *A study* of the level of persistence in school children *is presented by Blinco [1992]*.

style 4 A greater level of persistence has been noticed in Japan [5].

- In Style 1, the author, Blinco, is given as much importance as what he (i.e. Blinco) found.
- Style 2 is similar to Style 1, but in this case perhaps you are talking about more than one paper by Blinco, so in this case the paper is the most logical first element in the sentence.
- In Style 3, what Blinco found is more important than the fact that Blinco found it. This is a very typical style, but inevitably involves using the passive, which then leads to longer and heavier sentences.
- In Style 4 Blinco is not mentioned at all, but only a reference his paper in parentheses.

Tense Issues

- The **present simple (S1) or present perfect (S2)** are generally used to introduce
- the literature review.
- S1. In the literature there *are* several examples of new strategies to perform these tests, which all *entail* setting new parameters [Peters 1997, Grace 2004, Gatto 2005].
- S2. Many different approaches *have been proposed* to solve this issue.

Tense Issues

- Use the present perfect again to refer to ongoing situations, i.e. when authors are still investigating a particular field.
- This means that past simple cannot be used in any of these three cases.
- S3. Since 1998 there *have been* many attempts to establish an index [Mithran 1999, Smithson 2002], but until now no one *has managed* to solve the issue of
- S4. As yet, a solution to Y *has not been found*, although three attempts *have been made*. [Peters 1997, Grace 2004, Gatto 2007].
- S5. So far researchers *have only found* innovative ways to solve X, but not Y [5, 6, 10].

Tense Issues

- **Completely Finished? Use past tense.** You must use the past simple when:
 - The year of publication is stated within the main sentence (i.e. not just in brackets)
 - You mention specific pieces of research (e.g. you talk about initial approaches and methods that have subsequently probably been abandoned)
 - You state the exact date when something was written, proved etc.
- S9. Lindley [10] *investigated* the use of the genitive in French and English and his results *agree* with other authors' findings in this area [12, 13, 18]. He *proved* that ...
- S10. Smith and Jones [11, 12] *developed* a new system of comparison. In their system two languages *are* / *were compared* from the point of view of ... They *found* that
- S11. Evans [5] *studied* the differences between Italian and English. He *provides* / *provided* an index of .. He *highlighted* that ...