

The uses of literature in three academic disciplines

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Genre-based approaches to the literature review

- To demonstrate familiarity with the field
- To establish links within the literature and to impose a coherent organisational structure on the literature
- To evaluate the work of others
- To provide support for your own findings/claims
- To identify a gap in knowledge

Literature on disciplinary differences

- Bazerman (1981)

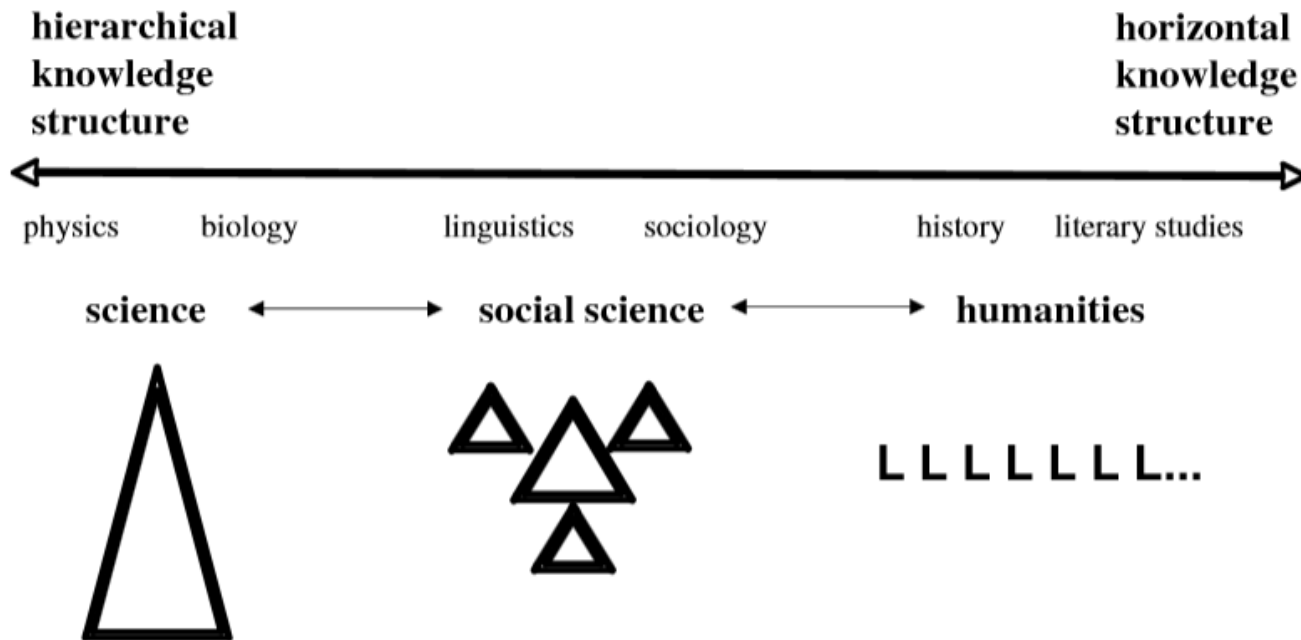
“... the three statements of knowledge are three different things. In mediating reality, literature, audience, and self, each text seems to be making a different kind of move in a different kind of game.”

- Becher & Trowler (2001), adapted from Becher (1994)

Categories	Disciplinary groupings	Nature of knowledge
Hard-Pure	Pure sciences (e.g. physics)	Cumulative; atomistic; concerned with universals/quantities; impersonal; clear criteria for knowledge verification/obsolescence; consensus on key questions; results in discovery
Soft-Pure	Humanities (e.g. history) & pure social sciences (e.g. anthropology)	Reiterative; holistic; concerned with particulars/qualities; personal; dispute over criteria for knowledge verification / obsolescence; lack of consensus on key questions; results in interpretation
Hard-Applied	Technologies (e.g. mechanical engineering)	Purposive; pragmatic; concerned with mastery of physical environment; applies heuristic approaches; uses qualitative and quantitative approaches; criteria are purposive; results in products/techniques
Soft-Applied	Applied social science (e.g. education, law)	Functional; utilitarian; concerned with enhancement of professional practice; uses case studies and case law to a large extent; results in protocols/procedures

Literature on disciplinary differences

- Martin (2007), adapted from Bernstein (1999) & Wignell (2007)



Interview questions

The nature of the discipline

1. What are the fundamental issues or questions that your discipline addresses?
2. What is the nature of the phenomena you study? Are they, for example, stable/concrete/measurable or are they changing/abstract/open to interpretation?
3. What methods or approaches do you generally adopt? To what degree are these standardised/accepted?
4. How is knowledge presented /structured in writing in your field? What makes knowledge claims credible? What counts as evidence for them? How are they assessed?
5. How would you describe the relationship between the writer and the reader? Where do students sit on an expert/non-expert continuum?
6. What was a major new revelation/breakthrough in your area? How did it contribute to the field?

Interview questions

The uses of literature

1. In general terms, how is literature used in your field? How would you describe the purpose of the literature review?
2. (With reference to a printed list of purposes) Are the principles here of equal importance in your discipline? Is the list exhaustive?
3. How much agreement/discord is there in the literature?
4. It is often said that a literature review should be critical. What does this mean in practice?
5. Should/can students include their own voice in the literature review and how can they avoid simply listing the literature?
6. To what extent are PGT students expected to be able to review literature in the ways we have discussed? Where do your students tend to fall short in their uses of literature?

Some emerging themes

ARCHITECTURE

“...fundamental changes that are taking place in the relationship between universities and public affairs.”

“You can’t just work in Architecture and make buildings in isolation.”

“The dissertations of the past five years have all been more and more cultural studies.”

“It is how much can you get Architecture to work together with science.”

ENGINEERING

“It’s where science meets society.”

“We don’t make steam engines anymore!”

Theme 1: Interdisciplinarity & Mode 2 knowledge production

Trowler, Saunders and Bamber (2012):

“Have disciplines been replaced by interdisciplinarity?”

Gibbons *et al.* (1994):

Mode 1 → Mode 2

Theme 2:

Different types of literature

ENGINEERING

- sources which establish the sector, problem or need
- scientific literature
 - fundamental underlying science
 - emerging developments
- manufacturing literature
- international standards
- regulations/policy

Bizup (2008):

Background – general information, factual evidence

Exhibit – analyses, interprets

Argument – engages with claims

Method – derives a manner of working

Criticality

ENGINEERING

“They’re not going to critically review the findings of Professor X from Cambridge. They’re going to take the findings of Professor X from Cambridge as cold, hard fact on which they’re going to base their work.”

ARCHITECTURE

“Put them on the shoulders of giants and hold their hands.”

Concluding comments: strengths and weaknesses

- Scope
- As yet, removed from EAP classroom application
- Some confusion in focus on expert/student writers
- Interviewees – insightful, informed, engaged
- Criticality and interdisciplinarity

Concluding comments: implications & future directions

- Confirmed the need to move away from vague/general approach to even more DS contexts
- A means of better contextualising our teaching for different departments
- Questioning our assumptions about the uses of literature in academic disciplines
- Investigating source types in different fields – and their uses
- Student expertness, models and realistic student outcomes → Student text focus
- (Re)Positioning ISE

Concluding comments

The role of the academic and researcher has changed and so too has the role of the literature review. Writers are no longer individuals working in isolation; they are part of research groups, they are fund chasers.

The role of writing has also changed in that academics and researchers need to be constantly doing it, competing with their colleagues and engaging in knowledge production.

English is going to become more important, trans-disciplinary teaching is going to become more important ... not just interdisciplinarity... Teaching English takes place alongside disciplines in part of new knowledge production. It is not a peripheral activity or a peripheral university department.

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