# HDR literature reviews

## Tape script

We have learned what a literature review is and know that it is not a description or summary of previous studies. So, in writing a literature review, we need to demonstrate its four main features. They are descriptive, interpretative, responding with critique and demonstrating the author's voice.
What does the first feature, descriptive, mean?

In some parts of our literature, we need to provide some background information and report the findings and research methods of some previous studies. The example below provides information on who did the research, when, where the research was done and what the main finding was.

However, the literature review is not just a description of what was done. So, what is the second feature that makes our review a review? Let's talk about 'interpretative'.

In our literature review, we need to demonstrate our synthesis of the information we have read, our analysis, explanation, interpretation, as well as our development of a point of view.

Let's look at these examples, A and B. What do you think? What example do you prefer? Why? Let's analyse.

Text A is a poorly synthesised review as the way the citations are organised makes it look like a shopping list. It does not demonstrate the connection across different sources and lacks critical analysis and discussion.

Text B, nonetheless, demonstrates the comparison across different sources and brings the authors together, highlighting a group of researchers and an area of research, not a single study. One technique you could see here is multiple authors citation.

**Let's move on to the third feature of the literature: responding with critique.**

Critique does not mean criticism. It means critical evaluation. Therefore, it can be positive or negative. The positive evaluation or strength critique highlights the strengths, significance and usefulness of the work, while the negative evaluation or deficit critique focuses on the limitations of the work, which helps us identify a gap and introduce our study.

Remember, in critiquing literature, we are source, idea, and finding oriented, not author oriented, so we need to be mindful of the language we use. There is a section on the language of critique on this page so please have a look.

As you can see in these examples, we could use evaluative language to highlight our critique

**Finally, our literature review has to demonstrate our author's voice. What does this feature mean and how can we do it well?**

In writing about the literature, we have to rely on previous work, so one concern is our voice might be lost in the writing. However, it is crucial that the literature review reflects our own voice through, for example, our selection of the sources, identifying the main themes, making connections across sources, critiquing the literature and organising our texts. More information on how to enhance our voice is in the following section on this page.

In this video, we have covered the four features of a literature review: descriptive, interpretative, responding with critique and demonstrating the writer's voice. Please continue looking at other sections of the page and if you need more advice, don't hesitate to attend our workshops and book an appointment with a Language and Learning Advisor.

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