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EVALUATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW WRITING BY NOVICE ACADEMIC WRITERS: ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS

Abstract. An evaluative and critical literature review in scholarly writing, which plays an important part in a scientific report, illustrates how the existing studies contributed to the relevant field and enables researchers to identify the gaps or niches that their research can fill. However, writing evaluative and critical literature reviews is challenging for non-native speakers of English (NNES). Literature reviews are frequently descriptive summaries of previous research. Beyond simply summarizing source materials, NNES academic writers, inclusive of novice academic writers, should be aware of the ways of developing evaluative and critical literature reviews by making connections between the research findings and interpretations of published studies, showing their inconsistencies, and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. This study aimed to explore NNES doctoral students' knowledge and awareness of evaluative literature review writing and enhance their knowledge with an implementation focusing on the conventions and norms of literature review writing. The study adopted an embedded quasi-experimental design. 20 Turkish doctoral students from different educational science departments participated in the study. The quantitative analysis of the literature review tasks submitted by the participants during the pre- and post-intervention phases and the themes gathered from the semi-structured interviews revealed that NNES students had several challenges when they wrote literature reviews. The supportive implementation, which aimed at evaluative and critical literature review writing, positively affected students' skills, increasing their awareness about the characteristics of effective literature reviews and improving their evaluation and critical thinking skills. The results also offered insights into graduate students' strengths and weaknesses in evaluative and critical literature review writing.

Keywords: academic writing; novice academic writers; literature review writing; multilingual applied linguistics.

Introduction

An effectively crafted literature review (LR) plays a crucial role in a scientific report by providing deep insights into related published studies (Nakano & Muniz, 2018). Practitioners and scholars seem unanimous on

the significance of reviewing the published literature on a specific topic (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). A literature review can be defined as “a written document that presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic of study” (Machi & McEvoy, 2016, p. 28). In this regard, it can lead to communication with other researchers in a related field. According to Steane (2004), building an LR resembles a tapestry in which the researchers use their writing skills to bring together ideas, arguments, and theories related to a research problem under investigation. Nevertheless, this endeavor requires conducting searches not only in the first step of the process but also in the subsequent steps to keep up to date with recent studies and the possible changes in the focus, research problem, or purpose of the current study (Steane, 2004).

Academic writers are expected to be able to analyze, synthesize, and critically evaluate the literature in their respective fields in order to establish the rationale of a new research question (Boote & Beile, 2005; Gall et al., 2007). Writers need to restate the source materials in a way that aligns with their intentions as authors. This should be achieved through a knowledge-transforming approach rather than simply conveying knowledge (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987). Unlike knowledge telling, which is a method often used by novice writers to express what they already know, knowledge transforming is an advanced strategy that involves developing ideas or reshaping knowledge into a coherent and impactful form. However, this is challenging even for native speakers of a language (Akindele, 2008; Cumming et al., 2016; Shahsavari & Kourepaz, 2020). Graduate students, particularly multilinguals, often struggle as novice writers to write LRs that meet the requirements of an evaluative LR (Walter & Stouck, 2020). That is, writers should not only make definitions, list studies and summarize research findings in their studies, but they also need to analyze, synthesize, and criticize other researchers’ arguments and findings. They should determine the insufficiencies and controversial points in the available knowledge. However, supervisors or thesis jury members might ignore or be unaware of their students’ lack of knowledge about evaluation, criticality, and author voice in the LR (Peng, 2019). However, enhanced student engagement is observed through student-teacher interactions in situated language learning environments (Yang, 2011). Supervisors' feedback plays

a vital and dynamic role in shaping the quality and scholarly impact of graduate-level academic writing (Yu & Lee, 2013). Particularly, the type of supervisors' support and feedback may display certain differences regarding academic writing at the graduate level according to L1 or L2 speakers. As such, the existing literature points out the necessity of a strong focus on increasing students' awareness about the importance of evaluative and critical language in LRs. As English is the scientific language to publish, researchers whose first languages are other than English may experience difficulties in enculturation into international academia, such as achieving an evaluative stance (Mur-Dueñas, 2019). Multilingual writers, individuals who are able "to write in two or more languages" (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2016, p. 365), often feel anxious or fail to publish, and, therefore, growing attention is paid to supporting writers focusing on pedagogies through workshops, courses or manuals about publishing for graduate students and advisors to improve their English proficiency and knowledge of the rhetorical and linguistic conventions and norms of scholarly writing (Curry & Lillis, 2017). Since writing skills are one of the most challenging skills and are often neglected, and L1 interference is documented to influence multilingual writers' products (Daukšaitė, 2019; Nangle et al., 2024), evidence-based pedagogical supports have become highly important (Choi, 2021).

As the relevant research has generally centered on the textual analysis of the completed theses or research articles (e.g., Chigbu et al., 2023, Kwan, 2006; Soler-Monreal, 2015; Xie, 2016), as well as graduate students' difficulties and experiences with LR writing (e.g., Akindele, 2008; Shahsavari & Kourepaz, 2020), there is a dearth of research concentrating on attempts to promote students' evaluative and critical writing skills. These studies demonstrate that NNES graduate students lack the necessary skills for evaluating and criticizing literature.

The current study intends to explore the doctoral students' perceptions regarding their evaluative and critical writing skills and the difficulties they face when writing the LR, provide some conceptual and practical training sessions, and find out the effects of this instructional procedure on their evaluative writing development. Given these purposes, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the NNES graduate students' perceptions of evaluative and critical LRs in research studies?
2. What are the difficulties that NNES graduate students face when writing LRs?
3. What are the effects of LR writing instruction on NNES graduate students' writing skills?

Literature Review

Researchers are expected to thoroughly analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the selected sources, coherently organize relevant sources, offer compelling arguments and persuasive rationale with their ideas, and ultimately make significant contributions to their fields (Kwan, 2009; Chen et al., 2016). Graduate students often find literature reviews challenging due to their complex nature. It is important to understand this complexity to improve writing processes and teaching strategies (Badenhorst, 2018). Despite the consensus among researchers about the importance of an effective LR for all academic papers (Webster & Watson, 2002; Wee & Banister, 2016; Xie, 2016), regardless of the discipline, the extent to which academic writers can comprehend the principles of a well-written LR and apply them when writing is quite doubtful.

An effective literature review requires an evaluative and critical perspective; however, reading other sources with a questioning mode and writing through analyzing, synthesizing, and justifying tone and organization is difficult to achieve, particularly for novice writers (Xie, 2016). When considering the complex nature of effective reviews, novice writers, particularly those in graduate programs, may experience difficulties in building an evaluative and critical LR even though they receive academic writing courses (Singh, 2019). There is a complex relationship between graduate students and supervisors regarding the role, responsibilities, and expectations including literature search and writing (Everitt, 2023; Lee & Murray, 2015; Nurkamto & Prihandoko, 2022). More importantly, this complexity may elicit gaps between students' LR writing performances and the requirements of their

faculties and supervisors (Bitchener & Turner, 2011). Critical to this situation is to understand why it is difficult to write an effective LR.

There are numerous studies on understanding graduate students' abilities, inadequacies, and difficulties regarding writing from sources (e.g., Akindele, 2008; Cumming et al., 2018; Kamimura, 2014; Kapranov, 2023; Shabsavar & Kourepaz, 2020). For example, Cumming et al. (2018) examined the challenges university students face, difficulties in understanding and integrating sources, and a lack of familiarity with academic writing conventions. The findings suggested that many students struggle with paraphrasing, summarizing, and citing sources appropriately. The article highlights the need for improved academic writing instruction in Chinese universities to better equip students with the necessary skills for source-based writing in English. In a similar study, Kamimura (2014) has addressed several issues related to students' abilities to effectively integrate and cite sources in their academic writing. This study specifically examined citation behaviors in argumentative essays that demand the integration of sources to support a position. It revealed that Japanese students often rely heavily on direct quotations without adequate commentary or analysis, which can weaken their arguments. In both studies there seems to be a gap in students' understanding of how to use sources appropriately, suggesting that current educational practices may not sufficiently address the demands of academic writing in English. In Kapranov's recent study (2023), a notable finding also demonstrated that students tend to rely heavily on direct quotations from sources rather than engaging with the material through paraphrasing. This over-reliance can be attributed to a lack of confidence in their language abilities or a misunderstanding of the purpose of citations. Kapranov (2023) also points to the need for improved instructional strategies that focus on teaching students not only the technical aspects of citation but also the skills required for critical engagement with sources, including paraphrasing and summarizing in EFL contexts.

Through qualitative data and textual analyses, a closer analysis of the LRs reveals a lack of criticality (Torraco, 2016) and authorial voice (Akindele, 2008), while the adoption of a critical and evaluative approach to the academic language is considered precedence for an effective LR (Ridley, 2012). Confirming this finding, Shabsavar and Kourepaz (2020) pointed to

the lack of necessary knowledge and skills to write critical and evaluative reviews. In a similar vein, Akindele (2008) provided evidence about the difficulty of evaluating the research literature. In his study, the researcher analyzed the LRs of 30 dissertations in terms of evaluation, critical voice, and authorial identity. The authors of the dissertations mostly summarized the literature by concentrating on the main issues without considering the weaknesses and strengths of the studies or showing the gaps in the relevant literature, which implies that the writers had difficulties in evaluating, critical thinking, and bringing their voices to the forefront. Akindele's (2008) investigation asserts that a primary factor contributing to the lack of proficiency in critical and evaluative writing is the absence of explicit instruction and specialized attention. Likewise, Boote and Beile (2005) have conducted an in-depth analysis of the LRs of novice writers' theses. They viewed the evaluative aspects and problematic situations of literature reviews in terms of the quality of this section in the theses. This can be considered a significant initiative for genre pedagogy and can inspire further studies using their guidelines, which evaluate the quality of literature reviews. Previous studies have generally centered on either textual analysis or questionnaires and interviews (e.g., Badenhorst, 2018). Limited research was dedicated to exploring the effects of LR instruction on students' evaluative and critical thinking skills and performances (Bitchener & Turner, 2011). Hence, this study aims to investigate the connection between LR writing instruction and the efficacy of LR writing processes, thereby addressing the existing gap in the subject related literature.

Methodology

Research Design

A quasi-experimental design was employed with a single group of pretest-posttest measurements. The researchers used quantitative and qualitative data collection tools to examine an intervention process. The researchers tested the intervention by means of quantitative analysis. Qualitative data analysis was used to effectively interpret the research results.

Participants

The study involved 20 participants (9 females and 11 males, mean (M) age = 28). The participants were native speakers of Turkish, and English was used as a foreign language. They were required to have passed English proficiency exams in order to be admitted to their respective graduate studies. In addition, they were expected to publish research articles in English for academic promotion. The participants were enrolled in a course in academic writing.

Instruments

Qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments were sequentially used in the study. The LR sections of the participants' dissertation proposals were used to obtain quantitative data before the intervention, and a similar LR writing task was given to students after the intervention to ascertain whether the instruction had an effect on the participants' LR writing skills. Based on the review of the relevant literature, a rubric was adapted to quantitatively analyze the participants' literature reviews.

To obtain qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the doctoral students to determine their knowledge, awareness, and views regarding LR writing before the intervention. Likewise, after the implementation of the instructional model, semi-structured interview sessions were held to explore the participants' views about the effects of the instruction they received. Two interview protocols were prepared for pre- and post-interview sessions, including 5 and 6 interview questions.

Procedure

The data collection procedure started with semi-structured interviews with the participants. Firstly, participants' academic writing knowledge, their awareness of evaluative and critical LR writing, and perceived needs when they had to review and write LR sections were explored by means of semi-structured

interviews. The content of the instructional model was primarily determined in this way. Secondly, the LR chapters in the participants' dissertation proposals were analyzed. Based on the analyses of the interviews and LR papers, the instruction content was developed, and the modules were designed. The intervention was administered for six consecutive weeks. The instructional module consisted of the definition and purposes of an LR, conducting effective literature searches and identifying information sources, reading and note-taking strategies, organizing data, synthesizing and analyzing relevant literature, comparing sources, and addressing the issue of plagiarism and referencing. Also, the tutorial modules offered ways and strategies students can leverage for adopting a critical and evaluative approach and bringing an author voice into their LRs. Following the implementation phase, participants engaged in semi-structured interviews to share their experiences and perceptions about the effects of the instruction. Additionally, the students were asked to write another LR following the instructional procedure. The literature reviews were all evaluated using the same rubric.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to comprehensively understand the data gathered from the interviews. This type of analysis can be described as "the identification of recurring themes or ideas in a textual data set" (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2015, p. 34). Such a process involves deriving and identifying common themes in a data set. As a flexible research tool, thematic analysis provides a detailed explanation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, thematic analysis was performed to thoroughly examine the interview data. The analysis was conducted based on Braun and Clarke's six phases, including "familiarizing yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

As for the analysis of the quantitative data, the chi-square test to examine whether two observations obtained from the same individual at different times or situations are different in terms of a variable specified as a quality was used. As a nonparametric test used to figure out if there is

a significant difference in frequency counts in two or more categories that do not overlap (Kothari, 2007), the chi-square test was used.

Results

Pre-test Interview Results

Based on the analysis of the interviews, three themes were identified: “NNES novice writers’ perceptions of the role and importance of the LR in a research paper”, “NNES novice writers’ priorities for an effective LR”, and “NNES novice writers’ strengths and weaknesses in writing the LR”.

Theme 1: NNES Novice Writers’ Perceptions of the Role and Importance of the LR in a Research Paper

Most participants stated that LR is important in a research study. This is mainly because it informs the audience about the general research topic, provides the opportunity to define terms related to the topic, and gives information about its background and the scope of the study. In this regard, P1 stated:

Everyone who reads the study should be able to understand the research topic, even if they are not from that field. Even if we do not have a good grasp of the terms related to that field, we should have an understanding of the field and the scope of the subject when we read the literature section of the study.

Similarly, a vast majority of the participants found the literature section valuable in displaying the gaps in the relevant field. P3 emphasized the importance of the literature review for a study with the following statements:

A literature review is important. Imagine that there is a puzzle, and one of the pieces is missing. Our study is the missing piece in this puzzle. There are still gaps in the relevant literature. Our aim is to fill these gaps and contribute to the whole.

The participants believed that an effective literature review is essential for a research study because it serves as the foundation for the topics covered in the academic text, justifies the study, informs the readers about the strengths and weaknesses of previous studies, and enables the publication of studies in prestigious journals.

Theme 2: NNES Novice Writers' Priorities for an Effective LR

The second theme describes the participants' priorities in writing an effective LR. According to the participants, a well-written LR should arouse the readers' attention with its content and include a comprehensive synthesis of the previous studies. Many participants (n = 11) stated that the language should be clear and precise and that a general-to-specific pattern should be adopted. As an example, P5 expressed, "One of the most important things in an effective LR is whether it adopts a general-to-specific pattern. Also, it must signal the gaps in the relevant literature and justify the current study".

Identifying effective keywords, paying special attention to current and important studies, looking for similarities or differences between studies, and writing a literature section relevant directly to the research topic are also among the priorities for many participants. P13 emphasized the importance of a thorough literature search, stating, "I am trying to conduct an effective search of published literature because it is important for my reading and the LR which will be included in my thesis". In support of the significance of a comprehensive literature search, P2 suggested, "We must conduct a comprehensive literature search with our audience in mind. We must be aware of their expectations and write the LR to meet their needs". Among their priorities, very few participants mentioned writing an LR from a critical and evaluative perspective. P4, for example, remarked that she adopted a critical approach when writing LR, stating, "While writing LR, I try to establish relationships between previous studies and determine if there are similarities and differences in the findings of the studies".

Theme 3: NNES Novice Writers' Strengths and Weaknesses in Writing the LR

In this theme, the participants' weaknesses and strengths were reported. The participants commonly stated that they have difficulties establishing connections between studies, interpreting, analyzing, and synthesizing the findings of previous studies, and making evaluations while writing LR sections. P19, for instance, expressed, "My biggest challenge is to write a list of summaries of the previous studies. I do not know how to include the cited author with an evaluative approach". Participants acknowledge that they can conduct comprehensive searches and easily access a large number of studies. However, they enunciate that analyzing and synthesizing the previous studies can be challenging. Among their weaknesses, they also include expressing ideas using their own words, capturing important ideas or information in the relevant studies, and justifying the current study through references to existing literature.

The interviews also revealed the NNES doctoral students' perceptions of their strengths as academic writers. The data showed that the participants generally felt competent in conducting comprehensive and systematic literature searches and finding all types of published literature. P8 recited her strengths as follows:

I can find many sources directly relevant to my topic and research questions. I must ensure that I don't overlook any significant information. I continue to search for relevant and new publications until the day I complete my final draft. I can identify similarities and differences between the sources I have found.

Another participant (P3) expressed that she could easily find the striking points of the relevant sources, whereas P2 could use evaluative language and make evaluative comments about previous studies. Despite the mentioned strengths, the weaknesses stated by the participants outnumbered their strengths in literature review writing.

Post-Test Interview Results

The data obtained from the interviews conducted after the LR writing instruction were also analyzed. Based on the findings, four themes were determined: "The effects of LR writing instruction on students' knowledge, skills, and awareness in LR writing", "Ongoing challenges in LR writing", "The role of supervisors in LR writing", and "Suggestions for developing knowledge, skills, and awareness in LR writing".

Theme 1: The Effects of LR Writing Instruction on Writers' Knowledge, Skills, and Awareness in LR Writing

According to the participants, LR writing instruction had positive effects on their self-perceptions about LR writing-related knowledge, skills, and awareness. Almost all the participants (n = 17) expressed that prior to the instruction, they lacked knowledge and awareness about how to write LR and were unaware of the importance of a critical and evaluative LR. Also, they reported that they used to be afraid of criticizing the cited authors, mentioning their weaknesses, and expressing their own opinions before they received the instruction. Instead, they confined themselves to summarizing prior research in the LR writing. P5 pointed out:

Honestly, before the instruction, I was afraid of criticizing the other studies about their weaknesses. However, after the instruction, I realized that we justify our work when we criticize the previous studies. Therefore, this instruction encouraged me to write a more critical and evaluative LR. I am more confident about criticizing when writing.

Many participants (n = 13) emphasized their lack of awareness about foregrounding their voice when writing the LR rather than simply making a summary without including their comments from the other researchers. P11 uttered "Actually, before the instruction, there was a misperception that the authors could not bring their voices to the fore at all. But then we realized that the author's voice should be involved".

Another positive effect of the instruction has been the increased awareness of the importance of creating spreadsheets and tables to organize the published literature review. P16 stated: "I realized that creating tables and spreadsheets gives the researcher flexibility for organizing the articles under some categories, and thereby these tables and spreadsheets can be used to effectively structure our review".

Finally, the participants mentioned that their awareness of issues such as the importance of critical reading, note-taking techniques, and creating tables when scanning the studies increased after the instruction.

Theme 2: Ongoing Challenges in LR Writing

Although the LR writing instruction considerably increased the students' knowledge and awareness, some difficulties were identified when they wrote LRs after the instruction. Some of them (n = 4) had difficulties identifying the strengths or weaknesses of the studies, while others struggled with writing introductory paragraphs and using critical and evaluative language. Relating to this theme, P10 said, "Although we are now more knowledgeable about how to write critical and evaluative LR, I still experience challenges in practice". P5 found it challenging to foreground the writer's voice and adopt a critical approach, stating, "I still struggle to assert my presence when writing LR. Even though LR writing instruction taught me how to create my authorial self, taking control of the text still requires more practice". The interviews also revealed that some participants (e.g., P5, P20) still experience difficulties doing effective literature search.

Theme 3: The Role of Supervisors in LR Writing

The majority of the participants (n = 13) asserted that they needed more guidance about writing effective LRs, which is one of the most striking reasons for the ineffective reviews. One of the participants (P5) explained the lack of supervisors' support on this issue as follows:

In fact, supervisors play an important role in writing effective LRs. They mostly do not support students. Some supervisors are not experienced in their

field, and they have a stereotyped mindset. For example, some supervisors find criticism in literature reviews a disadvantage.

Some participants (P6, P9, P12, and P16) believed that they could receive more feedback. They stated, for example, that supervisors usually provide feedback for punctuation, grammar, connections between paragraphs, in-text citations, or missing references, but not for evaluative and critical language in reviews. P16 explained the lack of supervisory support as follows:

I usually write the text myself, then send it to my supervisor for a final draft. He generally does not evaluate my paper in terms of being critical and evaluative. I only receive feedback for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.

18 participants agreed that while writing the LR section, they usually received peer feedback rather than supervisor support. Only two students found their supervisors' support fulfilling and were thereby grateful for receiving feedback about how to write critical and evaluative reviews.

Theme 4: Suggestions for Developing Knowledge, Skills, and Awareness in LR Writing

All participants stated that the instruction they received helped them develop their knowledge, skills, and awareness regarding the writing of LR sections, and they argued that all graduate students should receive such instruction. P20 emphasized graduate students' needs in this respect, stating, "LR is the most important part of a research paper. It is the section in which current studies are examined, along with their differences and similarities, as well as any gaps or weaknesses. Therefore, it is crucial to provide LR writing instruction". One of the participants (P13) suggested that such instruction should include more practice activities and concrete examples, and supporting this, another participant (P2) argued that instruction on theoretical knowledge is insufficient; instead, the instructions should include supervisor-student collaboration and examples of effective and ineffective reviews. P2 stated: "Reading activities can be included to improve students' critical reading skills, reading techniques can be implemented with such activities, and related

articles can be analyzed to observe and note the connections across different texts.”

Post-test interviews revealed that the instruction in this study contributed to the graduate students’ knowledge, skills, and awareness; however, it could be longer and include more writing assignments and practical support.

Quantitative Results

Table 1 shows the pre- and post-test scores of the participants’ LR writing quality. As can be seen, before the treatment, the participants’ LR writing lacked evaluative quality. They mostly summarized knowledge and listed the studies rather than analyzing and synthesizing other sources. Reflecting an authorial voice, likewise, was found to be quite rare. However, after the treatment, they adopted a more evaluative stance when referencing other sources in their reviews.

Table 1

Descriptive Data for Pre- and Post-Test Scores of LR Writing

		Knowledge of the research topic	Comprehension of Literature / Summary	Evaluation	Critical writing	Authorial voice / identity
Pretest	N	52	38	1	2	1
	%	55.3	40.4	1.1	2.1	1.1
Posttest	N	19	13	4	8	2
	%	41.3	28.3	8.7	17.4	4.3
Total	N	71	51	5	10	3
	%	50.7	36.4	3.6	7.1	2.1

N: The number of the relevant sentences

Table 2 indicates the statistical differences between the participants’ pre- and post-intervention LR performance. As can be seen, there is a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test results ($p < 0.05$) regarding “Literature Summary”, “Evaluation” “Critical writing”, and “Authorial voice/identity”. The percentage of the pretest scores regarding “Providing information about the research topic” and “Summarizing the literature” were found to be higher than the posttest scores. However,

the percentage of the posttest scores regarding "Evaluation", "Critical writing", and "Authorial voice/identity" increased, compared to the pretest scores.

Table 2

Chi-square Test Results for Pre- and Post-Test Scores of LR Writing

	Value	SD	p
Chi-Square	19.116	4	.001
Likelihood Ratio	18.071	4	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.398	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	140		

p<0.05

Discussion

RQ1. What are the Graduate Students' Perceptions of Evaluative and Critical LR?

Almost all the participants stated that LR plays an integral part in a research paper, and the most frequently mentioned reason for this was that a comprehensive LR shows the gaps in the relevant literature and thereby justifies the current study. This result is compatible with the results of the study carried out by Akindele (2008), who reported that doctoral students agreed about the importance of the LR for many similar reasons as the participants of this study. On the other hand, our findings contradict Boote and Beile's (2005) argument. Boote and Beile (2005) claimed that the dearth of studies devoted to understanding the importance of the LR in dissertations implies a lack of awareness regarding an evaluative LR. Despite the participants' positive attitudes towards the functions of LRs in their study, many still found the LR to be the most challenging chapter in an academic text, as confirmed by Badenhorst (2018). Likewise, the majority of the students in our study were unaware of the evaluative and critical language in LRs. Therefore, given the findings about the participants' priorities in this study, it can be concluded that evaluative and critical writing practices are rather obscure to the students. In terms of priorities, the participants mostly focused on the content of the LR and its clarity and precision. They believed that the texts created should inform

the readers about the background of the topic studied. This may lead to a tendency to summarize, paraphrase, quote, or write descriptions using the source texts. However, what is recommended here is to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the critically selected texts to support the arguments (Kwan, 2009).

Even though, in pre-test interviews, our participants did not emphasize the importance of critical and evaluative writing among their priorities, they were aware of the significance of finding similarities and differences among the source texts. This implies that the students did not completely ignore the importance of evaluation and critical writing, but they were unfamiliar with some requirements of an effective LR. This may be akin to the influence of the participants' native language as negative transfer effects were noted (Daukšaitė, 2019). Based on this finding, it can be argued that doctoral students' literacies that LR demands can substantially be improved.

RQ2. What are the Difficulties the Graduate Students Have When Writing LR?

A closer analysis of the quantitative data indicated that the participants had difficulties demonstrating evaluation and critical thinking skills. Before the instruction, the majority of the participants only summarized the published work and could not build relationships between the studies. Also, many participants did not bring their voices into the foreground in their LRs. Among the challenges they faced were finding weaknesses and strengths in the methodologies of the studies, evaluating different theories about the topic under study, and resolving conflicts among the studies they included in their reviews. These findings are in line with those of Akindede's study (2008). The researcher argued that the dissertation LRs analyzed in the study were simply descriptive summaries of the studies reviewed. Akindede's finding coincides with Xie's (2016) results for Chinese English-major MA students who consider evaluation a difficult endeavor even though they are advanced EFL learners. Similarly, Peng (2019) confirmed that constructing an authorial voice is a formidable task.

In line with our study's findings, some studies in related literature highlight difficulties in constructing LRs (Boote & Beile, 2005; Chen et al., 2016; Kwan, 2009; Shahsavar & Kourepaz, 2020). The interviews in this study showed that the doctoral students feel insecure about their evaluation and critical writing skills. This finding may indicate a need for more training to improve their writing skills and build confidence in critical writing.

The participants reported that they experienced difficulties evaluating the published studies they had obtained throughout their research. While these problems can be attributed to the students' lack of competencies and experiences in LR writing (Yang, 2011), they can also be due to a lack of supervisory support. Several studies in the relevant research have examined the role of supervisors in scholarly writing contexts (Afful et al., 2022; Lee & Murray, 2015; Nurkamto & Prihandoko, 2022; Yu & Lee, 2013). However, with a few exceptions, these accounts do not specifically include their role in LR writing (Everitt, 2023).

As the participants in this study highlighted, supervisory guidance is inadequate for many students, and process-based and corrective feedback for their LRs, also emphasized by Nangle et al. (2024), appears to be a pervasive need. As such, the students may fail to contribute to the relevant field because they only go through the stage of collecting several published studies but do not analyze these studies in a meaningful way to write an evaluative LR section in their studies. It is important to note that students do not ignore the importance of evaluating and criticizing published studies, despite having difficulty adopting them. Conceptual awareness-raising training with practices seems to be an effective way to improve LR writing quality.

RQ3. What are the Effects of LR Writing Instruction on Graduate Students' Writing Skills?

Another question about the students' improvement in LR writing skills was the effects of LR writing instruction. The quantitative data displayed that the instruction on writing effective LRs contributed largely to the students' evaluative and critical writing skills. Before the instruction, the analyses of the dissertation LRs revealed that the participants described published work as

a series of summaries lacking evaluative components. However, the analyses of the reviews written by the participants after receiving the instruction revealed that they could critically appraise the relevant literature, enhancing their metadiscourse knowledge.

Even though some research into the effectiveness of LR writing-based instruction exists in the relevant literature (Badenhorst, 2018; Bitchener & Banda, 2007; Bitchener & Turner, 2011) this issue is still an under-researched area. Among non-experimental studies, Hei & David (2015) investigated graduate students' LR writing difficulties that may provide insights to improve their LR writing competencies in future interventional studies. Achieving critical analysis and synthesis of the sources was found to be a primary challenge among the participants. These findings contributed to the rationale of the current study in a non-native context of academic writing. Multilingual students' inadequacies in evaluating and criticizing the previous studies, therefore, need to be investigated, and pedagogically supportive models should be developed. Choi's (2021), Curry & Lillis's (2017) and Mur-Dueñas' (2019) arguments highlighting the importance of understanding the diverse language backgrounds of NNE writers and help them develop their voices confirmed the findings of our study and support our suggestions. Particularly Singh (2019) attributes these challenges to the fact that English was not the first language of the non-native English of graduate students.

Our findings showed that NNES novice academic writers typically lack the essential skills for an effective LR. However, our study suggests that providing skill instruction enables students to develop an evaluative and critical LR. This may also be helpful guidance for developing effective teaching models.

Conclusion

This study drew attention to the characteristics of effective instructional content and pedagogy concentrating on quality LR writing, which would have significant ramifications for the faculty members in graduate programs and supervisors who have certain responsibilities for developing their students' evaluative and critical writing skills. The courses in graduate programs need to offer more guidelines and practices to teach how to develop arguments and

counterarguments and express evaluation in LRs. These issues point to the necessity of formal training for graduate students on how to evaluate and criticize source texts in a field. Graduate programs should incorporate the characteristics and standards of effective LRs as an important part. Thus, these training programs should establish a comprehensible framework for integrating and synthesizing findings across interventions, settings, and outcomes, resolving conflicts in a field, and identifying central issues or arguments. Also, the prerequisite of an instructional program which addresses the difficulties experienced by students from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds can be highlighted based on the findings of this study. Therefore, materials and practices for developing multilingual graduate students' writing skills should be incorporated into the instruction. Students' critical thinking and evaluative skills can be enhanced in multilingual environments which offer supportive practice and feedback.

Several implications can be suggested based on the findings of this study. Students could first be asked to read LR papers in which evaluative and critical language is embedded within their disciplinary community. Hereby, they can examine the examples of LRs, and instructors can begin familiarizing students with this genre. The students may then participate in a specific discussion about the LR requirements and expectations of their community. They can benefit from the examination of the evaluative and critical texts to understand how evaluative resources work. They should be trained to establish connections between the source texts, integrate the authors' arguments into their assumptions, and address the weaknesses and strengths in the methodologies of other studies. Students may be encouraged to engage in writing tasks to understand their problems and difficulties related to LR writing. This may help them with individual academic writing.

Considering that constructing an effective LR is not always completely dependent on students' writing skills, a few general suggestions can be made about supervisors. The students may need additional assistance from their supervisors, particularly when the courses devoted to academic writing do not meet their expectations in this respect. Therefore, the supervisors should be aware that the LR-related practices are complicated and unclear for the students, and they need to make these practices more visible by offering

suggestions, giving feedback about their errors, and making guided revisions of their drafts to develop their literacies in LR writing.

Limitations and Further Research

The number of participants was somewhat limited in this study to reach some generalizable conclusions. Further research can be conducted with more participants to be able to generalize the results. Second, a questionnaire might be used to obtain students' perceptions about writing literature reviews. Further research is recommended to provide insights into supervisors' roles and their knowledge and perceptions of literature review writing.

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**VERTINAMASIS LITERATŪROS APŽVALGOS RAŠYMAS
PRADEDANTIESIEMS AKADEMINIAMS RAŠYTOJAMS: ŽINIŲ IR
SĄMONINGUMO DIDINIMAS**

Anotacija. Vertinamoji ir kritinė literatūros apžvalga akademinuose darbuose atlieka svarbų vaidmenį, nes parodo, kaip esami tyrimai prisidėjo prie atitinkamos srities plėtotės, ir leidžia tyrėjams nustatyti spragas ar nišas, kurias jų tyrimai gali užpildyti. Tačiau rašyti vertinamąsias ir kritines literatūros apžvalgas yra sudėtinga asmenims, kuriems anglų kalba nėra gimtoji (NNES). Literatūros apžvalgos dažnai yra aprašomojo pobūdžio ankstesnių tyrimų santraukos. Negimtakalbiai, rašantieji akademinis tekstus, įskaitant ir pradedančiuosius akademinis rašytojus, turėtų ne tik apibendrinti šaltinių medžiagą, bet ir žinoti, kaip parengti vertinamąsias ir kritines literatūros apžvalgas, nustatyti ryšius tarp paskelbtų tyrimų rezultatų ir interpretacijų, parodyti jų nenuoseklumą, nurodyti stipriąsias ir silpnąsias jų puses. Šiuo tyrimu buvo siekiama iširti NNES doktorantų žinias ir supratimą apie vertinamojo pobūdžio literatūros apžvalgų rašymą bei pagilinti jų kompetenciją, įgyvendinant priemonę, orientuotą į literatūros apžvalgų rašymo konvencijas ir normas. Tyrime taikytas įterptinis kvaziekspimentinio tyrimo planas, dalyvavo dvidešimt Turkijos doktorantų iš įvairių edukologijos katedrų. Kiekybinė dalyvių pateiktų literatūros apžvalgos užduočių, atliktų prieš intervenciją ir po jos, analizė ir iš pusiau struktūruotų interviu surinktos temos atskleidė, kad NNES studentai, rašydami literatūros apžvalgas, susidūrė su keliais iššūkiais. Palaikomoji programa, kurios tikslas buvo vertinamasis ir kritinis literatūros apžvalgos rašymas, teigiamai paveikė doktorantų įgūdžius, padidino jų informuotumą apie veiksmingų literatūros apžvalgų ypatumus ir pagerino jų vertinimo ir kritinio mąstymo įgūdžius. Rezultatai taip pat leido įžvelgti stipriąsias ir silpnąsias doktorantų puses vertinamojo ir kritinio literatūros apžvalgos rašymo aspektu.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: akademinis rašymas; pradedantieji akademinio teksto rašytojai; literatūros apžvalgos rašymas; daugiakalbė taikomoji lingvistika.