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Master Students' Impediments in Writing the Review of Literature.

Case Study: Master Two Students

A Thesis Submitted as Partial Fulfilment for the Requirements of the Degree of *Master* in
Didactics.

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Declaration of Originality

I certify that this contribution is my own work, and it comprises no material that has previously been published or submitted to qualification of any other degree or diploma from a university or other institution. I also declare that the different usage of materials from other sources has been adequately and completely acknowledged and referenced.

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Dedications

To my beloved father and mother.

To my soul mate dearest husband who is always by my side.

To my precious two daughters.

To my sweetheart sister” Zohra” who represents everything bright in my life.

To my treasured niece Assinate.

To my Sweetie Fares.

To my brothers and sisters.

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Abstract

Undertaking a thesis represents a challenging endeavour for novice students, particularly when writing the literature review chapter, which is the fundamental basis of the entire dissertation. Inexperienced students navigating this new area may face many hurdles in accomplishing their literature reviews. The focal point behind the current research work is to give an in-depth look at the hindrances faced by EFL master students from the Department of English at Dr Moulay Taher University, in conducting the literature review of their theses. In addition to the extent of guidance provided by teachers to assist them in overcoming these obstacles. This topic is significant in the field of didactics because it sheds light on the importance of identifying areas that need improvement and academic support to enhance students' outcomes. To conduct this study, a mixed method approach was adopted, specifically employing an explanatory sequential design. Data were collected through two research instruments; a semi-structured questionnaire was delivered to twenty respondents and a structured interview was addressed to three EFL teachers who were randomly selected by the researcher. The main findings show that EFL Master 2 students have a limited understanding of the literature review's nature and structure as they explore it for the first time. The results also demonstrate that students struggle with synthesizing and critically analyzing previous works. Besides, they face problems handling large amounts of data, managing time, writing style, citation, and referencing. The results reveal a deficiency in the teachers' guidance. To this end, the researcher suggests a series of recommendations to both EFL teachers and learners. Teachers may provide systematic guidance and suggest relevant sources while constructing the literature review. They also need to dedicate appropriate time to teaching the literature review and how to synthesize and critically analyze previous studies. Learners should actively engage in the learning process by asking questions and seeking feedback. Further, learners must practise paraphrasing, analyzing, and synthesizing regularly to develop those skills. Upholding a positive mindset is a key element to enhance productivity and proficiency.

Keywords: Analyzing, challenging endeavour, Deficiency, EFL undergraduate students, Guidance, Literature review, Mixed method approach, Synthesizing

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

Ph.D.: Doctor of Philosophy

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General Introduction

Every undergraduate student is required to initiate thesis writing. It represents an opportunity for learners to be autonomous researchers and dive deeply into the chosen topics applying the acquired skills. Nevertheless, undertaking a thesis is not an easy task. Undergraduate students encounter difficulties during the thesis writing process where each chapter comes with its own hurdles. The literature review chapter emerges as particularly laborious.

A literature review is the first chapter in the thesis writing process. It is a combination of a broad summary and critical analysis of the previous studies to uncover the strengths and weaknesses of the topic of research. From this stage, the researcher obtains a thorough understanding of the topic at hand enabling him/her to identify the gap in the existing scholarly works, which paves the way for the reader to comprehend the context and significance of the research study.

As students embark on this independent journey, they find it challenging when conducting the literature review chapter. Though the literature review represents a fundamental phase, students lack knowledge of its purpose and structure.

This study is significant for those who are in the field of didactics. For students, it presents a wide range of information that could help them defeat difficulties and enhance their literature review writing. For teachers, it draws their attention to the necessity of progressive guidance and assistance during the literature review writing. This research deserves consideration as it bridges the gap between the student's difficulties and the teachers' role in overcoming those impediments.

In light of the information provided earlier, the following research, which is conducted with Master 2 EFL students at Saida University, has two aims. First, it aims to unveil the students' impediments while conducting the literature review. The second intention is to examine the extent to which EFL teachers assist students in overcoming challenges.

To accomplish these aims, two research questions have been raised:

- 1- What are the challenges and obstacles that Master 2 students encounter while conducting the literature review?
- 2- To what extent do teachers guide the process of conducting the literature review to master 2 students?

To answer these research questions, two research hypotheses are proposed:

- 1- Master 2 students may face several challenges including synthesizing, analyzing, managing time, handling large amounts of information, writing style, citation, and referencing.
- 2- EFL teachers provide various types of support for students to help them surmount the obstacles in conducting the literature review chapter.

As for the methodology used to collect data, the researcher has employed a mixed-methods approach, which is an explanatory sequential design that implies starting with a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase where a student questionnaire and teachers' interview were incorporated. The researcher selected a semi-structured interview to gather the students' responses with multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, and close-ended questions. The questionnaire was delivered to twenty Master 2 EFL students from the Department of English at Dr Moulay Taher University, during the academic year 2023/2024. The teachers' interview was structured with predetermined questions to ensure the comparability of information.

This study is divided into three chapters. Chapter one is dedicated to the literature review, it gives a glimpse of the literature review, its objectives, types, steps, and structure. Besides, it exposes its importance in academic research. It aims to explore the students' problems while conducting the literature review in previous academic studies and then identify the gaps. Chapter two is devoted to the research design and methodology. It describes the research methods, instruments, as well as the sample population profile. The last chapter is about analyzing the gathered data from the learners' questionnaire responses and the interview conducted with teachers and discussing the most relevant findings. Finally, the researcher suggests some recommendations for both teachers and students to help them solve the problems.

To accomplish this study, the researcher encountered some difficulties as any beginning researcher. One of the limitations was the non-collaboration from the majority of the population. Furthermore, the small sample size of the population led to reduced statistical results. Time constraints were an additional limitation in this research.

Chapter One:

Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

In the field of academic thesis writing, the first thing the EFL undergraduate students must do is to conduct a comprehensive literature review. It is an indispensable cornerstone, playing a role in obtaining a complete knowledge of the topic at hand. As students undertake the journey of research, the literature review acts as both a compass and map leading them through the wide range of existing studies. This chapter gives a glimpse into the literature review and its objectives. It also provides a comprehensive overview of the types and its parts which are essential in constructing a well-developed literature review. Furthermore, it introduces the styles of conducting a literature review and outlines the procedural steps of its realization. In the end, this chapter aims to investigate the students' impediments while conducting the literature review as well as reviewing the existing studies.

1.2 A Glimpse on the Literature Review

An early and important step in realizing a study is to review the existing knowledge. In the literature review, there are two words, which are literature and review. Mahrool (2020, p. 3) states, use italics "The word literature commonly known as pieces of writing that are valued as works. Meantime, review means the comparative study or analyzing the past available information". According to Denny and Tewksbury (2013), a literature review is a comprehensive overview of prior research regarding a specific topic. Following the previous statement, Ridly (2012), defines the literature review as where the researcher identifies the theories and previous research that have influenced his/her chosen research topic and chosen methodology. Additionally, a literature review is a written document that demonstrates a logically constructed argument based on the understanding of the existing knowledge about a specific topic of study (Machi and McEvoy, 2016).

As per Bakare (2013 as cited in Mahrool, 2020), literature review means reviewing academic work, books, and other causes relevant to a certain topic, area of research, or theoretical background, by providing an explanation, summary, and critical analysis of this research. Moreover, he delineates that, a literature review displays a summary of sources that the researcher encounters while conducting research and shows readers how the researcher's study coordinates with the vast field of study. As a result, the literature review serves as a crucial component in a thesis writing, serving the purpose of recognizing ideas related to the topic in hand from previous studies and incorporating them with a comprehensive understanding of the present knowledge in regard to the chosen topic of the study. This synthesis does not only establish a framework for the research but also highlights the academic context that informs and shapes the investigation.

1.2.1 Objectives of Literature Reviews

According to Neuman (2014), literature reviews have four objectives. The first one is to demonstrate familiarity with a state of knowledge and establish credibility. A review of literature communicates to the reader that the researcher knows the research area and understands its concerns. Moreover, it improves the reader's trust in the researcher's competence, ability, and background. The second aim is to depict the course of previous research, and how a present study is connected to it. A review presents the path of research on a question, providing insight into the development of knowledge. A well-constructed literature review contextualizes the research project, shedding light on its relevance by establishing connections to a piece of existing knowledge.

The third goal is to incorporate and summarize previous knowledge in a particular field. A review brings together and synthesizes diverse findings, indicating areas of agreement, disagreement, and major unsolved questions. It gathers what is known and suggests guidance for future research. The last objective is to learn from others and inspire new ideas. A review reports what others have achieved so that a researcher can benefit from their work. A good review detects gaps and proposes ideas for further research. It reveals methods and approaches that are worth adopting so that a researcher can concentrate on hypotheses and obtain new perspectives.

Thus, it can be inferred that the literature review serves to enhance the researcher's understanding of the undertaken topic of study and provides great help in selecting the appropriate methods and approaches. It helps researchers in formulating research questions, and hypotheses and discovering gaps through examining the existing studies.

1.2.2 Types of Literature Reviews

Neuman (2014), outlines literature reviews into six distinguished types. They come in different forms each offering different perspectives on existing studies.

1.2.2.1 Context Review

A common style of review involves connecting a particular study with a broader body of knowledge. It is often found at the beginning of a research report and presents the study by placing it within a wider context. It also demonstrates how the study continues or enhances the progression of thought or research.

1.2.2.2 Historical Review

A specialized type of review in which the author follows the evolution of an issue over a period. This review can be associated with either a theoretical or a methodological review to illustrate the development of a concept, theory, or research method over time.

1.2.2.3 Integrative Review

A common type of review involves the author demonstrating and summarizing the existing knowledge of the topic, emphasizing both agreements and disagreements. This review is frequently combined with a context review or may stand alone as an independent article to guide other researchers.

1.2.2.4 Methodological Review

A specialized integrative review where the author compares and assesses the relative strength of different studies. Furthermore, it demonstrates how various methodologies (e.g., research design, measures, samples) contribute to various results.

1.2.2.5 Self-study Review

A review in which the author displays his or her knowledge of a particular subject. It is often a component of an educational program or course.

1.2.2.6 Theoretical Review

A detailed review in which the author discusses multiple theories or concepts concentrating on similar topics and compares them based on assumptions, logical consistency, and explanatory scope.

1.2.2.7 Meta-analysis Review

A special type of review in which the author organizes the findings from various resources and uses statistical techniques to recognize common results.

1.2.3 Styles to Conduct Literature Reviews

Within the domain of literature review, how a researcher approaches it differs according to the style employed. By understanding the distinct styles, researchers can tailor their review to meet the objectives and contribute to the investigation of the chosen topic.

1.2.3.1 Traditional Literature Review

Jesson, Matheson, and Lacey (2011), delineate a traditional literature review as a written assessment of existing knowledge on a topic that generally lacks a predetermined methodology. The traditional form of a review involves a comprehensive examination of the literature. Critics argue that this traditional style is reproached for its openness and flexibility (Jesson, et.al, 2011, p.74). Thus, the important point is that in a formal review; researchers only present a purpose statement without telling the reader how to identify the sources, what is included or excluded, or why.

This traditional review often relies on the researcher's choice of resources since the researcher selects earlier authors whose contributions are significant to current knowledge. This style of review is commonly assigned to undergraduate students (Jesson, et. al, 2011).

1.2.3.2 Systematic Literature Review

A systematic review is defined as a method to understand and provide insights into what is effective and what is not (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006). The Center for Reviews and Dissemination (2009, as cited in Purssell and McCrae, 2020) issues the following definition: A review of the evidence on a formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant primary research, and to extract and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review. (p.11)

According to Jesson, Matheson, and Lacey (2011), there are six important methodological steps in conducting a systematic review that researchers should follow: Define the research question, design the plan, search for literature, apply exclusion and inclusion criteria, apply quality assessment and synthesis. Systematic reviews are very helpful tools for researchers who want to develop research and put it into action. As opposed to the traditional review, the systematic is a more neutral and transparent process, which aligns better with a scientific approach but may not suit social sciences.

Jesson, Matheson, and Lacey (2011), confirm that before using the systematic review, researchers must consider some essential things:

- A systematic review methodology may not be appropriate for undergraduate students.
- A systematic review is time-consuming and expensive sometimes.
- Systematic review is difficult to be an individual work. It generally involves collaboration among multiple individuals as a teamwork to share tasks such as scanning, screening, and quality assessment to minimize bias.
- A systematic review relies on access to electronic databases, and their limitation can be influenced by the effectiveness of these databases.
- The systematic review is restricted to published, peer-reviewed academic work.

Purssell, and McCrae, (2020) argue, "While the traditional literature review is a discursive text

that may give subjective prominence to the most interesting or influential studies, the systematic review is an objective and standardized exercise” (p.18). Consequently, to write an appropriate literature review, the researcher must select the appropriate style for his or her research.

1.2.4 Steps of Conducting a Literature Review

According to Fink (2014), a research literature review can be divided into seven tasks:

- 1. Selecting research question:** A research question is an accurately formulated question that directs the review.

- 2. Selecting bibliographic databases:** A bibliographic base is a collection of articles and books that can provide data to answer research questions. The database is usually accessed online. Bibliographic databases relevant to research review often include reports of original studies.

- 3. Choosing search terms:** Search terms involve picking up words and phrases to find relevant articles, books, and reports. They are based on the words and concepts that structure the research questions. Besides, the research is carried out using specific grammar and logic.

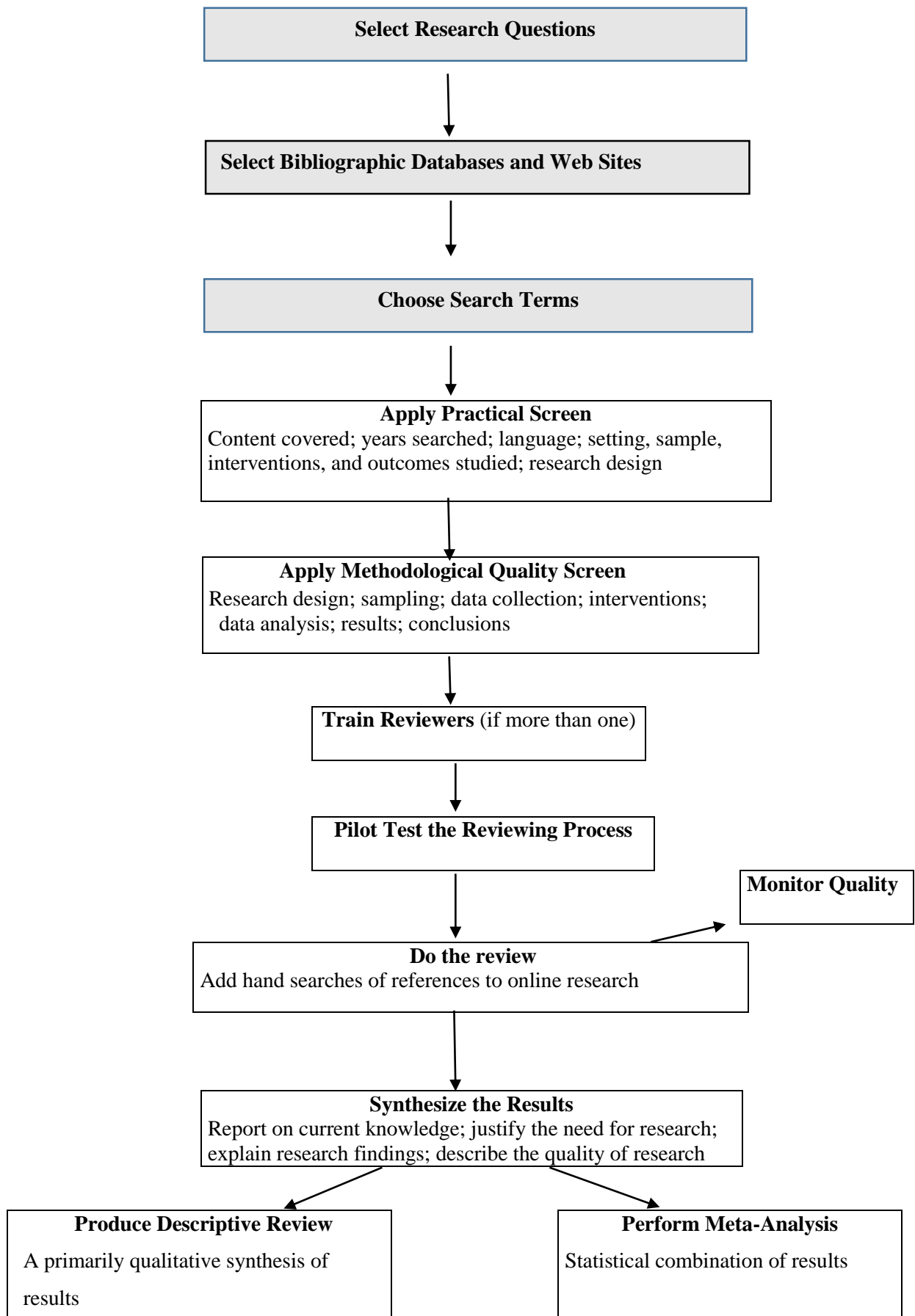
- 4. Applying practical screening criteria:** Literature reviews often offer many articles, yet only a few are relevant. To screen the literature effectively, one must set criteria to include and exclude articles from the review. Practical screening criteria encompass factors like the article’ language, type of article (e.g. journal article, clinical trial), date of publication, and finding source.

- 5. Applying methodological screening criteria:** Methodological criteria incorporate criteria for evaluating scientific quality.

- 6. Doing the review:** Reliable and credible reviews require the use of standardized forms to extract data from articles, observe the review’s quality, and conduct a pilot test of the process. It is essential for reviewers (if more than one) to undergo training on data abstraction.

- 7. Synthesizing the results:** Literature review results may be synthesized descriptively. Descriptive syntheses are interpretations of the review findings based on the experience of the reviewers as well as the quality and content of available literature. A distinct form of synthesis, known as meta-analysis, employs statistical methods to integrate results from multiple results.

Conducting a literature review involves a systematic process, to formulate research questions to screening relevant articles, using standardized data, and employing statistical methods for synthesis like meta-analysis. This process ensures a well-informed review of the available literature.

Figure 1.1 Steps Involved in Conducting a Research Literature Review.

Adapted from Fink, A. (2014).

1.2.5 The Structure of the Literature Review

According to Ridley (2012), organizing a literature review can vary due to its unique nature, making it challenging to suggest a common organizational structure but it is important to establish a logical progression that justifies both the research's necessity and the chosen methodology. Besides, when adopting the traditional approach of presenting the literature review in one or more distinct chapters, it is highly advised to incorporate the following elements:

- An introduction, which explains how your review is organized.
- Headings and subheadings that provide a map to show the various stands of your argument.
- A summary where the key arguments are reiterated concisely.

In keeping with Ridley, while a standardized structure for a literature review cannot be obligatory; numerous research writers follow common organizational principles. Depending on the specific section of your review, you can use a blend of the following approaches to suit each context. Weissberg and Bucker (1990, as cited in Ridley, 2012) advocate three ways for ordering citations:

1. Distant to close

Most distantly related to your work → Most closely related to your work

2. Chronological

Earliest related work → Most recent related work

3. Comparison and contrast of different approaches or particular features or characteristics of related theories or research

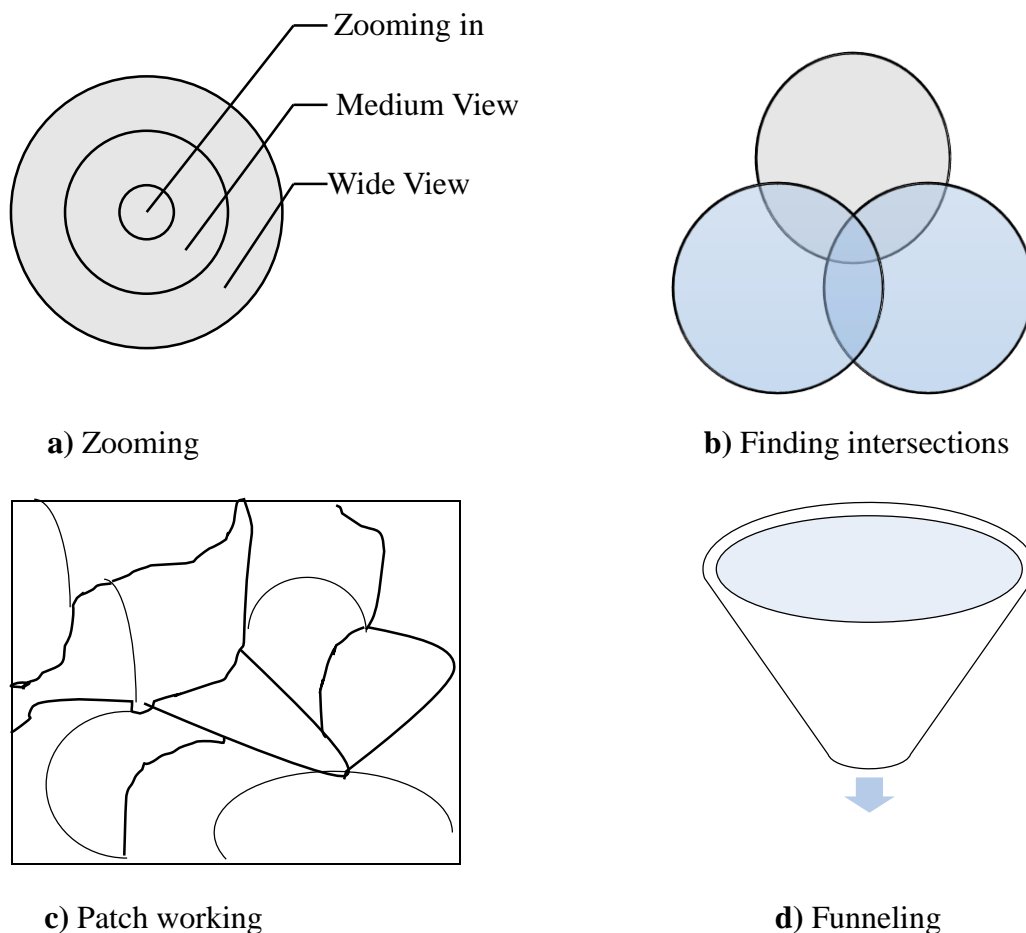
One approach → An alternative approach → Another approach

In the first of these approaches, Rudestam and Newton (2007, as cited in Ridley, 2012) converse about long shots, medium shots, and close-ups to describe the different degrees of depth when referring to source texts according to their closeness and relevance to the topic of research. Long shots refer to references offering the background context to the research, acknowledging existing work on the topic without detailed exploration. On the other hand, medium shots encompass references more relevant to the current research, providing enough information to demonstrate their impact on the proposed study, without an in-depth critique. Whereas the close-ups are the references crucial to the proposed research, involving a thorough and critical analysis of the cited work.

Ridley also advises research students to visualize the structure of their review as a picture or diagram. In line, Wellington, Bathmaker, Hunt, McCulloch, and Sikes, (2005) assert that utilizing

diagrams can help in clarifying the literature and illustrating the connections between the literature and the ongoing study. Figure 1.2 portrays many methods of visually representing a literature review. Some individuals perceive it as a progressive “zooming-in” on a topic, starting broadly and eventually focusing on the key area (Figure 1.2 (a)). Others envision it as multiple areas of literature intersecting, with some overlap and a central focus at the intersection (Figure 1.2 (b)). Another perspective is viewing the literature review as a funneling process, similar to zooming in (Figure 1.2 (d)). Some describe it as piercing together a patchwork (Figure 1.2 (c)), implying a creative weaving of diverse reading areas. Students need to choose a visual representation that aligns with their level of understanding since they must articulate it in both written and oral forms.

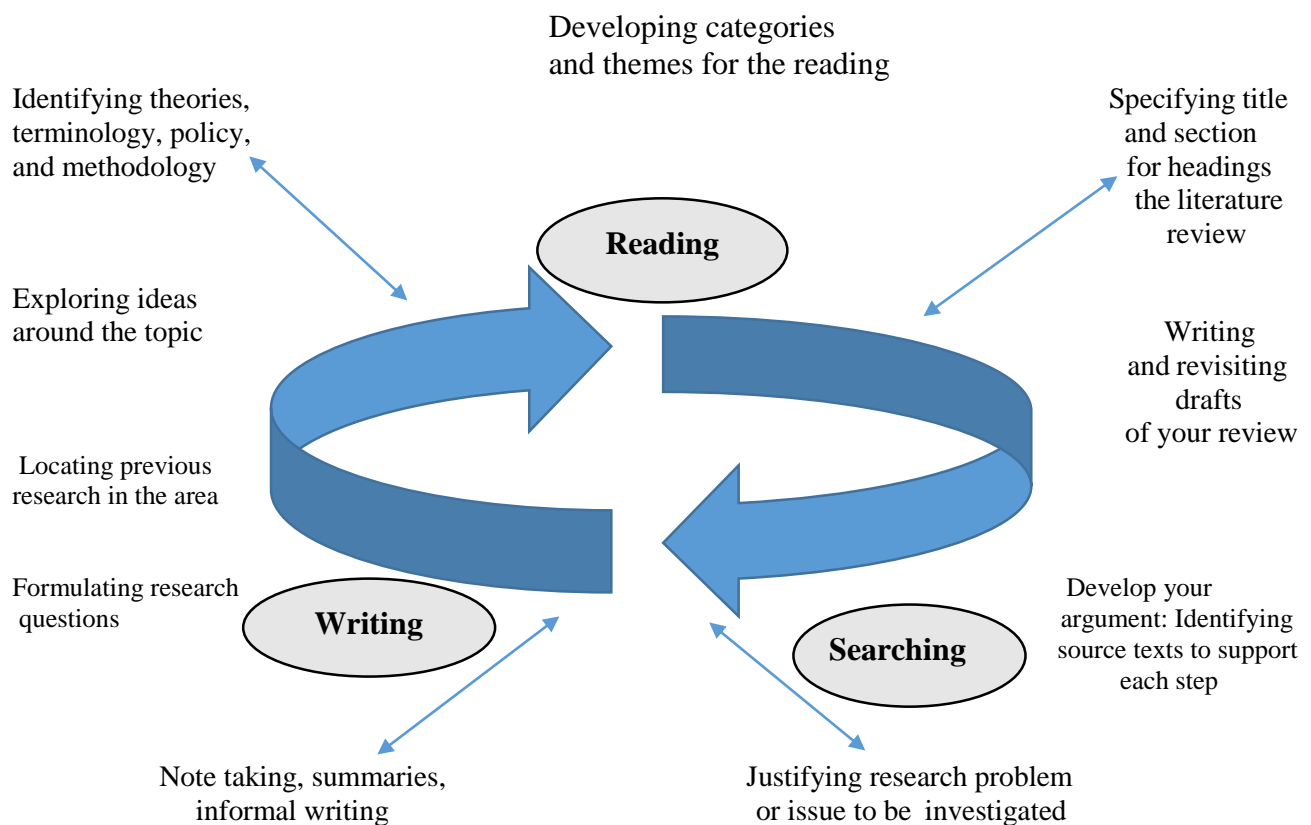
Figure 1.2 Possible Ways of Picturing the Literature Review



Adapted from Wellington et al, (2005, p.85)

As per Adero, Wafula, and Rotumoi, (2021) literature review is presented as a systematic process, which compels critical planning to ascertain not only relevance but adequacy as well. They confirm the idea of Ridley (2012) asserting that the exploration of literature, reading source materials, and composing the review are interlinked and present a cyclical process. No distinct endpoint exists where one activity ends and another begins as demonstrated in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 Literature Review Process



Adapted from Ridley (2012, p.99)

The organization of a literature review does not adhere to a single precise structure. The configuration of each review is influenced by the integral characteristics of the topic under examination.

1.3 Reviewing Previous Literature

Conducting a literature review constitutes an essential part of any research. Kuang and Maya (2015, as cited in Shahsavari and Kourepaz's, 2020) assert that the literature review section holds significant importance in the student's thesis. A good literature review is essential for grasping the topic and the relevant studies in the respective field. Moreover, a thorough review is necessary to support and clarify discussions that can affect the study's outcomes. Likewise, for Master students at Dr Moulay Taher University, it represents the cornerstone for their research endeavors. By reviewing existing scholarly works, they gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge in their field. To sum up, a well-conducted literature review lays the foundation for strong and impactful research results in their master's theses.

Under Adero, (2021), the art of literature review and writing plays a crucial role in safeguarding knowledge within the academic discipline. Yet, the systematic process remains perplexing, intricate, and challenging, particularly for undergraduate students.

According to Zorn (2006), several difficulties exist in writing a literature review; researchers often lack a systematic and comprehensive approach when seeking sources, sometimes directing searches toward irrelevant materials, such as textbooks and articles unrelated to the topic at hand. Frequently, researchers work without a clear objective, mistakenly thinking that the literature review's purpose is merely to compile or depict numerous relevant sources. Instead of elucidating the connection between sources, researchers typically convey what each source contains without explaining their interrelation.

In the same vein, Mafa and Mapolisa (2012), adopted a qualitative study about the supervision of students' dissertations at The Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU), to develop a thorough understanding of the supervisors' experiences in supervising Master's dissertations and the difficulties faced by the students in their research-writing journey. Most supervisors reported that their students' literature reviews tended to be descriptive summaries rather than critical assessments of the strengths and weaknesses identified in prior studies. Additionally, challenges identified in interviews encompassed sources and selecting relevant materials, reliance on outdated sources, insufficient synthesis, and difficulties in citing and referencing.

Intending to gain a comprehensive insight into the students' impediments while conducting the literature review, Loan (2017), carried out discourse-based semi-structured interviews with Vietnamese thesis writers and their supervisors, at Kalasin University. This study found out that students encountered significant challenges in their literature reviews, including referencing irrelevant sources and a deficiency in synthesis. Additionally, the analysis of content and interviews uncovered that students found summarizing and paraphrasing to be difficult tasks. Master2 students in the field of Didactics at Dr Moulay Taher University experience comparable challenges when delving into their literature review process.

In their study, Shahsavar and Kourpaz (2020) investigated the challenges faced by postgraduate students in writing their thesis literature reviews. They employed an exploratory sequential mixed method design, the research revealed that the majority of students, including those with advanced skills, struggled to synthesize, analyze, or explain their work. Instead, they focused on summarizing the findings and interpretations of others. Other challenges were reported such as lack of adequate knowledge and time to complete the literature review. As well as cases of neglect by supervisors to accomplish their obligations towards students.

On the other hand, Mitchell, and Rich, (2022), explored the undergraduate students' challenges in conducting literature reviews and how to overcome them. The study unveiled the hurdles of the literature review process for students as they have received minimal training in research methodology and have limited chances to develop critical writing skills through assignments and coursework. Moreover, limited timescales and absence of previous academic experience represent additional difficulties. Similarly, students at Dr Moulay Tahar University, Department of English encounter the same impediments, in which they lack training, time constraints, and are overwhelmed by the amount of information. Besides, they do not have sufficient practice in critically analyzing and synthesizing the previous studies.

1.4 Conclusion

In summary, the literature has provided valuable insights into the undergraduate students' impediments while conducting the literature review. However, a notable gap exists in understanding the role of teachers and supervisors in enhancing students' abilities and supporting and guiding them through literature review writing. Addressing this gap is essential for educators and advisers to develop tailored support services that address the master students' difficulties in different contexts.

Chapter Two:

Research Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter has discussed the relevant theories of the topic in hand, while this chapter delves into the methodological part of the research. Starting by describing the research methodology used to analyze the students' challenges while conducting the review of literature. Additionally, it aims to describe the sample population involved in the current study. Moreover, this chapter outlines the research instruments utilized to achieve these academic objectives. Lastly, it illustrates the limitations of the study and the ethical considerations.

2.2 Methodology

Research methodology is the systematic plan used by researchers to conduct and analyze data to answer research questions or test hypotheses. The methodology serves as a layout for the entire research, guiding researchers in choosing appropriate methods and techniques to accomplish the objectives. When designing the methodology in any research field, there are two main factors to be taken into consideration. First, the researcher must decide on the data collection approach, which is determined by the type of data needed to respond to the research question:

- Qualitative versus quantitative data: Will the data be expressed in words or numbers?
- Primary versus secondary data: Will the data researcher collect original data or rely on existing sources?
- Descriptive versus experimental method: Will the researcher just observe or experiment?

Second, the researcher needs to select the data analysis methods:

- For quantitative data, statistical analysis tools can be utilized to explore relationships between variables.
- For qualitative data, methods like thematic analysis can be applied to identify patterns and meanings.

The researcher used an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach to investigate the students' impediments while conducting the literature review and how can the teachers help them overcome these difficulties.

2.2.1 Mixed Methods Approach

According to Fraenkel, Hyun, and Wallen (2012), mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies within a single study. Those who engage in such research assert that employing both methods together offers a complete understanding of the research issues compared to using either method separately. It is based upon the exploitation that in specific circumstances refines the accuracy and significance of your conclusions and to gain a thorough understanding of the study while verifying your findings, it is imperative to employ multiple methods (Kumar, 2019, p. 55).

In the mixed methods approach as per Creswell and Plano (2017), the researcher:

- Rigorously collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data to respond the research questions and hypotheses.
- Blends the two types of data and their findings,
- Structures these methodologies into a defined research framework that outlines logic and procedure.
- Contextualizes these procedures within theory and philosophy.

2.2.1.1 Advantages of the Mixed Methods Approach

Creswell and Plano (2017) enumerate some of the advantages of this approach.

- First, mixed methods research offers opportunities to exploit strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative methodology.
- Second, it presents more evidence for investing in a research problem compared to relying on either quantitative or qualitative. Researchers can use all available data collection tools, rather than being limited to only one methodology.
- Third, it helps answer questions that neither quantitative nor qualitative methodology can answer in isolation.
- Fourth, it is practical in the sense that the researcher has more freedom to use both numbers and words.

2.2.1.2 The Explanatory Sequential Design

Creswell and Plano (2017) define the explanatory sequential design as the simplest and most straightforward among mixed methods designs in which the researcher starts by conducting a quantitative phase and follows up on a subsequent qualitative phase to help explain the quantitative findings.

2.2.1.3 Strengths of the Explanatory Sequential Design

Because of the variety of advantages connected to the explanatory design, it is confirmed to be the most transparent option among mixed methods designs (Creswell and Plano., 2017, p.139). These advantages include the following:

- This design is compelling to quantitative researchers owing to its initial emphasis on quantitative aspects.
- Its structure facilitates the implementation as the researcher performs the two phases (quantitative, then qualitative) independently, focusing on one type of data at a time. This makes it manageable to execute.
- The final report can be structured with a quantitative part preceding a qualitative one, simplifying the writing process and offering a clear structure for readers.
- This design accommodates emergent approaches, permitting the second phase (qualitative approach) to be tailored based on insights gained from the primary quantitative phase.

2.2.2 Quantitative Approach

The quantitative research involves gathering quantitative data (i.e., numerical data). It often employs what might be called a “narrow-angle lens”, concentrating on specific causal factors. Quantitative researchers aim to work with objectivity as their guiding principle (Burke and Larry., 2020, pp.151-152). In line with, Bhandari (2023) quantitative research can uncover patterns and averages, predict outcomes, confirm causal relationships, and extend findings to broader populations. This later is used extensively in scientific and social sciences.

Bhandari further explains that quantitative research methods can be utilized for descriptive, correlational, or experimental studies.

- In descriptive research, the aim is to provide a general summary of the factors under investigation.

- In correlational research, the aim is to explore the relationships among variables in the study.
- In the experimental research, the aim is to investigate whether the variables are causally linked.

2.2.3 Qualitative Approach

Based on Bhandari (2023), qualitative research involves collecting and evaluating non-numerical data, such as text, video, or audio, to enhance understanding of concepts, perspectives, or experiences. This approach is employed to gain a deep understanding of the topic or to generate new research concepts. The qualitative approach is concerned with evaluating attitudes, opinions, and behaviour subjectively. In this approach, the researcher's understanding and impressions play a crucial role, leading to results that are not quantitative (Kothari, 2004, p. 5).

2.3 The Sample Population

As per Newman (2014), a sample is a small set of cases a researcher chooses from a large group and generalizes to the population. When sampling, the researcher selects some cases to investigate in detail, and then uses the results obtained from them to comprehend a much larger set of cases.

The current study has taken place at Dr Moulay Taher Saida University, in the academic year 2023-2024. The sample population of the research were master 2 EFL students and teachers. The sampling of the population was selected randomly to help achieve the objectives of the study. The population contained three teachers and twenty learners to depict the whole population.

In this study, the researcher decided to use simple random sampling because everyone in the population had an equal opportunity to be chosen (Newman, 2014, p.255). Moreover, due to its random nature, any study conducted on this sample should have strong internal and external validity and be less open to research biases like sampling bias and selection bias (Lauren, 2020).

2.3.1 Description of the Teachers' Profile

The researcher selected three EFL teachers to address the interview questions. Two of them were female while the remaining one was a male. All the chosen teachers hold a Ph.D. degree in different fields. Besides, they have an extensive teaching experience in the field of didactics. Hence, the researcher sought their assistance to accomplish the investigation.

2.3.2 Description of the Learners' Profile

The twenty randomly selected learners were EFL students in the Didactics field at Saida University. Fourteen students were females whereas the rest of the sampling population who constituted six were males. They were designated to be part of the study and respond to the questionnaire.

2.4 Research Tools

Data collection is an essential part of any research endeavor and involves creating suitable instruments, employing appropriate measurement procedures, and determining sample characteristics. There are many research instruments, each with unique designs, operations, complexity, and interpretation methods. Researchers can select from the existing tools or may adapt them if they are not suitable to the nature of the research because each tool is designed to collect specific type of data. Therefore, researchers must familiarize themselves with the nature, advantages, and limitations of the different research instruments before proceeding with their studies.

2.4.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a written set of questions, where the respondents read and interpret the inquiries before writing down their answers (Ranjit, 2019, p. 284). Kothari (2004), defines a questionnaire as a popular method of data collection and the heart of the survey investigation. It includes multiple questions in a specific order, either structured or unstructured. Structured questionnaires are easy to administer and relatively affordable to analyze. Including alternative responses can help in clarifying the meaning of the question (p.102).

2.4.1.1 Semi-structured Questionnaire

According to Cleave (2023), the semi-structured questionnaire serves as a tool to gather feedback from respondents. By contrast to the structured questionnaire, which only relies on closed questions, the semi-structured questionnaire contains open-ended questions as well. This allows the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

2.4.1.2 Advantages of Semi-structured Questionnaire

Depending on the nature of the research and the research objectives, it is important to identify the advantages of this questionnaire type. As per Cleave (2023), researchers need to know the following benefits of the semi-structured questionnaire before implementing it:

- It is beneficial for the researcher while investigating to gather perspectives from a large variety of respondents.
- With this type of questionnaire, respondents are allowed to express their views without constraints.
- Interviewers have the freedom to explore further if they encounter interesting information that need additional explanation from the respondent.
- It can supply reliable and comparable qualitative data.

Hence, McLeod (2023) argues that in questionnaires respondents may provide inaccurate information in order to gain social acceptance. Most informants tend to present a good image of themselves, leading them to lie or fabricate facts to seem better.

2.4.2 Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The researcher used a semi-structured questionnaire to gather both quantitative and qualitative information from the sample population, about the students' challenges in writing the review of literature. The questionnaire was delivered to twenty respondents. It consisted of closed-ended questions (yes or no / multiple-choice questions) and open-ended questions.

The semi-structured questionnaire was consisted of fourteen questions organized into seven sections. The third, and fifth were closed-ended (yes/no) questions. The first, second, fourth, sixth, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth questions were multiple-choice questions. Whereas; the seventh question was open-ended.

2.4.3 Interview

Following Kothari (2004), interviewing is a common method for collecting information from respondents. Any face-to-face interaction between two or more individuals with a predetermined purpose in mind is identified as an interview.

As per Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), the interview is another technique employed by qualitative researchers to gather data from selected individuals. Interviewing, which entails asking relevant questions carefully, serves as a crucial method for researchers to confirm or refute the impressions they have formed through previous tools. Interviewing represents the primary data collection method for qualitative researchers. This instrument aims to find out the thoughts or emotions of the interviewees regarding a particular topic.

2.4.3.1 Structured Interview

In structured interviews, the researcher follows a predetermined set of questions, respecting the same wording and order outlined in the interview schedule (written list of questions, open-ended or closed-ended). It is prepared for the interviewer' use in person-to-person interaction, this may be face-to-face meetings, by telephone calls, or by any other electronic communication (Ranjit, 2011, p.145).

2.4.3.2 Advantages of Structured Interview

Ranjit (2011), mentions that structured interviews offer the advantage of keeping consistency and ensuring the similarity of information. Additionally, this type of interview requires fewer interviewing skills compared to unstructured interviewing.

According to Tegan and Merkus (2022), a structured interview is a simple instrument to create and assess. Asking the same questions has many positive aspects:

- **Reduced bias:** The predetermined structure minimizes context effects and other biases.
- **Increased credibility, reliability, and validity:** All participants are asked the same questions in the same sequence, facilitating the comparison of responses. This enhances their reliability and validity.
- **Simple and efficient:** Structured interviews enrich the exploration of the topic being studied without imposing extra effort. Thus, improving efficiency and saving time.

The interview can be a valuable contribution to any research investigation as it enriches the understanding of both the interviewer and interviewee. Further, it enhances mutual understanding and collaboration.

2.4.3.3 Description of the Teacher Interview

The type of interview used by the researcher in this study is a structured interview. This type of interview was chosen since it guarantees credibility and validity. Due to the researcher's limited skills in interviewing, the structured interview is the most appropriate to administrate. It was addressed to three EFL teachers who have considerable experience in the field of teaching. The teachers who participated in the research welcomed the opportunity to contribute by responding to the questions of the interview in contrast to others who expressed regret for their time constraints.

The interview contained thirteen questions that varied between WH questions and Yes/No questions. These questions were grouped under six themes. The questions aimed to explore every aspect relevant to the topic of the study, assisting the researcher in achieving the objectives of the investigation and confirming the hypotheses raised.

The interview data collection lasted two weeks, during which the researcher patiently awaited responses from the preoccupied teachers.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in every research endeavor, to ensure validity and academic integrity. By following the ethical principles and guidelines, the researchers can sustain the trust of participants. In this study, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights as research participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, and informed consent was obtained from both the administration and the participants.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

In any research, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges encountered during the research journey. It provides an honest evaluation of the study's scope and boundaries, offering insights into the factors that may have influenced the research outcomes.

This research is subject to several limitations, among them the small sample size of the questionnaire respondents that undermines the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the findings. This limitation also resulted in reduced statistical power. Another limitation is time constraints, which may significantly affect the feasibility and quality of the research. Additionally, the researcher experienced a lack of collaboration from the majority of the population.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter served a descriptive purpose, offering a thorough overview of the methodology employed to investigate the difficulties faced by EFL students during the process of conducting literature reviews of their theses. The chapter includes details about the sample population involved in the research. Moreover, it outlined the research methods utilized in collecting data and demonstrated the ethical considerations. Finally, this chapter acknowledged the study's limitations.

The following chapter will focus on analyzing the data gathered from the interview with teachers and the questionnaire administered to students.

Chapter Three:

Data Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Introduction

With the methodology chapter laying the groundwork for the research study, the researcher proceeded into the data analysis chapter, which is the core of the research. This chapter explores and analyses the data obtained from the questionnaire administered to students and the interviews conducted with teachers. Additionally, it aims to propose a set of recommendations for EFL teachers and learners based on the findings of the analysis to help students overcome the obstacles faced while conducting their literature reviews.

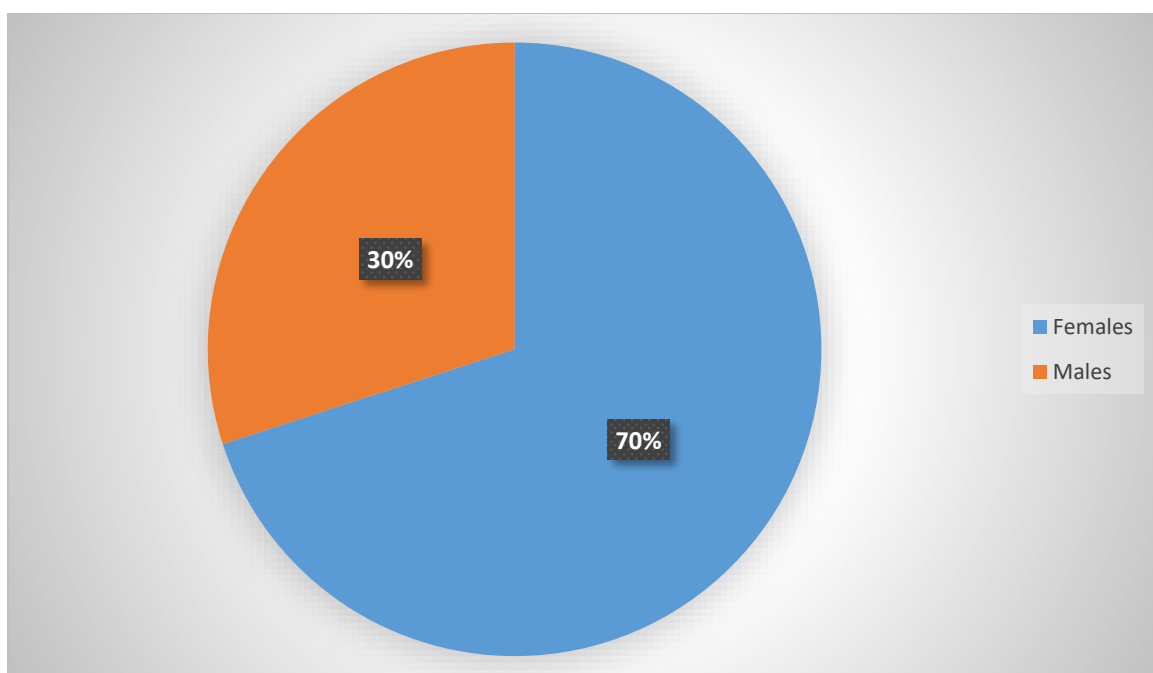
3.2 Findings

The findings of this study will be examined through both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Specifically, the analysis of the students' questionnaire is studied quantitatively, focusing on numerical data and statistical measures. Whereas the examination of the teachers' interview is conducted qualitatively, emphasizing on detailed exploration and interpretation of their responses.

3.2.1 Students' Questionnaire

Question one: What is your gender?

Figure 3.1 Participants' Gender



The above pie chart illustrates the gender composition of the participants involved in this research study.

Question two: Is it your first time to work on a thesis?

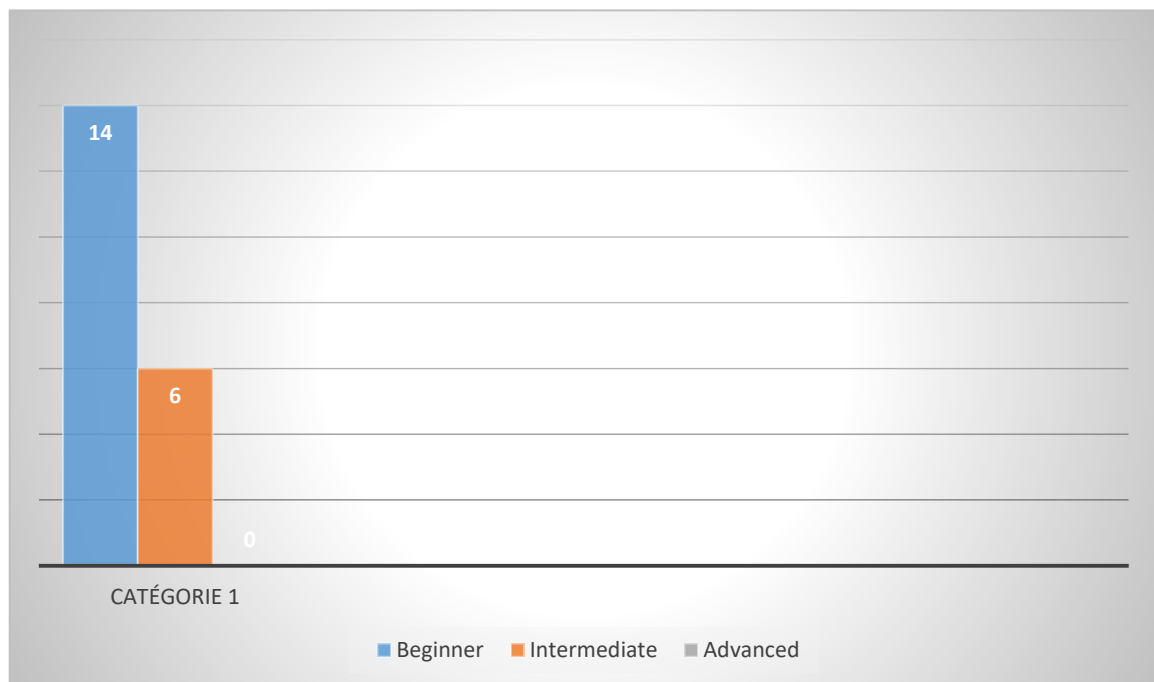
Table 3.1 Informants' Familiarity with Thesis Project

Answers	Informants
Yes	18
No	02
Total	20

The table above displays the students' familiarity with thesis writing. The findings revealed that only two participants had undertaken thesis work, whereas the vast majority representing 18 informants had no prior experience in this domain. They declared that it was their first time to work on this academic project.

Question three: How would you rate your overall experience in writing literature reviews?

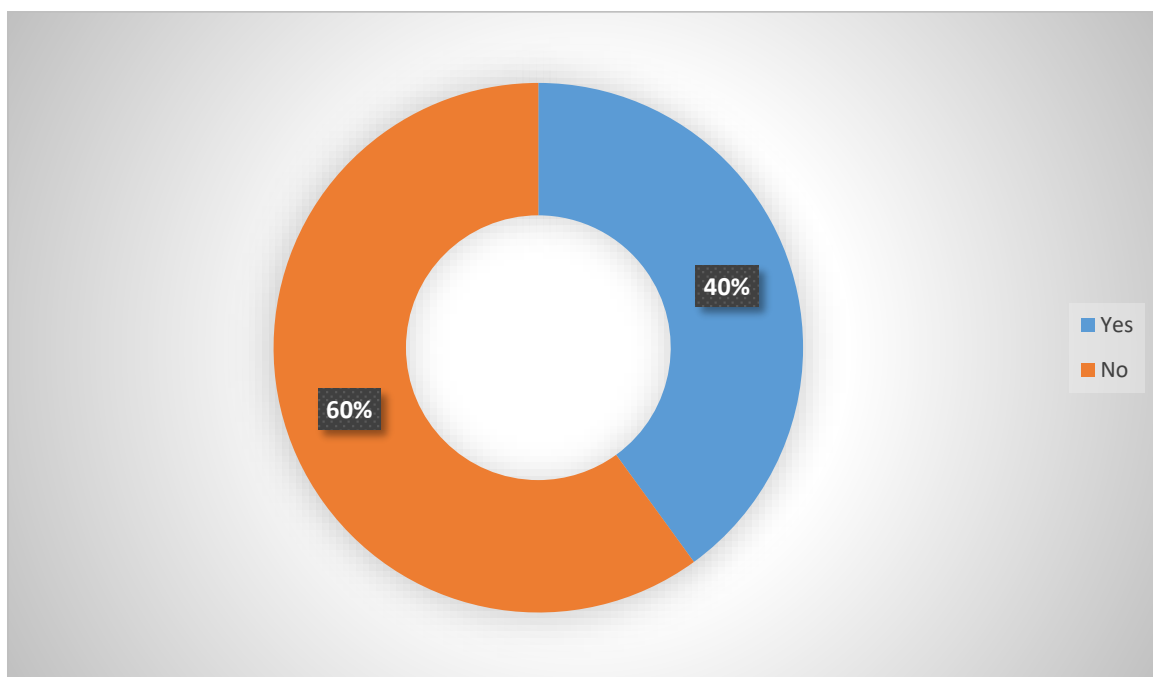
Figure 3.2 Students' Experience in Writing the Literature Review



The previous bar chart delineates the informants' self-rated proficiency levels in writing literature reviews. Among the informants, 14 individuals categorized themselves as beginners. While a smaller group of 06 participants rated themselves as intermediate, indicating a moderate level of proficiency. While, none of the respondents classified themselves as advanced in this skill. The absence of advanced level could reflect on either a lack of confidence or real shortage of experienced individuals within the sample.

Question four: Have your studies prepared you to conduct a well-structured literature review?

Figure 3.3 Students' Preparedness for Literature Review Construction



This pie chart provides a visual presentation of the participants' preparation to conduct a well-structured literature review. According to the findings, 60% representing 12 participants affirmed that their studies did not adequately prepare them to develop a well-structured literature review, while 40% depicting 08 participants confirmed that their studies did prepare them for this task. These results suggested a significant part of the population felt unprepared for the literature review writing.

Question five: How well do you understand the purpose and structure of a literature review?

Table3.2 Participants' Perspectives towards Understanding Literature Review

Answers	Participants
- Very well	01
- Somewhat	14
- Not well	05
Total	20

The previous table demonstrates the distribution of participants' responses regarding their understanding of the purpose and structure of a literature review. It reveals that only one participant claimed to have a great comprehension. However, the majority of informants comprising 14 individuals stated that they understood it somewhat, and 05 of them indicated a deficiency in comprehension. This indicates a lack of understanding among some participants, shedding light on the need for support and guidance to improve their comprehension of literature review purposes and structures.

Question six: Define in your own words, what a literature review is and its purposes in academic writing.

Table 3.3 Participants Definition and Purposes of Literature Review

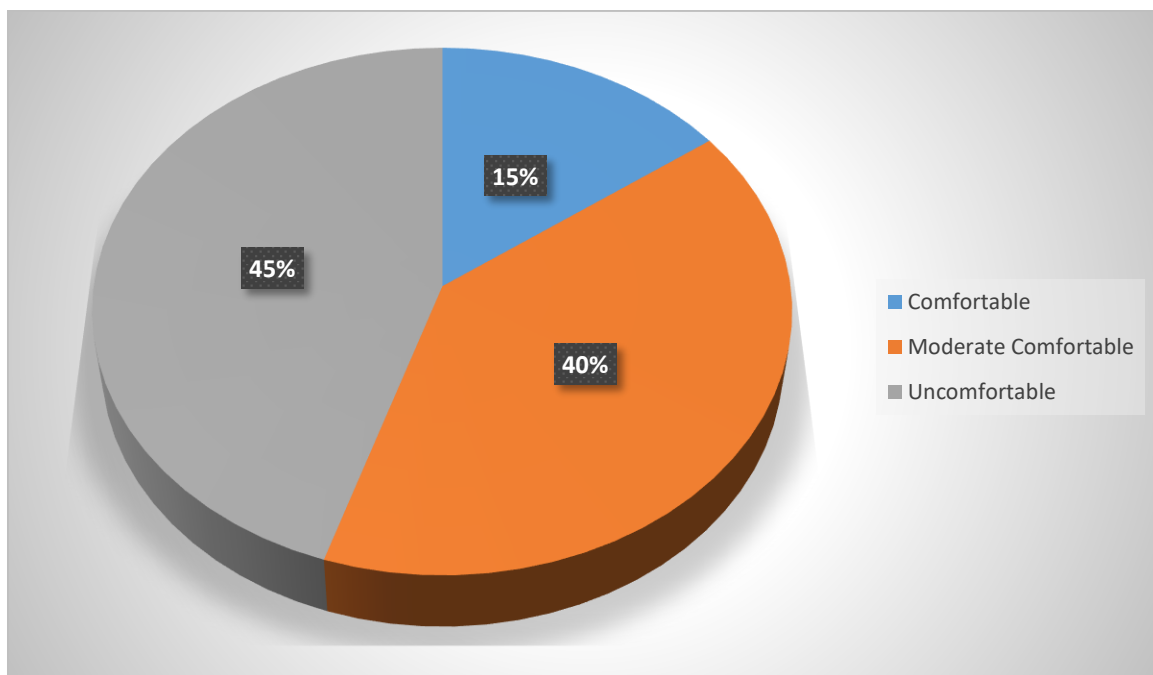
Responses	Participants
-It is a summary of all previous studies related to the topic.	13
- Literature review is about showing the previous studies and addressing the gap in them.	01
-It is a procedure used to conduct a thesis.	01
- Literature review is the researchers' opinion in order to see differences or new discoveries.	01
- A literature review is a treasure hunt in the world of research. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive summary and analysis of the current knowledge and research gaps in particular field.	01
-No answer	03

As mentioned above, the responses from the informants reflect different perspectives of the literature review nature and purposes. While the majority (13 informants) viewed it as just a summary of previous related studies, another participant shared the same definition but elaborated by stating that it also addresses the gap. Further, one participant was contented by defining literature review as an instrumental step in a thesis whereas another perceived it as the researcher's views about only the differences. Whereas, one participant demonstrated an understanding of the topic. The participant provided a metaphorical interpretation of the literature review, combining between exploration and discovery. The response uncovered its purpose as providing a comprehensive summary, analysis of the existing knowledge and lastly finding research gaps. Finally, 03 participants did not respond. That could be due to either lack of understanding or disinterest.

To conclude, most participants had a limited understanding of the nature and purpose of the literature review, others misunderstood it. Only one participant exhibited a strong understanding of its nature and purpose.

Question seven: How comfortable are you with synthesizing information from multiple sources?

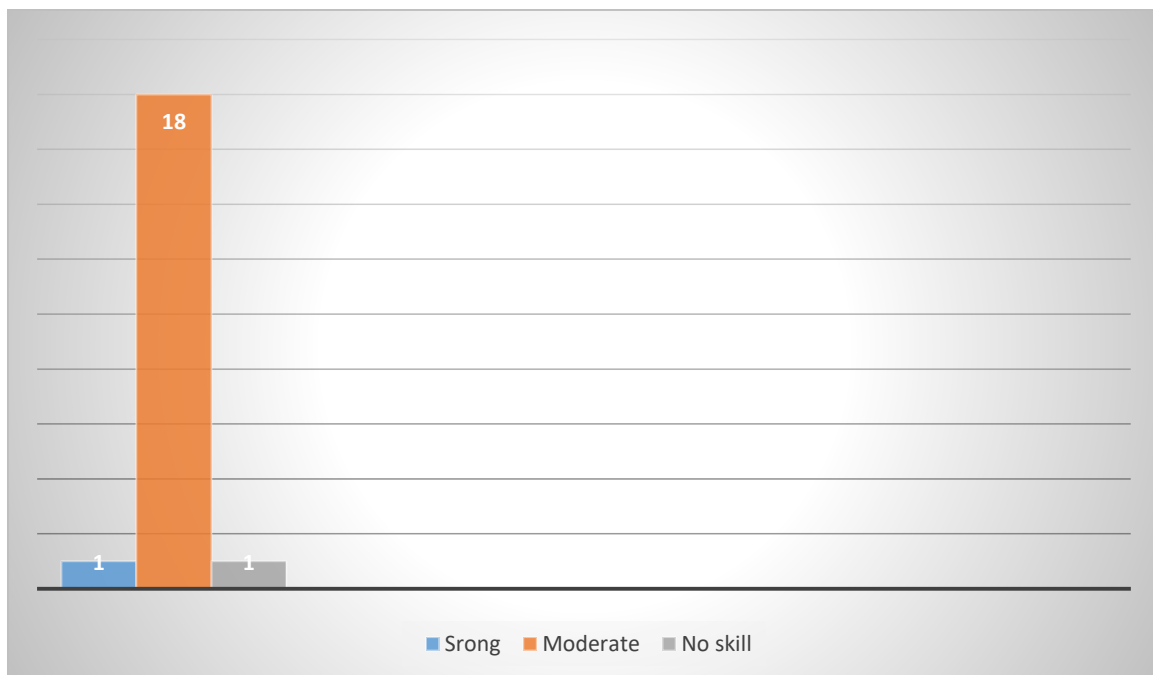
Figure 3.4 Comfort Level in Synthesizing



The preceding graph presents the participants' comfort levels in synthesizing information from multiple sources. Only 15% of the informants felt comfortable while synthesizing. On the other hand, 40% expressed moderate comfort, and the remaining 45% admitted feeling uncomfortable with this task. Overall, these findings highlight deficiency in the participant's ability to synthesize information from multiple sources since most of participants reported difficulties in this skill.

Question eight: How would you rate your critical skills?

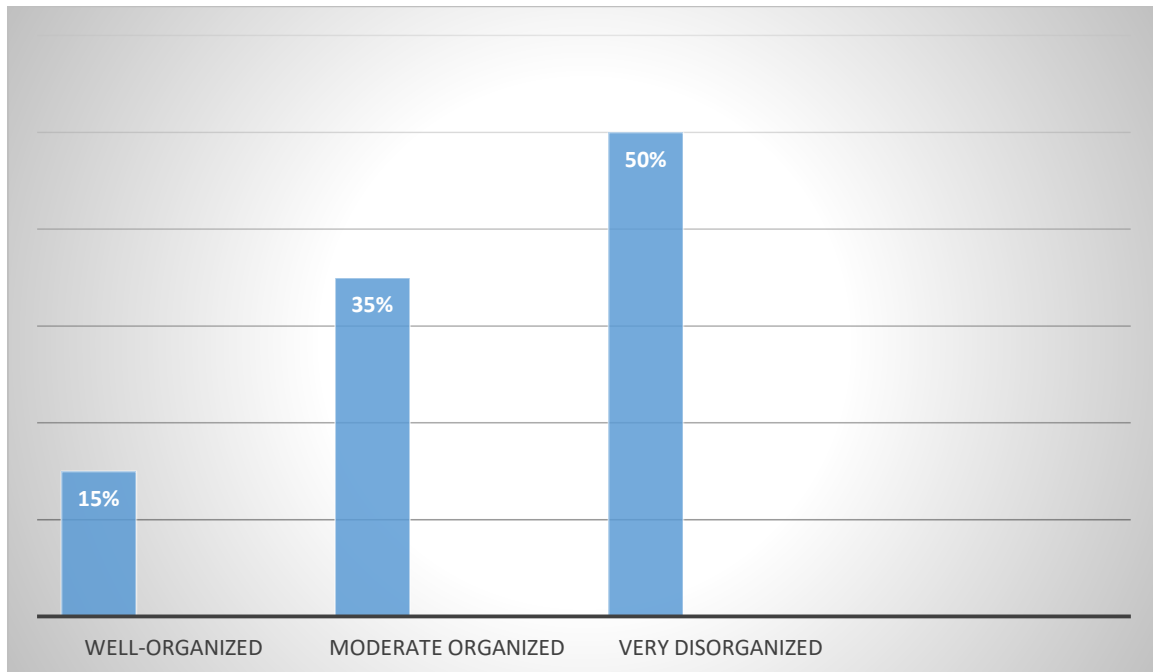
Figure 3.4 Participants' Critical Skills



This bar graph reveals the participants' proficiency level in critical skills. It indicates that one informant proved a strong ability of critical thinking. Conversely, the majority representing 18 informants confessed to having moderate skills. However, one participant admitted an absolute lack of critical thinking skills. The graph accentuates the participant's moderate critical skills that need improvement.

Question nine: How would you describe your attitude towards time management when working on the literature review?

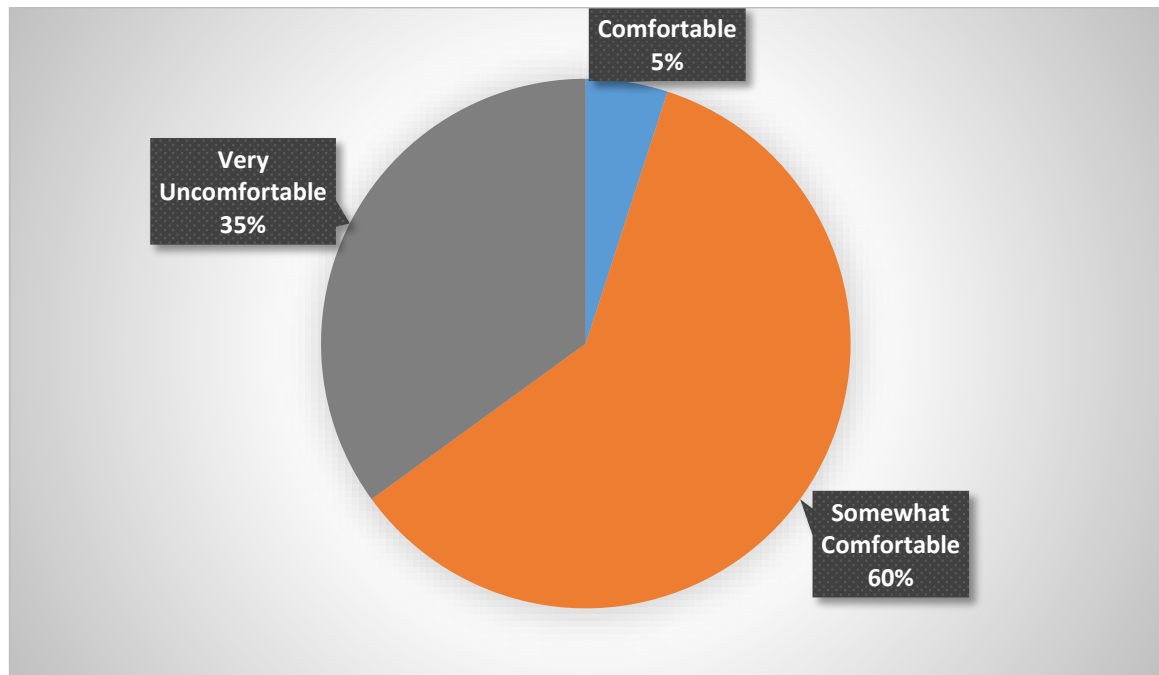
Figure 3.5 Participants' Time Management



The distribution of the participants' attitudes towards time management displayed in the previous pie chart reveals that half (50%) of the participants affirmed being very disorganized. In contrast, 35% considered themselves moderately organized, and the remaining minority (15%) perceived themselves as well-organized. This graph suggests that most of the respondents struggle with managing their time while conducting literature reviews whereas fewer demonstrated confidence in time management.

Question ten: How at ease are you when handling a large amount of data?

Figure 3.6 Comfort Level when Handling Overload Data



The pie chart presents the respondents' comfort level when dealing with a large dataset. It shows that only 5% of the informants felt comfortable in handling large amount of information. Conversely, the majority comprising 60% reported being somewhat comfortable in dealing with that amount of data. However, 35% expressed entire discomfort. In general, the visual presentation unveils the diverse distribution of the participants' attitudes, while the majority felt somewhat comfortable, a notable section of the population indicated hindrances in managing a large amount of information.

Question eleven: What challenges do you experience regarding language use and writing style in your literature review?

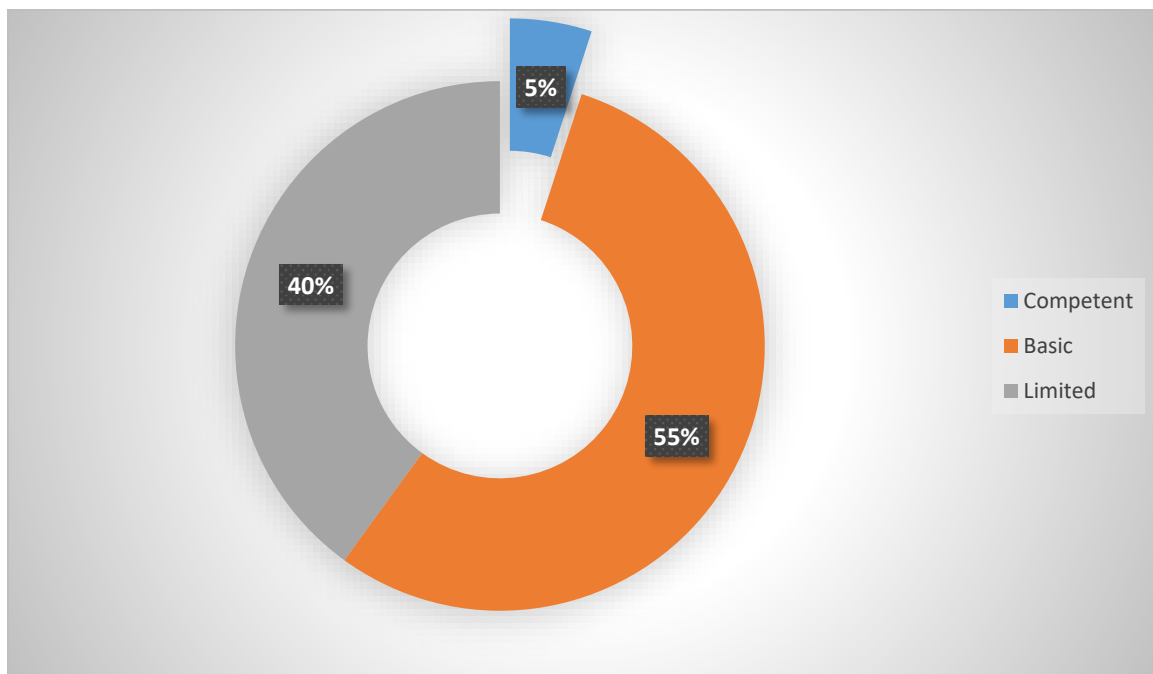
Table 3.4 Participants' Challenges in Language Use and Writing Style

Responses	Participants
- Lexicon	06
- Simplicity	02
- Clarity	06
- Transitioning	08
- Conciseness	06

The above table depicts the diverse challenges in language use and writing style revealed by the participants in conducting their literature reviews. Particularly, transitioning was identified as the most reported difficulty, with 08 participants reporting struggles in moving between the different parts or ideas of the review. Lexicon, clarity, and conciseness were also significant problems each mentioned by 06 informants. Additionally, 02 participants admitted simplicity as a hurdle in their literature reviews. This analysis underscores the writing challenges that need assistance and enhancement in order to achieve better outcomes.

Question twelve: How would you define your citation and referencing skills?

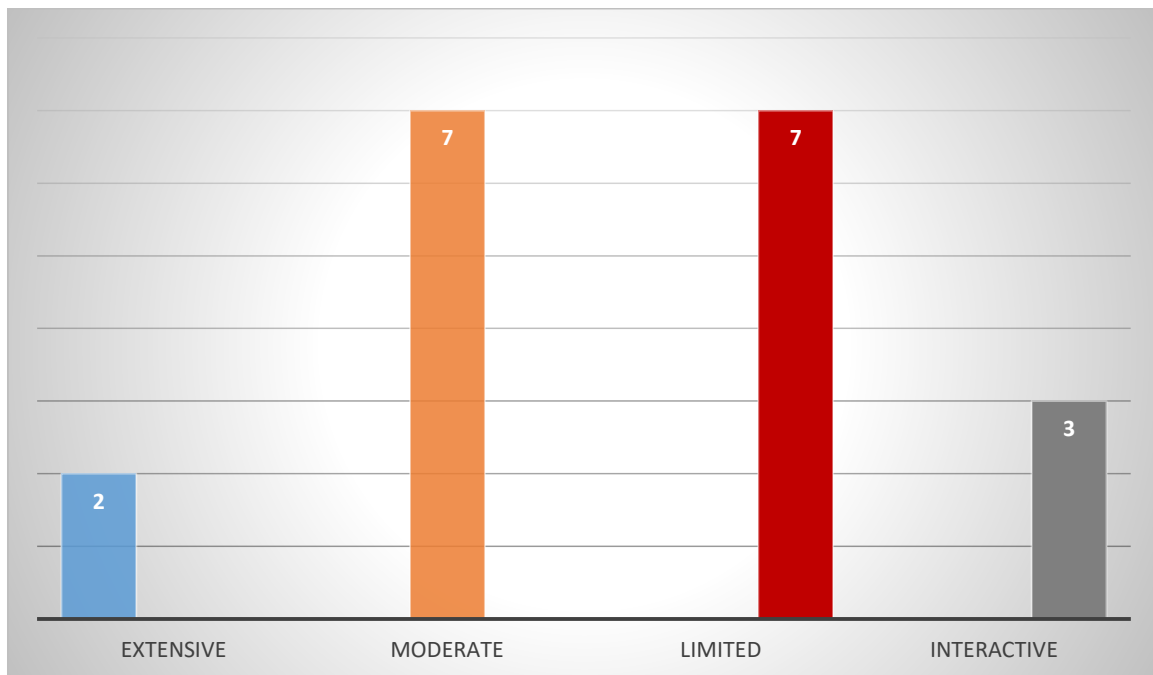
Figure 3.7 Participants' Level in Citation and Referencing



The pie chart illustrates the participants' self-rated citation and referencing skills. It shows that 05% representing only one participant being competent in citing and referencing. While 55% of the respondents described their skills in citation and referencing as basic, 40% confirmed that their skills were limited. The graph sheds light on the different levels of proficiency in citing and referencing, the majority had a basic understanding that requires improvement and the others demonstrated limitations that necessitate additional assistance.

Question thirteen: To what extent have your teachers guided you while conducting the literature review?

Figure 3.8 Teachers 'Guidance



This bar graph depicts the participants' perception of the guidance provided by the teachers. It presents multiple levels of the teachers' guidance. While the minority comprising 02 participants affirmed receiving extensive guidance, the majority communicated either moderate or limited guidance, and just 03 respondents defined it as interactive. Meanwhile, 01 participant did not respond, which might be because of the lack of engagement or disinterest about the topic. The exhibition exposes the deficiency in the teachers' guidance provided while conducting the literature review, suggesting further exploration.

3.2.2 Teachers' Interview

Question one: Based on your experience, what are students' common challenges when writing literature reviews, and how do you address them?

Teacher 1 said, "*Students encounter many hurdles as far as a literature review is concerned. First, they do not allocate sufficient time to reading and note-taking. They are not skilled in summarizing and paraphrasing, which, therefore, leads them to fall into the trap of plagiarism. Most importantly, master students do not have the knack for arguing and comparing the*

literature with the Algerian context. Students share a common problem, which is forgetting to acknowledge the source, which is, therefore, considered literary theft. To put it differently, they are not cognizant of the various steps that any researcher ought to go through when reviewing literature. As a teacher, I always correct and remind students to keep consistent (grammar and methodology) and compare what they have read and learned with that of our context.”

Teacher 2 said, *“Based on my experience, writing the literature is the most difficult and long step. The student has to develop some academic skills that he should acquire from his license level, including reading skills, note-taking, and synthesizing. To be able to write the literature review, you need to develop two types of knowledge, namely background understanding of the topic and background knowledge. In the first one, the student has to read randomly to understand the topic. In the second, the student becomes eclectic in his reading, i.e., he reads what he needs and can write since he has acquired knowledge for that. Another problem is citations and integrating other people’s ideas in your writing. The student is not familiar with this. It is until the university level, that they are warned about plagiarism. Integrating many types of sources makes the literature very rich. This process includes general truths, direct citations (quotes), examples, photos, and statistics. To include all these, the student has to take time to collect sources to write the literature. Hence, writing the literature may take four to six months. When the student can write the literature, he will find no difficulties in writing other chapters.”*

Teacher 3 said, *“I believe many master students encounter lot of challenges while writing their literature reviews among them summarizing and organizing information from different sources. Additionally, they fall in the trap of plagiarism because of lacking appropriate citation knowledge. To address them I encourage them to understand the sources and derive the key points. I also emphasize on creating an outline to organize their thoughts. Further, I provide guidance on proper citation.”*

According to the responses of the three teachers, the students’ common struggles while performing the literature reviews were the insufficient time allocated for reading and note taking, summarizing, paraphrasing, and synthesizing. Their unawareness of the procedure of conducting the literature review was another impediment. Moreover, they strove with citation and referencing which might lead them to plagiarism. To overcome these challenges teachers suggested providing corrections and maintained consistency. They also urged them to engage

in extensive reading to gain comprehensive knowledge. Finally, the three teachers recommended guidance on correct citation practices.

Question two: How do you assess students in terms of locating relevant literature for their reviews?

Teacher 1 answered that her assessment involved evaluating students' proficiency in finding recent references, their ability to paraphrase and how they acknowledged the sources. Further, she examined how they kept to the main idea of the theme.

Teacher 2 provided more detailed response on this topic by saying that she assessed her students in the following point:

- All the concepts that were present in the titles should be defined and explored.
- Presenting necessary theories and most recent works in the field (updated literature).
- Identifying what is a research gap existing in previous studies.
- Writing an analytical literature and not a descriptive one."

Teacher 3 answered that he assessed students by giving them relevant sources and guiding them in their search for example evaluating what they found whether they aligned with the purpose of the study or not.

Question three: In terms of writing style, what are the challenges students face in their literature reviews?

Teacher 1 said, "*Students are not consistent; they move from the present to the present perfect to the past. For methodology, they also mix as far as referencing (in-text citation) is concerned.*"

Teacher 2 said, "*There are many styles in writing literature, including descriptive, expository, narrative, persuasive, and creative. The student finds difficulties in writing the literature since he has not mastered these styles. The student also has to master the different elements of style, including voice, tone, diction, and punctuation. As far as voice is concerned, the student's voice is important in writing the literature review section, i.e., he does not only depend on authors' voices. He has to include his own through explanation and analysis.*"

Teacher 3 said, *“In terms of writing style, students face many challenges such as coherence between ideas and how to integrate new ones from other sources. Additionally, they struggle with synthesizing information.”*

Based on the previous responses, students’ challenges concerning writing style were summarized in consistency in using tenses, coherence, and synthesizing. Another mentioned challenge was mastering the writing styles and the literature elements particularly the students’ voice.

Question four: How can teachers assist students in enhancing the clarity of their writing?

Teacher 1 viewed teachers’ assistance as providing written feedback (correcting mistakes). She showed their learners how to write academically and gave them samples (Reading materials) to demonstrate how a particular writer had dealt with a certain piece of writing.

Teacher 2 claimed that she constantly encouraged her students to use clear and clean English. Writing simple English based on simple and short sentences. She added that she encouraged them to use active voice rather than passive, to be careful concerning the placement of subordinate clauses, and to use action verbs rather than the form to be.

Teacher 3 affirmed helping students in enhancing the clarity of their writing by providing clear instructions and offering feedback, and he encouraged revision of the drafts.

Question five: Do you find students struggling to balance summarizing existing literature and providing critical analysis?

Teachers 1 and 3 simply said, *“Yes, indeed”*, whereas teacher 2 elaborated, *“Yes, students are always struggling to make a balance between summarizing existing literature and providing a critical analysis. Most students tend to include previous studies without including their voices. Their voice includes a critical analysis of the existing literature so that they can identify the research gap by the end.”*

The three interviewed teachers acknowledged witnessing students including previous studies without incorporating their own voice, indicating a lack of balance between summarizing and critical analysis.

Question six: What strategies can be employed to help students maintain this balance?

Teacher 1 said, " *Time management, practice, and use of the learned strategies.* "

Teacher 2 said, " *To maintain the balance, I included in teaching academic writing to my students a unit on how to develop their arguments. Students are introduced to the different components of an argument.* " She added, " *They learn how to insert previous studies as evidence and how to explain, analyze, and even critique the evidence. They also learn how to develop a counter-argument through which their critical analysis appears.* "

Teacher 3 said, " *To help students find the balance; I make sure they understand what they are reading. I help them to present evidence, give them useful sources, and of course urge them to ask lots of questions.* "

In line with the teachers' responses, different strategies were used to help students balance between summarizing and critical analysis. Among the strategies presented: managing time, practice, teaching how to develop arguments and counter arguments. Additionally, providing evidence to sustain their claims, facilitating access to academic sources, encouraging them to ask questions were part of the strategies.

Question seven: Do you notice difficulties in students' critically analyzing and synthesizing information from various sources?

The three-teacher responded affirmatively. They confirmed that students faced significant difficulties in analyzing and synthesizing information, showing their low levels of proficiency. Teacher 1 suggested that it could be simply laziness.

Question eight: How can teachers support students in developing stronger those skills?

Teacher 1 answered, " *Teachers Can Foster those skills via practice.* "

Teacher 2 said, " *These skills should be developed from the license level at the level of paragraph writing to essay writing, then different types of writing to thesis writing by the end.* "

Teacher 3 replied, " *To enhance those skills, I recommend active reading, I give them examples to follow and assignments to make them synthesize and critically evaluate the information.* "

Teachers 1 and 3 focused on practice as the best way to support students in developing those skills however, teacher 2 insinuated that those skills should have been improved step-by-step starting from paragraph writing in the license level.

Question nine: Do students commonly struggle with proper citation and referencing in their literature reviews?

Teachers 1 and 3 simply said, " *Yes* " However teacher 2 responded, " *Yes, they have bad knowledge about citations. They do not give importance to citation when they are first-year Master's students.* "

In line with the above responses, students lack proficiency in citation, and they did not recognize its importance in the previous year.

Question ten: What guidance do you provide to help students master citations?

Teacher 1 answered, " *I correct them and ask them to follow the feedback I provided.* "

Teacher 2 informed the interviewer, " *First, I need to teach students sentence formatting and paraphrasing to avoid plagiarism because you can reference a literature source and you are still plagiarizing. Besides, you need to teach students the importance of giving credits first and then guide them through the literature on how to insert the reference. The student will follow the instructions and learn faster.* "

Teacher 3 said, " *Practice is key to mastering citation.* "

All questioned teachers affirmed helping students to master citations, by correcting them, providing feedback, practicing, and most of all teaching them the significance of acknowledging credits to others.

Question eleven: How much time did you allocate for your instruction on the literature review? Do you think the allocated time is enough for students to master it?

while teacher 1 declared that the time allocated was a week, teacher 2 devoted a whole semester to teaching literature review emphasizing on the importance of covering all essential steps (raising awareness, learning how to read, how to be eclectic in taking information, synthesizing). Conversely, teacher 3 held a different opinion about it, He declared that the literature review was not so important at their current level consequently, he did not allocate much time. Each teacher believed that the allocated time is sufficient.

Question twelve: How extensive is your support for students while conducting the literature review?

Teacher 1 claimed, “I do my best to help students come up with a satisfying literature review.”

Teacher 2 stated, “I prefer to guide my student title by title. I even suggest what to include in each title and how to organize his ideas. I also do research for documentation and send sources to my students. I suggest the references be included in each title.”

Teacher 3 asserted, “I provide relevant sources, correct and evaluate their works, and I am available at any time to answer their questions.”

According to what has been stated teachers employed diverse methods to help students improve their skills so as to conduct effective literature reviews.

3.3 Discussion

As previously indicated, the main purpose of this study is to explore the obstacles that students encounter during the process of conducting literature reviews and how to overcome them. To accomplish those endeavors, the researcher presented two research questions. The first one was: What are the challenges and obstacles that master 2 students encounter while conducting the literature review? and the second one was: To what extent teachers provide guidance in the process of conducting the literature review to master 2 students? These questions assist the researcher in obtaining persuasive conclusions for her investigation by analyzing the data derived from the two research instruments: the questionnaire administered to students and the interview conducted with teachers.

Starting with the first research question, both the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interviews addressed the topic, providing a comprehensive understanding of the students' challenges. Regarding the participants' responses, most students which form 70% identified themselves as beginners in literature review writing with a limited understanding of its nature and structure (see answers to questions 3,5,6, appendix A). This can be attributed to their first thesis work as indicated by 90% of participants. As they navigated through this new area, they would encounter challenges that might shape their literature reviews. This idea is supported by other studies (eg. Shahsavari & Kourepaz, 2020). The predominance of informants admitted facing many hurdles while conducting their literature reviews, 85% reported struggling with synthesizing (see the answer to question 7, appendix A). Besides, 90% acknowledged encountering issues with critical analysis (see answer to question 8, appendix A). These findings are supported by the studies of Loan (2017) and Peng (2018) which revealed that learners could not compare and contrast information from multiple sources and make connections between their works and other studies.

Students also asserted that they lack organization in managing their time effectively, in 50% confirmed that (see answer to question 9, appendix A). In line with this finding, Terry and Terry (2013) affirmed that inadequate time management is a significant barrier for learners to achieve a good literature review. Additionally, the majority of participants constituting 95% claimed having difficulties in dealing with large amounts of information (see answer to question 10, appendix A), this result is consistent with other studies such as Walter and Stouck (2020). While the entire population demonstrated deficiency in writing style (see answer to question 11, appendix A). This issue was reported in other studies such as Benbellal and Khaldi (2021).

Finally, the students' citation and referencing skills presented challenges as exhibited by 95% of the informants. These answers were similar to the interviewed EFL teachers' responses that affirmed the challenges experienced by the students (see answers to questions 1, 3, 5,7,8,9, appendix B). Time constraints emerged as an additional challenge from the teachers' responses, the majority of teachers did not dedicate enough time to teach how to conduct a literature review (see answer to question 11, appendix B), though it was the most difficult and long step in a thesis as mentioned by teacher 2 (see answer to question 1, appendix B). Therefore, the first hypothesis is validated, which states that Master 2 students face several challenges including synthesizing, analyzing, managing time, handling large amount of information, writing style, citation, and referencing.

The second research question was also answered through both the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interviews. The majority consisting of 14 participants confirmed the limited teachers' guidance in conducting the literature reviews (see answer to question 13, appendix A). These findings are in accordance with Chen, Wang, and Lee (2015) also Shahsavari and Kourepaz (2020) that some supervisors and professors do not equip and provide students with sufficient information about how to write a successful literature review. Whereas the interviewed teachers stated that they made every effort to support learners in achieving appropriate literature review (see answer to question 12, appendix B). The interviewed teachers suggested a wide range of guidance approaches such as correction, providing feedback, assisting them in finding relevant sources, giving samples, encouraging them to use clear language, and practice, teaching how to develop arguments, supplying evidence, and encouraging them to ask questions. Hence, it is imperative to highlight that the students' questionnaire findings and the teachers' interview responses do not align; as a result, the second hypothesis is disconfirmed.

3.4 Recommendations

Recommendations constitute a crucial component for concluding the analysis chapter. They are a piece of suggestions offered to address particular issues. Consequently, the researcher has provided some recommendations to The EFL teachers and learners to overcome challenges in conducting literature reviews.

For teachers

➤ *Additional assistance*

Supervisors are expected to offer step-by-step guidance, especially during the execution of the literature review.

➤ *Source provision*

To avoid overwhelming students with large amount of sources, supervisors can suggest relevant references and emphasize the importance of citing sources properly to prevent the risk of plagiarism.

➤ ***Adequate time allocation***

Sufficient time enables students to go deeper into their topics, synthesize and analyze the literature, and refine their writings.

➤ ***Regular feedback***

Supervisors can offer regular feedback to help students overcome difficulties and correct mistakes, enabling systematic intervention and support.

➤ ***Early introduction of analysis and synthesis skills***

Teachers could introduce the concepts of analysis and synthesis at an earlier stage than master's level. They have the responsibility to guarantee that students have a solid foundation in these skills before advancing to higher levels.

➤ ***Allocating sufficient time for teaching literature review***

Teachers are invited to dedicate appropriate time to comprehensively teach the nature, structure, and purpose of the literature review, and help students grasp these core concepts.

For learners

➤ ***Active engagement***

Learners should actively engage in the learning process and make best use of the guidance offered by their teachers and supervisors.

➤ ***Asking questions***

Asking questions not only enhances learners' understanding but also fosters critical thinking. That's way learners should seek additional information or clarification to deepen their understanding.

➤ ***Seeking feedback***

Learners must ask feedback from teachers, supervisors, or peers on their literature review drafts. It benefits them in identifying strengths and weaknesses to improve their performance.

➤ *Practice*

Learners should practice paraphrasing, analyzing, and synthesizing regularly to develop those skills, which are key elements in literature review writing.

➤ *Maintaining a positive attitude*

Learners should consider challenges as opportunities for progress. They must maintain a positive mindset on their research journey to increase productivity and proficiency.

3.5 Conclusion

The final chapter of this dissertation involved a comprehensive analysis of the data obtained from the learners' questionnaire responses and the interview conducted with teachers. They were characterized by a detailed examination, unveiling a multitude of challenges that hinder students' ability in conducting effective literature reviews. Moreover, the questionnaire responses indicated a deficiency in the teachers' guidance while students were undertaking the literature review process.

General Conclusion

Writing an effective literature review is a challenging venture requiring significant effort and time. Hence, beginning researchers confront obstacles when conducting the literature review. In this study, the researcher aimed to unveil the difficulties that impede students during this writing process and investigate the role of teachers in assisting students to overcome hurdles. To achieve the research aims, the researcher raised two research questions. The first was about students' struggle in conducting the literature review and the second was about the extent of teachers' guidance.

The researcher adopted an explanatory sequential design to insure a complete understanding of the investigation's findings. She opted for a questionnaire submitted to Master 2 EFL learners to gather quantitative data and an interview conducted with teachers to collect qualitative information. Both research tools were essential to gain reliable results.

The findings of this study showed that students' problems were so numerous along with insufficient teachers' guidance. First, the findings showed that students were unaware of the nature and structure of the literature review. They also lack the competency of synthesizing and analyzing. These outcomes confirmed the first hypothesis, which stated that Master 2 EFL students faced several challenges including synthesizing, analyzing, managing time, handling a large amount of information, writing style, citation, and referencing. Second, the results manifested the inadequacy of the teachers' assistance, which disconfirmed the second hypothesis, stating that EFL teachers provided various types of support for students to help them surmount the obstacles in conducting the literature review chapter. One important contribution of this paper is that it sheds light on the role of teachers and supervisors that needs to be bolstered.

The study results highlighted the need for revised regulations to address the students' hindrances such as teaching literature review from early years to familiarize learners with its nature and structure, progressive teaching, and allocating sufficient time and training on how to synthesize and critically analyze large amount of information.

This investigation was limited to a small number of participants, and it was only conducted with didactics students and did not encompass other fields. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized as a result it is suggested that future research conduct studies with a larger number of participants.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Learners' Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to fulfill the following questionnaire which aims to investigate the students' impediments in writing the literature review of their theses. Your answers would be greatly appreciated.

Section 1: Personal Information

1- Gender:

Male

Female

Section 2: Experience Level

2- Is it your first time to work on a thesis?

Yes

No

3- How would you rate your overall experience in writing literature reviews?

Beginner

Intermediate

Advanced

4- Have your studies prepared you to conduct a well-structured literature review?

Yes

No

Section 3: Understanding of Literature Review

5- How well do you understand the purpose and structure of a literature review?

Very Well

Somewhat

Not Well

6- Define, in your own words, what a literature review is and its purpose in academic writing.

.....
.....
.....
.....

7- How comfortable are you with synthesizing information from multiple sources?

Very Comfortable

Moderately Comfortable

Uncomfortable

8- How would you rate your critical skills?

Strong critical skills

Moderate skills

No skills

Section 4: Time Management and Data amount

9- How would you describe your attitude towards time management when working on the literature review?

Well-organized Moderate organized Very disorganized

10- How at ease are you when handling a large amount of data?

Comfortable Somewhat comfortable Very uncomfortable

Section 5: Language and Writing Style

11- What challenges do you experience regarding language use and writing style in your literature review?

Lexicon Simplicity Clarity Transitioning Conciseness

Section 6: Citation and Referencing

12- How would you define your citation and referencing skills?

Competent Basic Limited

Section 7: Teachers' Guidance

13- To what extent have your teachers guided you while conducting the literature review?

Extensive Moderate Limited

Appendix B

Teachers' Interview

Understanding Difficulties:

- Based on your experience, what are students' common challenges when writing literature reviews, and how do you address them?

Relevant Sources:

- How do you assess students in terms of locating relevant literature for their reviews?

Writing Style and Clarity:

- In terms of writing style, what are the challenges students face in their literature reviews?
How can teachers assist students in enhancing the clarity of their writing?

Summary, critical analysis and synthesis of Information:

- Do you find students struggling to balance summarizing existing literature and providing critical analysis?
- What strategies can be employed to help students maintain this balance?
- Do you notice difficulties in students' critically analyzing and synthesizing information from various sources?
- How can teachers support students in developing stronger those skills?

Citation and Referencing:

- Do students commonly struggle with proper citation and referencing in their literature reviews?
- What guidance do you provide to help students master citations?

Instruction and Guidance:

- How much time **do** you allocate for your instruction on the literature review? Do you think the allocated time is enough for students to master it?
- How extensive is your support for students while conducting the literature review?