

State of the Art: Literature Analysis

MuTra PhD School
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1 Problem

When researching a project it is often problematic to identify & systematize the available literature in terms of:

- 1) finding representative authors, i. e. deciding whether a work is original or secondary**
- 2) Deciding which literature is relevant (in terms of being similar or different from one's own planned project)**

This presupposes that there exists a description of the phenomenon and the problem as well as a (broad) working hypothesis for the project

2 Researching authors

2.1 Originality

Only consider original work & thought.

For the design of theoretical work it is important to refer to the original author (of a concept), because of the in-built risk with secondary (re-written) work that it is misrepresented. For instance, if you are writing a work on translation theory with the aim of developing your own model, you would not wish to refer to a book named “Introducing Translation Theories” only

This may be helpful for orientation purposes but maybe dangerous with respect to the correctness of the concepts discussed.

2 Researching authors

2.2 Relevance

Limit the scope of your literature research and say so (“This overview of the literature takes the following works into account....”)

For instance, if you write a thesis on culture you may not want to start with the definition of culture in the ‘Duden’.

Look for work relevant to your topic. For instance if you write a dissertation on translation theory and you want to develop a new model considering the factors involved in the translation process, then it may not be relevant to consult a book on psycholinguistics unless you have determined that psycholinguistic elements will be part of your model.

Be sure that you can define the scope of your own topic and the related research in broad terms.

Ask yourself questions like: In which way does concept x, y, z relate to my own topic?

3 Monitored Reading

3.1 Top-down: Index, titles, subtitles, relevant concepts

Reading begins in top-down direction from concepts identified in the index as relevant to the titles of the chapters of the book to the subtitles of relevant chapters of the book to the concepts included in their relational setting.

The reader's task during the top-down analysis is to establish relevant concepts (from the index and/or in the (sub)titles) as key concepts and reference points (arguments or more complex units) for your own research

The end result of this step is a list of relevant concepts introduced by an original representative author

3 Monitored Reading

3.2 Bottom-up: concepts, relations, aspects and sub-aspects

Bottom-up reading starts from the relevant concept and establishes the relations around that concept. This can be done intuitively or in a formalized way (Relatra). The formalized way identifies all relations relative to the chosen concept (in Gerzymisch-Arbogast/Mudersbach (1998)). For a short example cf. „Logical thought in critical reading“.

The end result of this step is a list of concepts that are relevant to a dissertation project in its relational text-specific context.

Having all the relations identified that ‘belong’ to a concept, the reader can decide which ones are

- 1) similar (in which way) to one another and/or to the topic under discussion**
- 2) different (in which way)**
- 3) not relevant relative to a specific subject**

4 Aspective Matrix

4.1 Concepts & Authors

List the representative authors you have consulted in vertical order.

Example: You want to establish a new notion or concept of translation. You have found translation concepts by authors Catford, Nida, Koller, Reiß, Vermeer as original representative authors. You have identified how they define their concept and have a list of their translation definitions:

4 Aspective Matrix

4.1 Representative authors

Catford (1965:20)	„Translation may be defined as follows: the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) [source language] by equivalent textual material in another language (TL) [target language].“
Koller (1972:69)	„Linguistisch kann die Übersetzung als Umkodierung oder Substitution beschrieben werden: Elemente a_1 , a_2 , a_3 des Sprachinventars L_1 werden durch Elemente b_1 , b_2 , b_3 des Sprachinventars L_2 ersetzt.“
Jakobson (1959:233)	„1) Intralingual translation or <i>rewording</i> is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. 2) Interlingual translation or <i>translation proper</i> is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. 3) Intersemiotic translation or <i>transmutation</i> is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.“
Nida & Taber (² 1974:12)	„Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style.“
Reiß & Vermeer (² 1991:119)	„Ein Translat ist ein Informationsangebot in einer Zielkultur und -sprache über ein Informationsangebot aus einer Ausgangskultur und -sprache.“

4 Aspective Matrix

4.2 Aspects and aspect values

You have identified relevant concepts by original representative authors. Identify the common traits (= aspects) in these definitions (abstraction). Then identify the sub-aspects in which they differ (differentiation).


For instance, they all in some way refer in some way to what they consider as source ‘material’, ‘transfer procedure’ and ‘target material’.

These are the three aspects, which all of these authors have in common:

- 1) Source material**
- 2) Transfer modality**
- 3) Target material.**

4 Aspective Matrix

4.3 Matrix

<p>Translation defined</p> 	<p>1. Source material</p> <p>1.1 Language elements, verbal signs</p> <p>1.2 Textual material</p> <p>1.3 Message</p> <p>1.4 Information offer in source culture and source language</p>	<p>2. Transfer modality</p> <p>2.1 Replacement</p> <p>2.2 Transcoding</p> <p>2.3 Rewarding</p> <p>2.4 Reproducing</p> <p>2.5 Interpretation</p> <p>2.6 Transmutation</p> <p>2.7 ---</p>	<p>3. Target „material“</p> <p>3.1 Language elements, verbal signs</p> <p>3.2 Equivalent textual material</p> <p>3.3 Signs of non-verbal sign system</p> <p>3.4 Closest natural equivalent of message</p> <p>3.5 Information offer in target culture and target language</p>
<p>Catford</p>			
<p>Koller</p>			
<p>Jakobson</p>			
<p>Nida & Taber</p>			
<p>Reiß & Vermeer</p>			

5 Literature Analysis Statement

Correlating the aspects/subaspects with the relevant authors will give you a systematic picture (numbers) of what aspects are/were considered in the concepts of translation so far. On this basis you can formulate a State-of-the-art (literature) analysis which should

- 1) list the authors you have researched as relevant original authors**
- 2) list the aspects which these authors have considered and in which they are in agreement and those (sub-)aspects or values in which they differ**
- 3) also show aspect(s) that have not been covered by these authors
→ these will be treated by your research project
(→ legitimation of your research, added value)**

6 Examples

TRANSLATION CONCEPTS