

On the Significance of Preparing a Professional Literature Review in EFL Context

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Abstract : The present research is inspired by the comment that "A substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a precondition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research". This study is a report on an action research to solve my problem of preparing students to write a Literature Review (LR) that is more than mere cut and paste. More specifically, this study was initiated to discover whether there is an impact of equipping students with tools to write LR on the quality of research and on their view on LR significance. The participants were twenty-four Iranian TEFLers at Allameh Tabataba'i University. they were taking their advanced writing course with the lead researcher. We met once a week for 90 minutes for five weeks followed by individual consultations. Working through a process approach, and implementing tasks, the lead researcher ran workshops implementing different controlled assignments and subsequent activities to lead students to practice appropriate source use on multiple drafts: From choosing the topic, finding sources, forming questions, preparing quotation, paraphrase, and summary note cards, to outlining and most importantly introducing them the tools to evaluate prior research and offer their own take of it and finally synthesizing and incorporating the notes into the body of the LR section of their papers. The LR scoring rubric was implemented and a note was emailed to the students asking about their views. It was indicated that awareness raising and detailed explicit instruction improved the LR quality compared to their previous projects. Interestingly enough, they acknowledged how LR shaped all stages of their research, a further support for the notion of "being scholars before researchers". The key to success is mastery over the literature which translates into extensive reading and critically appraising it.

Keywords : controlled tasks, critical evaluation, review of literature, writing synthesis

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