

ACADEMIC SKILLS REVIEW

Session II

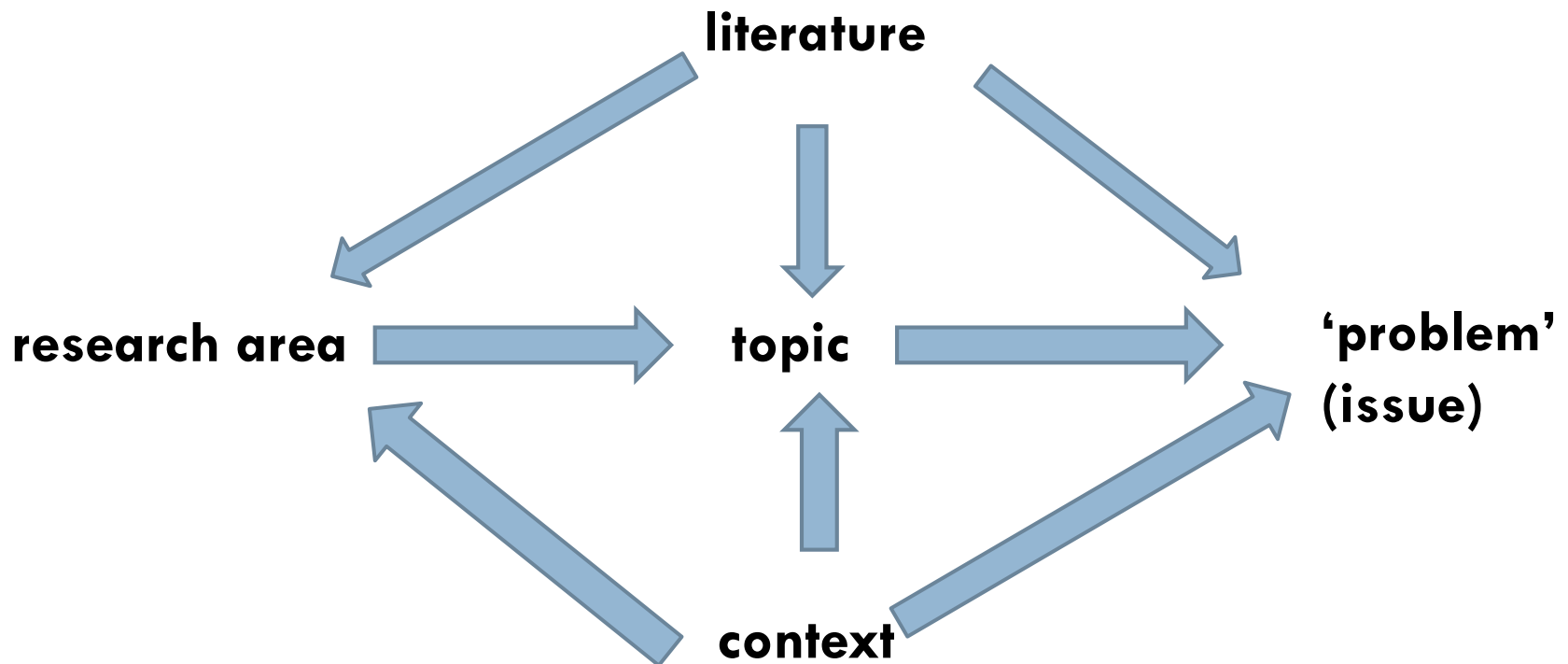
Mgr. Martin Jirušek, Ph.D.

Topic selection - How to begin?

- Issues that are interesting or attractive for us (among other things 😊) or issues we can relate to
- Critical assessment whether the topic can be turned into a thesis
- 'To have an issue...'
- 3 key questions:
 - WHAT?
 - WHY?
 - HOW?

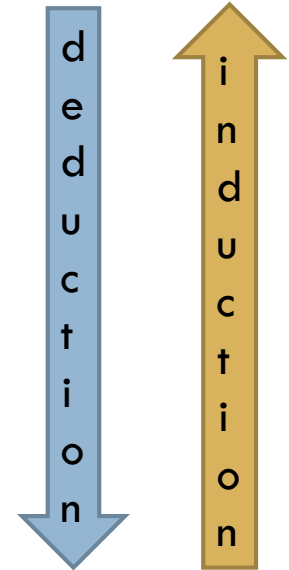


Developing a topic



Developing a topic

- Research area
- ... (may include one or more steps further specifying the topic)
- Research topic
- Research question(s)/hypothesis
- Specific research questions
- Particular questions related to data mining/collecting... (interviews)
- **Let's give it a try...**



Developing a topic

□ **Keep in mind:**

- availability of sources (sometimes relates to methodology)
- deadlines
- topicality
- what falls within the area/topic and what does not
- ...

Literature search

Differs by...

□ Purpose

- Longer (thesis): comprehensive search of majority if not all relevant authors
- Shorter (essay): key authors, most recent contributions

□ Stage

- early stage skimming (looking for topics, 'What is going on?')
- more focused on particular area ('Now I'm interested in this...')
- intensive reading and assessing sources ('Ok, tell me more and let's see if I can use this...')

Literature search and assessment

- What is known and what is not?
- How solid are the findings?
- Can we build on them?
- Does the literature identify key points and cleavages?
- Where I stand according to other authors/findings?
- Can my position be justified?

- Don't make premature conclusions.
- Apply critical approach (!)
- Mind the nature of assessed sources (!!)
- Mind authors's background and affiliation (!!!)

Some mixed remarks...

- Avoid biased sources (blogs?) – mind the purpose, author, background, sponsor,... – every author is **just** a human being!
- Mind the difference between commonly used sources and sources used in academia
- Mind the difference between primary and secondary sources
 - (X prim. & sec. data)
 - choose sources with the lowest level of distortion
- Wikipedia! – rather a starting point...
- Verification/triangulation of sources (!)

Referencing

- **...is necessary** 😊
- Naturally, no one knows everything therefore we use other people's knowledge. Using it without reference is not ethical
 - Infringement of intellectual property – in fact a **robbery**
- Reader must be able to **differentiate already known findings from new ones (author's inputs)**
- rephrased a content vs. direct citation
- Referencing = reliability!
- Referencing enables replicability (=reliability)
- Reader must be able **to track and find** the referenced source
- **Most cases of plagiarism are unintentional!**

Referencing

- **ctrl+c, ctrl+c = plagiarism**
- **ctrl+c, ctrl+c, reference = no plagiarism**
- Don't 'over-reference' your text (ok, this is a bit controversial 😊)
 - an academic work should NOT be a compilation of previously released texts
 - should be original (i. e. worth reading)
- Referenced materials are basis for our own findings

Referencing

- What should be referenced and what need not to be:
 - 1) **Should be:** evidence, data that are not commonly known among the population among the targeted audience, different views on commonly known facts/events
 - 2) **Need not to be:** Commonly known facts ('WWII ended in 1945') – mind the level of information and targeted audience!
- Reference list – may be divided according to nature of sources (primary/secondary, articles, monographies, interviews,...) – **should be easy to follow and use**

Referencing

- Generally: in text or as footnotes
- Automatic referencing engines: included in MS Office, Zotero,...
- Only sources **used in the actual text** can be referenced!
- In case of interviews or other materials that are hard to include as annex – statement of availability
- Do not translate language of the source
- Only known reference details are used
- Many different styles of referencing and citations
 - always mind the targeted audience and rules of the targeted platform/journal
- <http://mve.fss.muni.cz/en/masters-degree/study-agenda/citation-style>

Rephrased content vs. direct citation

- Both should be referenced
- Paraphrase/Rephrased content (i.e. **information ABOUT the content, NOT the same text**) is cited in plain text
 - no quotation marks or italics – only if exact and/or specific words/terms are used
- Direct citation (i.e. **the content itself**) is highlighted/differentiated from the rest of the text (quotation marks, italics)

Writing style

- Only a question of self-confidence...?
- Use „The study **shows...**“, „It **was proved** that...“ instead of „The outcomes **might show** that...“, „It is likely that the evidence **might point** to...“ where possible
- Avoid shortened forms (e.g. use **are not** instead of **aren't**)
- Try to be concise (NOT wordy)
- Keep the text coherent (making sense) and cohesive (internally interlinked)

Thank you for your attention



jirusek.martin@mail.muni.cz