STUDY SKILLS

A Pedagogical Support for Second Year Students

- **Course Code: UEF1 (O/P)**　　　　　　**Credits02　Coefficient: 01**
- **Period**: **Semester 3**　　　　　　**Work Load: 45 Hours**
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Course Description

- **Course Code: UEF1 (O/P)**
- **Credits02   Coefficient: 01**
- **Period**: **Semester 3   Work Load: 45 Hours**
- **Tutorial** 1.5H
- **Pre-requisites**: basic research notions
- **Recommended Books**:   /
- **Assessment method** : 100 % continuous assessment

Course Objectives

This course provides ample information as to research methodology, particularly the importance of the literature review, and the procedures for its writing, as well as the rules for good paraphrasing and information search

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- identify the momentum of a literature review
- conduct a search of information through print and web sources
- structure their literature review in accordance with the research problem and hypotheses
- develop the skill of paraphrasing
- evaluate scholars' views

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1. DEFINING LITERATURE REVIEW

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Define the review of literature.*

- *Familiarize learners with its form.*

- *Shed the light on the importance of the review of literature in academic research.*

1. What is a literature review?

Literature review is a critical recap of what has already been researched on a topic, it could draw on many sources including books, journal articles, conference proceedings, and other sources. According to Creswell et al. (2002), "A literature review is a written summary of journal articles, books, and other documents that describe the past and current state of information; organizes the literature into topics; and documents a need for a proposed study" (p. 89). It has also been defined as "… a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners" (Fink, 2013).

Reviewing the literature is a process that involves extensive and intensive reading about a particular topic with the aim of locating, analyzing, synthesizing, and organizing previous research and documents (periodicals, books, abstracts, … etc.) related to your study area. The ultimate objective behind undertaking such an endeavor is familiarizing oneself with the topic under investigation, reviewing previous and current works done by other researchers on the issue at hand, and keeping abreast of any rising issues or aspects that you need to know in order to form a complete understanding of the target research area/field.

2. What does a literature review look like?

Literature review can be classified in terms of a number of types depending on several factors including its scope, purpose, and form. As a rule of thumb, a review of literature can be classified in terms of being selective or comprehensive, and whether it forms the entire work or it is just a part of it as shown in figure 1 below (Feak & Swales, 2011). A short paper about a particular topic or a school writing assignment are good examples of a selective literature review as it focuses on a small segment of the literature available about the topic, and it stands alone to form the entire work on its own as no other parts are needed to complement it. On the

other hand, the theoretical part of a thesis is a comprehensive review of literature that covers all the aspects of a particular topic but it is still part of a bigger work that also entails other parts such as the practical side of the study. Meanwhile, the theoretical part of most journals' articles is a selective reviews of literature that is a part of larger work, unless the entire article is devoted to reviewing the literature, in such a case the review of literature is a comprehensive one that stands on its own.
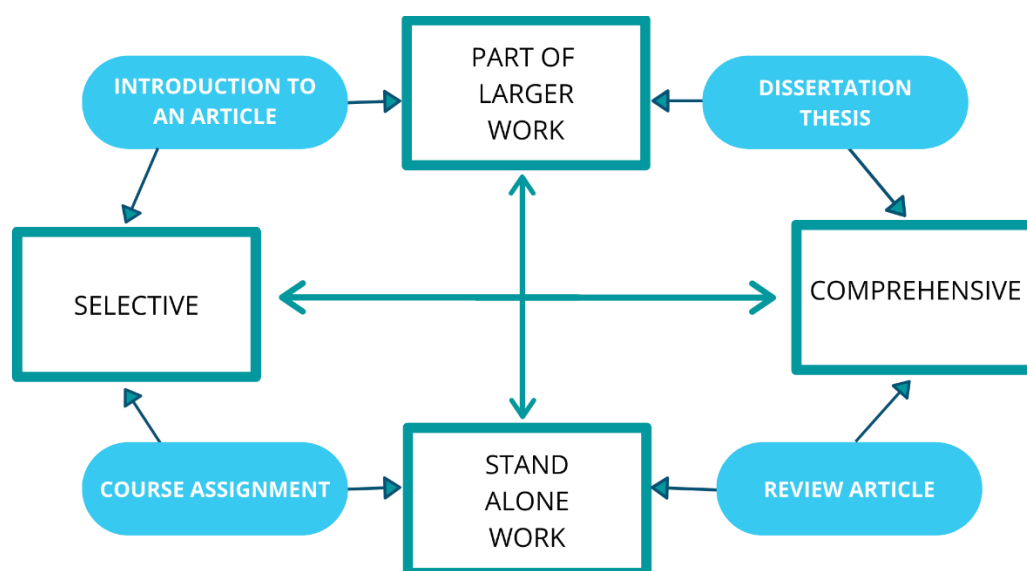
Figure 1: Types of literature review.

It is worth noting that a literature review is far from being an annotated bibliography, as the role of the researcher goes far beyond the mere task of gathering related literature about a given topic (ibid.). In fact, the major goal should be to design an overall framework that aligns all the different points of view and research findings in a way that proves or rejects a notion and clearly maps out the different stances on the issue. The researcher must guide the reader down a path that relates different separate parts from various sources to clarify a particular point or a set of points and highlights the significance of the issue under investigation. Furthermore, the researcher must assume an active role and make sure his voice is present in his work by reflecting on the literature he covered, pinpoint aspects that the reader might miss, and clarifies the ambiguities.

3. Why do a literature review?

The literature review is the researcher's opportunity to demonstrate a number of key aspects, including his ability to exhibit his knowledge about the topic under research, analyze and

interpret what is already known, and shed the light on contradictions and gaps in the current body of literature (Jesson et al., 2011). The review of literature is also an opportunity to highlight the importance of your research, all the while explaining how your work is different from what already exists in the field and what added value it brings about. Every new academic research is initiated with the aim of originality and tackling the issue at hand from a fresh new perspective that results in a notable and meaningful contribution, and such a feat cannot be achieved if the researcher is not abreast of the nitty-gritty of the issues he plans to tackle. Hence, extensive and intensive reading required to write a review of literature is one way to ensure equipping the researchers with the needed knowledge and insights. Furthermore, even when done on its own as a dissertation, a well-executed review of literature is bound to guide the researcher through a learning journey with so many findings, lessons, and insights that no lecture or course can manage on its own, hence, asking students to engage in such a task is primordial and highly beneficial.

Besides being such an invaluable learning journey, the review of literature serves a number of important objectives. First, it lays the ground for the upcoming discussion by equipping the reader with the needed prerequisite knowledge and demystifying areas that might incur confusion down the path (ibid.). Second, it unveils how the issue at hand and related research unfolded throughout the years helping the reader gain an overall understanding of the matter, locate the current work within the wider spectrum, and link the previous work to the current work (ibid.). Third, reviewing previous research and literature helps the researcher avoid "reinventing the wheel" by ensuring whatever contribution s/he makes is a novel one (ibid.). Forth, extensive and intensive reading associated with writing a review of literature helps the readers gain a better understanding of the matter and all its related issues and so puts him/her in a position where they can come up with refined and sophisticated problematics and hypotheses well-beyond the obvious and achieve a far superior study design (ibid.). Finally, the depth and breadth of the analysis and the size of the covered literature is a clear statement that the researcher is a member of the chosen field, someone who is so well-educated about the matter that his/her conclusions and recommendations are to be taken seriously (Jesson et al., 2011).

4. Purpose and Scope

A comprehensive review of literature is more than just a side task that keeps the researchers busy while they wait for the data to be collected, as it serves a number of purposes including:

1. Narrowing down the scope of the study to focus on a well-defined area (Ridley, 2012).
2. Defining the key notions and terminology to be used at later stages and setting the ground that would justify later actions and interpretations (ibid.).
3. Recounting the story behind the issue at hand and all the research related to it, detailing how it unfolded, how it changed, major breakthroughs, and their ensuing effects (ibid.).
4. Gaining deep insights about the issue at hand and refining the problematics, the hypothesis, the research plans, research tools, and research procedures (ibid.).
5. Identifying researchers and scholars at the forefront of the field (ibid.).
6. Highlighting the importance of the study and the contribution it would make (ibid.).

2. Locating & Evaluating Relevant Sources of Information

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Using difference information research tools.*

- *Finding relevant sources of literature.*

- *Accessing different sources of literature.*

- *Evaluating the validity and relevance of different sources of literature.*

1. Sources of Information

When conducting and academic research, one would tap on the full range of every possible information source including printed and online ones as long as they are relevant and reliable. The most common sources are:

- Books
- Journal articles
- Dissertations and theses
- Conference proceedings
- Websites

2. Using Library and Finding Books

Libraries had once been the main and, in many cases, the only place that provided researchers with access to the information and knowledge they needed for their academic and scientific endeavors. They act as repositories of manuscripts. Yet the breadth of the collection and its variety differs from one library to the other, the fact that pushed scholars to travel to other places to access particular manuscripts of interest.

Despite the fact that libraries use different methods and systems of arrangement and classification of their collections, they all agree on the use of catalogues. Catalogues are records that keep track of every single document within the library including the title of the book, the name of the author, the date of publication, the serial number of the book, and the section at which it is located. Such records allow library patrons and librarians alike to easily

and efficiently look up, locate, and fetch any book or document as well as returning them back to their places.

After the introduction of the internet, most libraries currently have online catalogues that allow the users to browse the content of the library from the comfort of their homes and even book the document they wish to borrow before physically going to the library to fetch it.

3. Searching the Internet

When asking students to look up a piece of information or any type of documents, their first destination is Google, which the best-known search engine out there. In a fraction of a second, Google would present you with hundreds of thousands of results, yet the question for researchers remains: Are these sources reliable?

Researchers and students alike need to know that anyone can publish whatever they want on the internet, and unless the website is a verified one, one might run the risk of using forged, falsified, misleading, or made-up information, the fact that would compromise the quality and reliability of any subsequent research endeavor. And with the prevalent use of blogs for commercial and fraudulent activities, one would not be able to tell an academic factual-report from a well-disguised advertisement.

Thus researchers and college students are encouraged to use online libraries and Open Access Data Bases owned by universities and verifiable official entities that systematically screen their content and ensures its reliability and validity. Such websites are characterized by a number of features including:

1. Their URL's domain name includes one the following extensions: .com, .gov, .edu.
2. Their "About Us" page identify the source of the web page or provide information about the publishing entity.
3. The bottom of the page includes links to pages such as "Contact Us" and "Copyrights Info" that allows the user to reach out to the and verify their identity.

<div align="right">(Academic Guides: Evaluating Resources, 2020)</div>

4. Keyword searches

The keyword used to lookup any piece of information determines the range and the relevance of the results. The fact that authors use different words and terminology to describe and name their publications makes locating all relevant sources of information a task at which most researchers and students fail. A good keyword includes a combination of nouns and adjectives that accurately describe the content being looked for. When coining the keyword, it helps to consider all the possible synonyms and alternatives using dictionaries and thesauri. Additionally, using the keywords we find in the academic articles that are relevant to our research topic should also help generate similar search results. For an effective keywords use Ridley (2012) suggests the following:

➢ Begin with only 2-3 terms and avoid long phrases (The more terms you enter, the fewer results you'll get).
➢ If your first term doesn't work, try a synonym or a broader term. (environment instead of environmental consequences).

If your search generates too many irrelevant search results, narrow the scope down by:

➢ Adding an additional keyword.
➢ Narrowing search terms (language learning ➔ Second language learning).
➢ Using limiters such as author's name, date of publication, and publisher.

5. How to Find Related Literature: Practical Tips

First of all, you need to locate related articles, books, and other reliable sources of information, and this can be done by looking up your keywords on a verifiable website as discussed earlier. There are many such websites that students or researchers can use, yet the following ones are amongst the major ones:

➢ https://scholar.google.com/
➢ www.mendeley.com/newsfeed?search=research-papers (requires signing up)
➢ https://eric.ed.gov/
➢ https://www.jstor.org/

Once you find relevant articles and books that you deem relevant and worth reading, you can proceed by downloading them from the following websites by using the title, the name of the author and the year of publication:

- http://gen.lib.rus.ec/
- libgen.pw
- ebook3000.com/
- sci-hub.tw/
- https://b-ok.org/
- http://en.booksee.org/
- https://www.pdfdrive.net
- https://ebookee.org/

6. Identifying Appropriate Sources

Finding a relevant source of information be it a virtual or a printed one is the first part of the process, as the second and equally important part is to verify whether it is a reliable one.

While preparing papers and short reports at high school, it was deemed acceptable to use online sponsored websites, blogs and encyclopedias such as Wikipedia.com and other reference sources, but that is not the case for academic research and university-level assignments. As the information in such sources tends to be generic at best and can be edited by unverifiable individuals or entities.

Thus, only primary and secondary sources can live up to the high requirements of scientific research. Primary sources include original works that report unique discussions of ideas, concepts, trends, events, personalities, and discoveries (Ellison, 2010). In such sources, it is the original author who reports the findings, sets forth arguments, and provides unique insights and conclusions (ibid.). Meanwhile, secondary sources are the works that report other researchers' works to provide summaries, analyses, or interpretations of primary sources (ibid.).

Regardless to you gained access to any piece of information, you need to follow a set of steps that would allow you to critically evaluate the source and gauge its conformity to academic research standards. So how to determine how authoritative a document is? Ellison (ibid.) proposes checking the following aspects:

a) **Purpose**

- What is the intended purpose? (to inform, to argue, to persuade, etc.)
- What information or research methods are used to achieve the intended purpose?
- Is the author successful in achieving their purpose? How (not)?

b) **Audience**

- For whom is the source intended?
- Is this a scholarly or popular source? A professional/trade journal?

c) **Relevance**

- Is the content appropriate for your purpose?
- What does the source add to an understanding of your topic or argument?
- How does the source relate to other information you've found?
- How does the source relate to your ideas or argument?
- Is there a list of references? It may point you to other relevance sources.
- Is the information in the article timely and up-to-date?
- What type of bibliography did s/he use?

d) **Authorship**

- What are the author's credentials or background in this area?
- Has this author written other things on this same topic?

e) **Bias**

Almost all sources have some degree of bias, but a well-reasoned argument considers multiple viewpoints.

- Is the information primarily fact or opinion?
- Does the author appear to have a strong bias, whether explicit or implied?
- Does the author present multiple sides of issues?
- Is the information supported by research?
- Has the author provided sufficient evidence?
- Does the author use highly-charged or emotional language?

If it does not and you still would like to use the information in your paper, expand your research to see if you can find other sources that support or confirm what it says.

In order to find out whether the information on the book will be useful for you, consider the following:

- Check journals and reports for an abstract, summary of findings, or executive summary at the beginning; these highlight the key information in the report.
- Review prefaces, introductions, and summaries on dust jackets for a quick overview.
- Read reviews, summaries, and commentaries about books.
- Check citations in a work to see how well-documented the work is.
- Read headlines, subheads, and call-outs in newspapers and magazines.
- Scan graphics and illustrations. Read the captions that accompany them.

Further Reading: Brand-Gruwel, S., & Stadtler, M. (2011). Solving information-based problems: Evaluating sources and information.

3. TECHNIQUES FOR READING EFFICIENTLY

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Introduce learners to effective reading strategies.*

- *Learning how to apply the SQ3R reading technique.*

1. Definition

Reading for academic research is completely different from leisure reading. While the latter is done for the purpose of enjoyment and understanding the overall plot regardless of the missed tiny details, the former is done with the chief aim of learning about a particular topic or locating a particular piece of information. Researchers engage in what is commonly known as "Active Reading" or "Interactive Reading" as they go far beyond merely decoding the text to interact with it and analyze it at multiple levels. One way to achieve that is through the use of a technique known as the "SQ3R".

SQ3R involves the following steps:

2. Survey/Skim

This step helps the reader grasp the general idea of the text and activate his/her schemata (background knowledge about the topic) to facilitate better understanding of the content at later stages.

In the case of a book or long documents with multiple parts or chapters, it comes in handy to break the reading task into manageable chunks by tackling the document one chapter or one part at a time. Skimming entails quickly going through the reading material with the sole aim of forming an overall impression and getting a sense of the general idea and how it is developed. As the reader skims the reading material he needs to refer to the title, the blurb on the back of a book, the contents page, the index, the abstract of a journal article, the introduction and conclusion of a text, the first and last paragraphs of chapters, and the first and last sentences of paragraphs. So, one needs to:

- Page through the text to get an overall impression.

- Look at headings, bold or italicised print, graphics, boxed text, statistics, and dates.

- Locate familiar aspectsas well as new ones.

<div align="right">(Understand and remember using SQ3R, 2020)</div>

3. Question

The second stage of the "SQ3R" is questioning where the reader jots down a number of questions that would guide the whole reading process and keeps the reader's attention focused on the main/relevant aspects instead of wandering around aimlessly.

The first step is to jot down all the questions that you would like the document to answer for you. Second, as you skim the text write down any questions or inquiries that pop into your mind. Third, turn all the titles and the subtitles into questions (Understand and remember using SQ3R, 2020).

4. Read

The third stage is reading, unlike the skimming done in the first step, this step is all about scanning, i.e., reading in details. The careful reading is done with the previously-formulated questions in mind so that answers and notes are immediately taken while the reading process is still going on and not until the end (ibid.). The primary aim of this stage is full-understanding of the content, and, so, if the reader finds it hard to understand the source, it is advisable to refer to introductory and less difficult materials that would help the reader gain the needed background knowledge and prepares him/her to tackle more advanced and complicated materials. Researchers must also keep in mind that they might need to do multiple readings to ensure fully understanding the text and covering all the entailed details. As one reads, a number of aspects need to be kept in mind including:

- Read the text and see how much of it you understand (ibid.).

- Stop whenever there is a note that needs to be taken and jot it down (ibid.).

- Highlight the keywords in the text (ibid.).

- Use a dictionary to look up words and technical terms that you don't understand (ibid.).

- Re-read any parts that are still not clear (ibid.).

5. Recall

This stage is where the researcher writes down all that he learned from the text by following a number of steps:

1. Decide upon the main points and all the information you learned from the reading and write them down (Understand and remember using SQ3R, 2020).

2. Use your own words (ibid.).

3. In your own style explain any ambiguities and add details that need to be added but are lacking from the text (ibid.).

4. Answer the questions you came up with earlier (ibid.).

6. Review

At this stage, the learner puts the notes he has taken alongside the texts and re-read both to see if s/he has covered all the main points and missed nothing of importance.

Further Reading: Locke, L. F., Silverman, S. J., & Spirduso, W. W. (2009). *Reading and understanding research*. Sage Publications.

4. SUMMARIZING

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Defining the norms of proper summary.*

- *Learning how to summarize a text.*

1. Challenges Associated with Summarizing

One of the main challenges faced when conducting academic research is creating an original work coined in your own words and style. When writing the literature review you will be required to refer to previous research and summarize and paraphrase it by restating information, ideas, and results in your own words. The main difference between the two process lies in the scope of their focus. While paraphrasing is the reiteration of individual points and tackling relatively short texts, summarizing involves the restatement of the overall idea of the work and comes in handy while tackling longer sources of literature (Feak & Swales, 2011). Regardless of which one you would resort to, presenting the original work in your own words and style is a challenging task due to a number of reasons.

- First, highly technical texts use a specialized terminology that rarely has other proper alternative, and that severely limiting the researcher's options (Ellison, 2010).
- Second, the original sources are sometimes so nicely and concisely written that any attempt to alternate that would do little but make it less appealing and expressive (ebid.).
- Third, lack of proper understanding of the material is one of the main challenges that hamper researcher's summarizing and paraphrasing efforts (ebid.).
- Fourth, the researchers' limited vocabulary repertoire and lack of the needed vocabulary to properly express or clarify complex notions may prevent them from finding proper alternative (ebid.).

As a rule of thumb, researchers and students should aim at restating the sum of what they understood from their reading by relying on the notes they took, in that manner, they will have a goal to work towards instead of a text that they try to replicate. As using the latter technique would cause a shift in style that can be easily detected by experienced field specialists and academics (Flowerdew, 2007).

2. How to Summarize a Text?

As stated earlier, summarizing is a technique that researchers resort to when trying to restate the overall idea of the text and focus on the main aspects and points without venturing into the details that they can do without. Thus, covering all the main aspects is the chief objective. To ensure that one needs keep in mind the following aspects as discussed by Pechenik (1997):

1. Maintain the main ideas and information.
2. Restate the ideas in your own words and style.
3. A summary is meant to be a concise version of the original text, and so make sure it is no longer than 20% of the original text's length.
4. Be present in your own summary by reflecting and commenting on the different points and aspects.
5. Clarify any ambiguity in the text by explaining technical terms and adding any background information that you deem necessary for the average reader to understand your summary.
6. The primary focus must be the quality of the content, and only once that has been achieved that the researcher can shift his/her focus to the length of the summary and trim it to the required size without compromising the meaning.
7. Make sure the summary is complete on its own by providing any missing information and discarding redundant and irrelevant details and parts.
8. As you edit for completeness, also make sure you edit for style as your text flows in a clear direction that makes understanding the message an easy task.
9. Eliminate wordiness by dropping adverbs and unnecessary adjectives.
   "The results clearly showed that there was no difference between the groups" can be shortened to "There was no significant difference between the groups".
10. Rely on paraphrasing rather than direct quotations.
11. Rearrange the main points as befits your overall narrative and style.
12. Stay true to the original source and represent it accurately.

Further Reading: Anderson, V., & Hidi, S. (1988). Teaching students to summarize. *Educational leadership*, *46*(4), 26-28.

5. PARAPHRASING

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Defining the norms of proper paraphrasing.*

- *Learning how to paraphrase a text.*

1. What is Paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is the restatement of information and ideas from another text using one's own words and style. The restatement affects a number of levels including the vocabulary, sentence structure, and the text's style and overall arrangement. Paraphrasing also introduces changes to the arrangement of ideas, the number of details, and the number of examples. Despite all these changes, paraphrasing still maintains the original passage's message and intentions all the while presenting it in a new light. A well-executed paraphrasing demonstrates that the researcher fully understands the source text. Some of the most common strategies used in paraphrasing include replacing words with their synonyms and changing sentence structure and grammar.

When using synonyms, researchers need to be careful to choose the appropriate words to express the intended meaning, as the meaning of words differs significantly from one context to the other (Swales & Feak, 2012). Furthermore, paraphrasing a text does not make it yours, as one still needs to cite the original source (ibid.). Additionally, one might wonder what is the importance of paraphrasing if it adds nothing to the meaning, as in such a case direct quotations would serve the same purpose without having to go through all the hustle associated with paraphrasing. The answer is that one paraphrases to either adapt the original idea in a style that suits his own writing or to portray the information in a language that is understood by his/her audience, especially in the case of highly technical texts that are meant for the general public. Furthermore, high direct quotation rate percentage vis-à-vis the overall text length is frowned upon as it demonstrates that the researcher either does not fully understand the original text or lacks the needed background knowledge to simplify concepts and explain them.

2. How to Paraphrase a Passage?

Paraphrasing is a systematic process that goes through a number of steps that help the researcher divide the task into manageable chunks, and allow the researcher to proceed in a methodical and efficient manner. Swales and Feak (ibid.) argue that the most efficient way is by going through the following steps:

a) Determine the main ideas and points in the passage and drop any unnecessary details that you can do without.

b) Map out the nature of the relationship(s) between the different points, be it addition, contradiction, contrast, comparison, … etc.

c) Determine the linking phrases and expressions that can best express the relationship(s) identified in the previous step.

d) Determine the verbs that better express and establish the determined relationships.

e) Consider the possible synonyms for the source vocabulary and changing the part of speech nouns to verbs, for instance. Still one needs to be careful when choosing the synonyms as the meaning of the word changes depending on the context.

f) Determine the unnecessary ideas and information that you should delete, as well as the ones that you need to add to clarify any ambiguity.

Since it is at its base a form reporting, paraphrasing might start with a reporting verb such as the one below:

- The author tells us that
- According to the author,
- The author writes …
- The author says that …
- The author states that …

Now let's apply what we saw so far with a number of examples:

=**Further Reading:** Chuong, H. (2017). *Paraphrasing Strategies: 10 Simple Techniques For Effective Paraphrasing In 5 Minutes Or Less*. Independently published.

6. PLAGIARISM

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Defining plagiarism.*

- *Highlighting all the cases that can be considered as academic dishonesty.*

- *Learning how to avoid plagiarism.*

1. Definition

'A theft of ideas' is probably the definition that comes to mind when thinking about plagiarism. Being one of the main issues in academia, plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own either intentionally or unintentionally without any reference to the original source. The definition suggested by Roberts (2004) is the most comprehensive and helpful one that we've found in the literature.

> "You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else's words or ideas but fail to credit that person. You plagiarize even when you do credit the author but use his [or her] exact words without so indicating with quotation marks or block indentation. You also plagiarize when you use words so close to those in your source, that if you placed your work next to the source, you would see that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow." (p. 167)

What can be understood from the quotation above is that plagiarism goes far beyond the failure to acknowledge the source, as even the failure to adequately paraphrase the source text is considered a form of plagiarism. Another form of plagiarism that might evade unwary novice researchers is self-plagiarism where previous works are reused and presented as if they were new. So even when using one's own work, a proper acknowledgment is warranted with few exceptions where limited parts of instrumentation or analysis can be reused without a need of any form of referencing.

Basically, there are four ways in which one can fall in the trap of plagiarism are classified by Roberts (2010) as follows:

1. Using others' words or ideas without properly acknowledging them.

2. Using others' exact words without quotation marks or indentation.
3. Failing to paraphrase or summarizing your source properly (even if you cite the source).
4. Using your previously published works as if they were new (self-plagiarism).
5. Fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of facts.

Most researchers fall into plagiarism unintentionally because they fail to properly summarize or paraphrase the original passage, as the line between a proper summary/paraphrasing and a poorly done one is so blurred and unclear that the risk remains a permanent one.

As we saw in the previous lesson, is the restatement of information and ideas from another text using one's own words and style. However, how close are your words to those of the original source would determine whether you fell into the trap of plagiarism even in the presence of a proper acknowledgment.

Keeping in mind that paraphrasing is far from being the simple act of replacing words with their synonyms or rearranging sentences to alter their structure, Roberts (2004) offered a simple test to ascertain whether or not you are inadvertently plagiarizing.

> "Whenever you use a source extensively, compare your page with the original. If you think someone could run her [or his] finger along your sentences and find synonyms or synonymous phrases for words in the original in roughly the same order, try again." (p. 170)

The best way to avoid plagiarism is by laying down some rules to be used as a reference to check one's work against, and this includes answering the following questions.

2. When to acknowledge the source?

Roberts (2010) argues that the original source must be acknowledged in the following case.

a) When using someone else's exact words.
b) When summarizing or paraphrasing someone else's ideas.
c) When incorporating interesting phrases.
d) When incorporating unique word or item.
e) When using facts, data, and information from other people's research.
f) When adapting or adopting paintings, maps, graphs, photographs or charts from other sources.

g) When using ideas from a speech, lecture, interview, or conversation.

h) When using ideas from an interview, a conversation, a video, a podcast, a film, or a television program.

i) When referring to experiments conducted by other people.

3. What you do not have to cite?

Meanwhile, there are some cases under which you are not required to cite the source, and that includes:

- Any data that you have gathered yourself (Roberts, 2010).

- Any piece of information that can be classified as known facts, general truth, or common knowledge. This can be extended to anything that is widely known by the general public or the members of your field of interest, and obvious common knowledge that does not need research to prove it or back it up (ibid.).

- Your own opinions, views, reflections, conclusions, and feelings about your topic (ibid.).

4. What materials can be classified as "Common Knowledge"?

This point in particular can be a tricky one and so one needs to be cautious when trying to classify any piece of information as common knowledge or not. Still, it comes in handy to check the following points:

- When the piece of information is documented in at least 5 different research works without any particular reference (ibid.).

- When the information simply made part of your background knowledge of the topic before encountering it in any other research document (ibid.).

- When the piece of information is considered common knowledge amongst the members of your field (ibid.).

5. How to avoid plagiarism?

As tricky as it seems, there are a number of simple procedures that can be taken to keep plagiarism at bay, and that includes:

- Paraphrase and summarize properly (ibid.).

- Quote all that you copy or take from other people's work (ibid.).

- Keep records of all the sources you use (Roberts, 2010).

- Use plagiarism checkers to check the materials you wrote (ibid.).

7. REFERENCING

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Defining acknowledgement.*

- *Reviewing the different types and classifications of in-text and full references.*

1. Definition

Referencing is broadly defined as the acknowledgment of the author of the source document by including a set of information that would allow the reader to track back your source and verify the validity of your arguments and the evidence you included in your work if necessity calls for that (Greetham, 2021). One is required to acknowledge the source whenever s/he uses any type of content found in other people's works (Hyland, 2004).

Academia is based on a set of moral principles and values, most of which are embodied in the act of acknowledgment of other people's efforts and contributions. Referencing serves a number of purposes as argued by Ridley (2012):

- Showing respect to the original author(s) by acknowledging their contribution to the field;
- Proving your credibility by establishing your position and that of your work within the larger spectrum of your respective field;
- Proving the validity and credibility of your arguments by allowing others the freedom of verifying them;
- Clarifying the premises upon which you based your arguments;
- Locating your work within the larger spectrum of your field and demonstrating how it is related to previous works done by other researchers;
- Weighing your findings and arguments and gauging their relevance and reliability by comparing them against the ones presented in other academic works;
- Demonstrating the breadth and the depth of the reading that you did and the extent of your knowledge regarding your field of interest;
- Enabling and encouraging traceability in academia and verification of the validity and accuracy of arguments and findings.
- Avoiding plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

2. Referencing Systems

Referencing systems can be classified in terms two of main systems that are both divided into in-text references and their corresponding list of references. The first system is known as the author-date system, where the in-text reference includes the name of the author(s) and the year of publication (and the page number in the case of a direct quotation). Every single reference is then recited again in an alphabetical list of references located at the end of the document to provide detailed information regarding the reference to include the name of the author, the year of publication, the title of the document, the nature of the document, and the publisher. This system is widely used in academia with differences in the form and the type of mentioned details that change from one discipline to the other.

Author-date system in-text reference	"It is important to be able to argue [and behave] rationally in a civilised society" (Andrews, 2011, p.1).
Author-date system full reference included in the list of bibliography.	Andrews, J. G. (2011). In the Name of Civilization: War, Conquest, and Colonialism. *Journal of Historical Studies*, *59*(11), 312-334.

Examples of author-date referencing system.

Meanwhile, the footnote or endnote system's in-text reference is a superscript number that comes directly after the referenced information. The full reference is later on added either at the bottom of the page or in a list at the end of the chapter or the document where each number comes with its corresponding full reference.

Footnote system in-text reference	"It is important to be able to argue [and behave] rationally in a civilised society" [1].
Footnote system full reference included in the list of bibliography.	1. Andrews, J. G. (2011). In the Name of Civilization: War, Conquest,

| | and Colonialism |
| | . Journal of Historical Studies, *59*(11), 312-334. |

Examples of Footnote referencing system.

3. Integral and non-integral references

When it comes to in-text references, there is an important distinction that needs to be made as it affects the way the reference is employed within the text and how it is formatted.

a. Integral References

An integral reference is a reference where the name of the author is kept out of the parentheses (Swales & Feak, 2012). Such a reference has a grammatical function within the sentence, and that can be as a subject, an object, or an agent. Observe that in both examples below the name of the author functions as a subject within the sentence.

Example:

- Donna Haraway (1991, 1997), amongst other scholars, has argued that knowledge is embodied and situated, that the content of a scientific text is shaped by the place of its production.
- According to Barone et al. (1997), it is part of the current agenda of social cognitive psychology to acquire a better understanding of individual differences in self-regulation.

b. Non-integral References

In a non-integral reference, the author's name is included within the parentheses and so it has no grammatical function within the sentence as shown in the example below (Swales & Feak, 2012).

Example:

- There are four broad categories of issues that affect commitment: personal characteristics, role-related characteristics, structural characteristics, and work experiences (Mowday et al. 1982).

c. Short Direct Quotation

A direct quotation is an excerpt copied from the original source with no changes or modifications (Walden University Library, 2020). Direct quotations are differentiated from the rest of the text by placing them between two quotation marks ("….") (ibid.). When a quotation is 39 words-long or less, it is referred to as a short direct quotation and it is embedded within the text. Short direct quotations can be either integral or non-integral as shown in the examples below.

Example:

- Wegner and Wheatley (1999) proposed that the subjective experience of intentions causing behavior is an illusion as "both intention and behaviour are caused by a third variable; 'unconscious mechanisms of the mind" (p.490).
- The subjective experience of intentions causing behaviour is an illusion as "both intention and behaviour are caused by a third variable; unconscious mechanisms of the mind" (Wegner & heatley, 1999, p.490).

d. Long Direct Quotation

Long direct quotations include any direct quotation that is 40 words-long or more (Walden University Library, 2020). They are separated from the rest of the paragraph. Not only long direct quotations are presented as separate blocks but they are also indented, single-spaced, and not surrounded by quotation marks (ibid.). The full stop that marks the end of the paragraph goes before the part of the reference that indicates the page as shown in the example below.

Example:

As a notion, self-control's definition kept eluding psychologists for a long time, as the elasticity of the notion itself makes framing it simply impossible. Among the many attempts made by several scholars, Muraven et al. (1998) suggest that:

> It is good to exert self-control on a regular basis because in the long run, these exercises will strengthen self-control and make a person less susceptible to the depleting effects of a single exertion. (p. 456)

NB: Never end a paragraph with a long direct quotation, and instead include your own analysis or reflection on the quotation before closing the paragraph or the idea (Walden University Library, 2020).

4. Choice of reporting verb

A further choice to be made concerning citations is that of the reporting verb and its tense. when using an integral reference, a reporting verb is often necessary. It gives the sentence more meaning and introduces what the cited author thinks, said, or did.

Reporting verbs can be categorised according to the type of meaning they convey as clarified by Ridley (2012):

- 'Doing' activities refer to procedures and research findings, for example: observe, discover, show, illustrate, analyse, conduct, study, examine.
- Thinking' activities refer to an author's beliefs and thoughts, for example: believe, view, speculate.
- Discussion' activities refer to what a cited author has said, for example: argue, discuss, suggest, state, propose, claim, describe.

5. Choice of Verb Tense

Another aspect that confuses researchers regarding the reporting verbs is what tense to opt for as the choice of the tense affects the meaning. Meanwhile, researchers must choose the verb tenses in a consistent way. One of the major tenses used in academic writing is the simple past.

a. The past simple is considered to be the safest tense to use as it is applicable across a wide range of functions and serves different purposes (American Psychological Association, 2020). The past simple comes in handy when reporting actions and discussing events that took place at some point in the past, which represents most of what research papers talk about.

Example: Chappelle et al. (1995, as cited in ibid.) found that the intermediate species hydrogen was potentially important for diagnosing which anaerobic respiration process was dominant.

b. Present perfect is the tense to use when discussing processes and actions that are still in progress as of the time of reporting them (ibid.).

Example: Reactive transport modeling of groundwater systems has become an important field of research during recent years (e.g. Zheng and Bennett, 1995; Steefel and MacQuarrie, 1996)

c. Present simple is commonly used when reporting what a cited author thinks, believes, writes, or says (ibid.).

Example: Analysing the context and processes of this emergence, Findlen (1994, p. 97) stresses that "Humanists, natural philosophers, and collectors were not just found anywhere in society. They inspected nature in a precisely demarcated setting, the museum, that took its place alongside the courts.

8. APA Style

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Introducing the learners to the APA referencing style 7th edition.*

- *Reviewing in-text as well as full references forms.*

- *Tackling the main referencing cases which the learner might face.*

1. What is APA Style?

APA is an acronym that stands for 'American Psychological Association'. It is a set of rules and norms that governs academic writing formatting all the way from referencing to the document's format and arrangement (American Psychological Association, 2020). In this lesson, we will be focusing on the citation and referencing aspects. It should be noted that the APA referencing style is based on the author-date system and the current document is based on APA 7th Addition.

a. Basic in-text referencing

In-text reference is used to acknowledge the author of the source document and it consists of the surname of the author and the date of publication (just the year) (American Psychological Association, 2020). The date is always cited within two parentheses, whereas the surname of the author is kept out of the parentheses when it is an integral reference and it is put within the parentheses when it is a non-integral reference (refer to the previous lesson for more details).

Example:

- Azar and Martin (1999) found that… (As part of the sentence)

In the case of using a direct quotation, the number of the page must be cited as well right after the date.

Example:

- …the result of this is a "technical super identity" (Erikson, 1967, p. 20).

For a source that lacks page numbers such as a website or an ebook, the number of the paragraph is mentioned instead (American Psychological Association, 2020). To indicate

which paragraph, the word 'para' is followed by a colon, then the number of the paragraph. It should be kept in mind that the counting starts from the beginning of the document and not only the page.

Example:

- … the result of this is a "technical super identity" (Azar, 2019, para. 4).

When citing more than one reference for the same piece of information, just order the authors alphabetically and separate their names with a semi-colon as shown in the examples below (American Psychological Association, 2020).

- More recent studies (Bartlett, 1992; James, 1998) show that …
- The researchers (Bartlett, 1992; Brown, 1876; James, 1998) refer to …

b. The Form of Reference Lists

As indicated in the previous lesson, every in-text reference has a corresponding full reference included in the list of bibliography at the end of the chapter or the document. In the case of full references, we need to point out each and every source of information are presented in a unique way that allows the recognition of the nature of the source by its reference. Amongst the most widely used sources of information are books (also known as non-periodicals) and journal articles (also known as periodicals).

⇨ **Non-periodical =** Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Copyright Year). Title of the book (7th ed.). Publisher. DOI or URL

When writing the full reference of a non-periodical, one should:

- Put the surname (last name) followed by a comma then the initials of the first and middle name. in the case of multiple authors keep them in the same order they came in in the source document (ibid.).
- Pur the year of publication between parentheses, followed by a period (ibid.).
- Next, put the full title capitalizing every word except for content words. In the case of a subtitle, it comes after a colon and only the first word is capitalized. Italicize the whole thing and conclude it with a colon (ibid.).
- Put the name of the publisher, followed by a period (ibid.).

- Put the DOI at the end of the reference (American Psychological Association, 2020).

- If the book has an edition number, include it between parentheses right after the title followed by the abbreviation "ed." right before the colon (ibid.).

Example:

Fletcher, D. P. (2018). *Disrupters: Success strategies for women who break the mold*. Entrepreneur Press. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000143-000

⇨ **Periodical** = Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). Title of the article. *Name of the Periodical, volume*(issue), #–#. https://doi.org/xxxx

When writing the full reference of a periodical, one should:

- Put the surname (last name) followed by a comma then the initials of the first and middle name. in the case of multiple authors keep them in the same order they came in in the source document (ibid.).

- Pur the year of publication between parentheses, followed by a period (ibid.).

- Next, put the full title capitalizing every word except for content words and it ends with a period. In the case of a subtitle, it comes after a colon and only the first word is capitalized (ibid.).

- The periodical name is capitalized and italicized, followed by a comma (ibid.).

- Put the number of the volume followed by the issue between parentheses. Italicize the volume number and conclude the whole thing with a comma (ibid.).

- Put the numbers of the first and the last page of the article separated by a dash and followed by a period (ibid.).

- Put the DOI at the end of the reference (ibid.).

Example:

Reed, M. J., Kennett, D. J., & Newbold, I. L. (2009). The relative effects of university success courses and individualized interventions for students with learning disabilities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(4), 385–400. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360903067013

c. A source with more than one author

In the case of an integral in-text reference with two authors, always spell out the word '**and**' (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Example:

- Gass and Varonis (2005) confirm that …

In the case of a non-integral in-text reference with two authors use '**&**' (ibid.).

Example:

- A recent study (Gass & Varonis, 2005) confirms that …

In the case of a full reference, combine the authors' names using '&' as shown in the example below (ibid.).

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Copyright Year). Title of the book (7th ed.). Publisher. DOI or URL.

Example:

- Bland, D. J., & Osterwalder, A. (2019). Testing business ideas: A field guide for rapid experimentation. John Wiley & Sons

In the case of a non-integral in-text reference with three or more authors, include the first author name followed by '**et al.**' (ibid.).

Example:

- A recent study (Taylor et al., 2008) shows that …

In the full reference with three authors or more, put a comma between the authors and place '&' right before the last one (ibid.).

Example:

- Bland, D. J., & Osterwalder, A., & Chapelle, D. (2019). *Testing business ideas: A field guide for rapid experimentation.* John Wiley & Sons.

d. Reference to more than one publication of the same author in the same year

In the case of using multiple publications of the same author, and two or more of those publications share the same date, add alphabetical letters after the year of publication to differentiate between them (a, b, c, … etc.) (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Example:

- Johnson (1994a, p.48) discussed the subject …
- In his later works (Johnson, 1994b, p.56) he argued …

e. Different authors with the same surname

In the case of using different publications of authors who share the same surname, precede the authors' surname with their respective initials (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Example:

- According to B. Smith (1989) and F. Smith (1997), ….

f. A book with an institution, organization or association as author

In the case of a publication with no human author mentioned as an author, but instead, it is published under the name of a body such as institution, organization, association, … etc., the official name of the body is cited as an author (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Example:

- …it had long been evident that the intellectual potential of the Afrikaners on the Witwatersrand was underutilized (Rand Afrikaans University, 1976)…
- …thus the Rand Afrikaans University (1976) concluded that…
- Rand Afrikaans University (1970). *The new university: A practical guideline*. Rand Afrikaans University.

g. Anonymous work

When the author's identity is hidden and the word anonymous is used instead of his name, simply use the word anonymous instead of the name of the author both in the in-text and the full references (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Example:

- A recent article (Anonymous, 1993) stated that…

In the case of a newspaper, magazine, or blog article where the name of the author is not mentioned, simply use the title of the article instead of the name of the author.

Example:

- A recent article (War over, 1991) stated that…
- War over. (1991, 7 January). The Star, p. 1.

h. An edited book

An edited book is a document that includes an assortment of articles or chapters written by different contributors. The different parts are then organized by the editor in the form of one single book. When relying on an edited book as a source of information, the researcher must reference the name of the author of the chapter or the article that s/he used. While there is no problem with in-text reference as they consist of the surname of the author, the date, and possibly the date; the problem lies within the full reference that should include the word (Ed.) after the name of the editor, and in case of a book with more than one editor use the word (Eds.) as indicated in the example below (ibid.).

A. A. Editor & B. B. Editor (Eds.), *Title of the book* (2nd ed., pp. #–#). Publisher. DOI or URL

Example:

- Driver, E. & Broisen, A. (Eds.). (1989). *Child sexual abuse.* Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Strunk, W. (Ed.). (1976). *Adult learning*. Macmillan.

i. Part/chapter of an edited book

Most of the time when using an edited book we refer to a particular chapter of it instead of the whole document, and in this case, we need to acknowledge the author (ibid.). While there is no problem with the in-text reference, the full reference needs to be formatted in the following manner:

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Copyright Year). Title of the chapter. In A. A. Editor & B. B. Editor (Eds.), *Title of the book* (2nd ed., pp. #–#). Publisher. DOI or URL

Example:

- Hartley, J.T., Harker, O.J., & Walsh, D.A. (1980). Contemporary issues and new directions in adult development of learning and memory. In L.W. Poon (Ed.), *Aging in the 1980's: Psychological issues (*pp. 116-141*).* American Psychological Association.

j. A source with a foreign title

In the case of a source with a foreign title, simply write the title in the original language then right next to it write its translation between two brackets […] (American Psychological Association, 2020). The translation is not italicized.

Example:

- Spyridakis, A. (1987). *E historia tis Helladas* [A history of Greece]. Therios ita Iona.

k. Date of publication unknown

Some of the documents and data sources have no specific date of publication, in such a case the date must be replaced by the acronym 'n.d' (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Example:

- Wolverton (n.d.) found that… (As part of the sentence)
- …the result of this is a "technical super identity" (Wolverton, n.d., 20).
- Wolverton, H. (n.d.). *The geological structure of the Black Hills*. Prairie Press.

l. Unpublished dissertation or thesis, print/hardcopy format

Dissertations and theses include every research paper written as a requirement for gaining an academic degree such as a Master's or a Ph.D. Unpublished means that the only hard copies ever made by the researcher are the ones submitted to the university and no further efforts were made to publish the document otherwise. The reference should contain the type of the document written between brackets right after the title, either [Unpublished master's thesis] or [Unpublished doctoral dissertation] depending on the nature of the degree (American Psychological Association, 2020). The reference should also include the name of the university along with the city and the country as shown in the example below.

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). *Title*. [Unpublished master's thesis/ Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University, City, Country.

Example:

- Knight, A. (2001). *Exercise and osteoarthritis* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

m. Dissertation or thesis, from a database or published online

Theses and dissertations retrieved from online databases have slightly different references, as the name of the university is included within the brackets along with the document type, followed by the name of the database and the URL to access the document online (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Author, A. (year). *Title of dissertation* [Doctoral dissertation, Name of Institution Granting Award]. Database Name.

Example:

- Pflieger, J. C. (2009). *Adolescents' parent and peer relations and romantic outcomes in young adulthood* [Doctoral dissertation, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. http://hdl.handle.net/10292/466

Conference proceedings

Conference proceedings are a collection of academic papers that were presented at a conference under one unified theme. The papers are published in one single document, in the same manner as an edited book, and it should contain the details shown in the example below (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of conference contribution. In C. C. Editor (Ed.), *Title of conference proceeding* (pp. #-#). Publisher. DOI or URL

Example:

- Wellington, E. M. H., Marsh, P., Toth, I., Cresswell, L., Huddleston, L., & Schilhabel, M.B. (1993). The selective effects of antibiotics in soils. In R. Guerrero, & C. Pedrós-Alió (Eds.), *Trends in microbial ecology: Proceedings of the sixth international symposium on microbial ecology, Barcelona, 6-11 September 1992.* (pp. 331-336). Spanish Society for Microbiology.

n. Personal Communication

There are cases in which a piece of information is acquired through direct exchange be it a face-to-face conversation, a guest speaker in class, notes you took during class, a phone call, or an email (American Psychological Association, 2020). Such type of information is classified under what is known as personal communication and it should be referenced as such (ibid.). Yet it should be noted that such references are only added as in-text references and NOT included in the references list.

Integral reference: Initial(s). last name (personal communication, Month Day, Year)

Non-integral reference: (initial(s). last name, personal communication, Month Day, Year)

Example:

- … (P. Rand, personal communication, May 22, 2019).
- P. Rand (personal communication, May 22, 2019) observed that ----

o. Internet site with author

Internet websites are amongst the most accessible sources of information and thus being aware of how to reference them is a necessary skill to learn for any researcher. In the case of a blog page or a website where the name of the author is clearly displayed, the reference must be as follows (ibid.).

Author, A. A. (Date). *Title of the web page*. Publisher/Site sponsor name. URL

Example:

- Templeton, S. (2019, June 4). *Why your reusable shopping bag isn't better than a single-use plastic one*. Newshub. https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/lifestyle/2019/06/why-your-reusableshopping-bag-isn-t-better-than-a-single-use-plastic-one.html

p. Internet website without author

In some cases, the name of the author is nowhere to be found on the page or the website, and in such a case, the name of the website is used instead, and it is usually the domain name

without the extension or the one displayed on the banner at the top of the page (American Psychological Association, 2020). Once the website is mentioned as an author it cannot be mentioned again after the title as shown in the example below.

Publisher/Site sponsor name, A. A. (Date). *Title of the web page*. URL

Example:

- Newshub. (2019, June 4). *Why your reusable shopping bag isn't better than a single-use plastic one*. https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/lifestyle/2019/06/why-your-reusableshopping-bag-isn-t-better-than-a-single-use-plastic-one.html

q. Documents Downloaded from websites

A great deal of the documents if not most of them are downloaded from the internet, and so if the document can only be accessed or read after downloading, the acronym '[PDF]' must be added after the title as shown below (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Author, A. (Year). *Title of PDF* [PDF]. Title of webpage/publisher. URL

Example:

- Bates, M. (2015). *Eating and activity guidelines for New Zealand adults* [PDF]. Ministry of Health. https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/eating-

r. Cite a Source Found in Another Source

When we refer to a source that was cited in another source, we call that indirect citation or a secondary source. It goes without saying that the best approach is to track the original source down and access the original source yourself, but if that was not possible one needs to make sure to reference both sources properly. In the in-text reference include both authors' names and years of publication separated by the expression 'as cited in', meanwhile in the full reference only cite the secondary source as shown in the examples below (American Psychological Association, 2020).

(original source author name, year, as cited in the secondary source author name, year)

Example:

- Little empirical research on students' critical thinking exists (Patel, 2016, as cited in Kamura, 2018, p. 83).
- Patel, G.N. (2018). *Critical Thinking in Language Classrooms* (2th ed.). Elsevier Academic Press.

s. Newspaper article

In the case of newspaper and magazine articles, the full date must be mentioned in the full reference yet in the in-text reference only the year is mentioned (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Author, A. (Year, Month Day). Title of the article. Newspaper name. URL if available.

Example:

- Harding (2019) argues that …
- Harding, E. (2019, November 21). Invercargill Kmart ready to open. *The Southland Times*. https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/117596378/invercargill-kmart-ready-to-open

This was a brief review of the main referencing cases usually faced by researchers and students alike, as covering all the possible situations that researchers might face is beyond the scope of this lesson, thus for further information about cases that has not been covered here one might consult the guides on APA Style 7th Edition published by many universities online.

10. ABSTRACT

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Defining an abstract.*

- *Familiarizing learners with its form and structure.*

- *Learning how to write a dissertation's abstract.*

1. Definition

An abstract is a concise summary of the research paper. Despite its conciseness, the abstract is a very important part of any academic research work be it a dissertation, a thesis, or a journal article. Abstracts are meant to be a succinct description of the work that comes at the very beginning of any paper. Thus, most often than not, it is the first part with which any examiner or reader of your work would start. It is an important opportunity for the researcher to give a good initial impression and hook the reader to dive into the details of the rest of the paper (Simon Fraser University, 2020). Presenting the major elements of the research, an abstract expands on what is stated by the title by giving more insight into the work and allowing the reader to form an overall understanding of the work and evaluate its relativity to what s/he is looking for (ibid.). Despite the fact that the abstract is the first element one encounters when reading any academic work, it is the last element to be written and that's for a good reason as it must reflect all the major parts of the work including the results (ibid.).

There is a set of norms and specifications that govern both the form and the content of an abstract, and unless the student or the researcher is well acquainted with them, his/her abstract will fail to serve its purpose. As the main objective of the module as a whole is to prepare the students to write their Master's dissertation, we will shed the light on the rules the govern the writing an abstract of a Master's degree dissertation. As far as the form is concerned, an abstract must entail the following:

a) The first sentence of the abstract should set the ground for presenting the problematic by briefly touching on some background and contextual information that functions as an introduction (School of Management & Languages, 2012).

b) The second part to be covered are the research objectives that motivated the conceptualization of the research paper and its realization. Stating the objectives also

helps frame the work by clearly indicating the area of interest and justifying the investigated problematic (School of Management & Languages, 2012).

c) The third part of the abstract is the clear stipulation of the research problematic and research questions (ibid.). The research questions must not exceed three questions that can be reformulated in the form of statements.

d) The fourth element is an overview of the paper structure by summarizing the content and the objective of each chapter in one sentence (ibid.).

e) The fifth element is a straightforward account of the research methodology applied by the researcher (ibid.). It should clearly state what you did and how you did it in 2 or 3 sentences without getting caught in the details of technicalities.

f) The sixth element is displaying the results and findings. Make sure they are clearly stated as the reader is more interested in what you found than in how you achieved it (ibid.). In the case of having too many findings, focus on the main ones that directly answer your research questions and help the reader understand your conclusions and interpretations.

g) The seventh element is a brief commentary that succinctly interprets the results and puts them into perspective by relating them to the previously mentioned problematic and research questions (ibid.).

h) The eighth element is optional, as, in the case of facing any hurdles and problems that affected the outcome of the study, they should be briefly mentioned in the form of limitations as this would allow the reader to gauge the extent to which the results could be generalized (ibid.).

i) The final element is the inclusion of the keywords, albeit separately from the rest of the abstract. The list of keywords entails around five words or short expressions to reference the most important element of the work and help to find it in online searches. It should be pointed out that in the case of a master's dissertation, some universities do not require the inclusion of keywords.

Meanwhile, the form of the abstract is just as important as its content and there are rules to be respected and they include the following.

a) The length of the abstract differs based on the nature of the paper and the requirements imposed by the publisher or the university, but as a rule of thumb, the abstract of a journal's article is around 150 words, that of an M.A. dissertation is about 250 words; meanwhile, a Ph.D. thesis is around 350 words long.

b) The abstract is an independent self-contained original text rather than a copy of any other part of the research paper (School of Management & Languages, 2012).

c) The abstract is presented in the form of a single unindented block that comes right after the title in journal articles, whereas in dissertations and theses, it is presented in a separate page that comes right after the acknowledgement page and before the table of content.

d) The fact that it is depicts different parts of the research should not affect the coherence of the abstract as one single block; as the ideas and different parts should be logically related as each one leads to the other in a smooth manner.

e) Depending on what part of the work you are trying to cover, one can either use the present simple tense as in the case of presenting the problematic or the objectives or use the past simple tense as in the case of talking about the methodology or research procedure, yet the future is to never be used when writing an abstract.

Further Reading: Resources, C. R. W. (n.d.). *Writing an Effective Abstract-How to Write a Research Paper: An Editage Series*. Cactus Communications.

11. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Objectives of the lesson:

- *Defining a general introduction.*

- *Familiarizing learners with its form and structure.*

- *Learning how to write a dissertation's general introduction.*

1. Definition

The general introduction sets the tone for your research and provides the reader with the background information s/he needs in order to form a clear image of what is entailed in the work and what issues are discussed in the paper. It also helps the reader form a holistic understanding of how the dissertation is structured, what every chapter entails, and how all the different components are related to one another. More importantly, the general introduction is the part at which you hook the reader into diving deeper into your work after you have wet their appetite. Like any other piece of academic writing, a master's dissertation entails a set of components that ensure it serves its purpose, and so while writing it, researchers must stick to the following guidelines:

1. *Topic and context*: lay some background information about your topic by highlighting the area of your research interest (School of Management & Languages, 2012).
2. *Problem statement*: Narrow down the scope to the specific problem that your dissertation investigates and all the aspects you intend to tackle, all the while clearly stipulating the main problematic and the aim of your research (ibid.).
3. *Relevance and importance*: indicate the reasons for which your problematic is worth investigation and how it relates to the existing research already done on the matter (ibid.).
4. *Research questions*: review the research questions along with their hypotheses and briefly describe how you intend to investigate the issue (ibid.).
5. *Overview of the structure*: briefly describe the different chapters and different components of the work and how they contribute to the overall aim of the study (ibid.).

Similar to any other piece of academic writing, the varied nature of the different parts entailed in the composition of the general introduction should not overshadow the importance of cohesion and coherence to ensure smooth flow of ideas and logical transaction from one section to the other. It should be pointed out that the general introduction should be around 8% of the overall length of the dissertation.

Further Reading: Bui, Y. N. (2019). *How to Write a Master's Thesis* (Third ed.). SAGE

Publications, Inc.

12. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Aims of the lesson:

- *Defining a general conclusion.*

- *Familiarizing learners with its form and structure.*

- *Learning how to write a dissertation's general conclusion.*

1. Definition

A general conclusion is the writer's opportunity to leave a long-lasting impression and restate the main points that s/he wants the reader to take from the work. It is written with the purpose of wrapping up the paper, and thus it must not introduce new data, interpretations, or arguments; but, rather, it must reiterate the findings by drawing them all together in a way that answers all the questions in the mind of the reader and sets the path for future researchers so that they build on what has been achieved in the dissertation. A general conclusion is a fundamental element of the dissertation and it should cover a set of elements that ensure it serves its purpose, and they include:

1. Synthesize your findings in a way that draws everything together so that the reader leaves with a clear set of points in mind (Dissertation Genius, 2016).
2. Answer your research question(s) and clarify whether you achieved what you set out to address at the beginning of your work and confirm or reject the hypotheses you listed at the beginning of your work (ibid.).
3. Summarize your work by reviewing the approach you employed, the issues you set out to investigate, and whether your findings matched your expectations (ibid.).

4. Address any new issues or questions that arose in the middle of the process, and refer to any limitations that affected your findings in one way or another (ibid.).

5. Based on your findings and the knowledge that you garnered in the process of conducting your research, reflect on the implication of your work on the field and how it contributes to the already existing body of literature (ibid.).

6. Make a set of recommendations for future related research regarding what needs to be investigated next or how it should be tackled (ibid.).

Further Reading: Bui, Y. N. (2019). *How to Write a Master's Thesis* (Third ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

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