About this sample literature review: The following literature review was composed as part of an honors capstone project proposal in the field of communication sciences and disorders. It served as the introduction to the project proposal and, thus, was part of a larger work (as opposed to a stand-alone piece).

The assignment was: In this literature review, you will create a justification for your honors capstone project (and its design) by examining the state of knowledge on your topic, the key concepts and theories that will serve as the foundation for your project, and the gaps or needs that your project will address. The literature review should be 4 to 5 double-spaced pages—slightly longer than the literature review in a typical journal article.

This sample literature review is more comprehensive (meaning it draws on more sources) than many class assignments but less comprehensive than literature reviews for a thesis or dissertation. Class assignments that require students to carefully examine a limited number of sources or graduate level literature reviews (which are expected to provide a thorough analysis of many sources) may offer more detailed descriptions of the studies under review than this sample does. For an overview of literature reviews (created in conjunction with this annotated sample) and for more literature review resources, please visit this link.

Examining Verb Usage in English Learners

English learners, those learning English in addition to other languages, composed 10% of the American school-age population in the 2014 – 2015 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education (2016) estimates that the percentage of English learners is even higher for those under the age of 6. Scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) demonstrate that many of these children will need support in acquiring English language skills. On the 2015 NAEP reading assessment, the scores of fourth graders identified as English learners averaged below the basic reading level and only two points above children who were identified as having a disability (The Nation’s Report Card, 2015). Many English learners struggle to acquire English language skills, but it is important to note that there may be different causes for this difficulty. ⭐
In writing in the health and social sciences (as well as natural and physical sciences), quotations very rarely appear in literature reviews. However, this is one exception: when sharing an established definition. In this sentence, the writer is outlining what is to come. She will expand on each of these ideas in the coming paragraphs.

Some children simply have a language difference, “a rule-governed language style that deviates in some way from the standard usage of the mainstream culture,” while others have a language disorder, “a significant discrepancy in language skills relative to what would be expected…for a clients’ age or developmental level” (Paul & Norbury, 2012, pp. 138). A language difference can be due to the cultural and linguistic variables from another language influencing the way English learners acquire English, such as the sounds they produce and the grammatical structures they utilize. An English learner with a language disorder will have consistent errors throughout all the languages they use, which may negatively impact their reading and writing skills (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2017a).

Speech language pathology is one profession that supports English learners’ various language needs. Interventions for these students focus on the language and literacy abilities they need to succeed in the classroom (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2017a; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2017d). According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s (ASHA) scope of practice (2017c), in order to be clinically competent, a speech language pathologist (SLP) is required to differentiate a language difference from a language disorder in English learners. However, a 2016 survey showed that only 8% of SLPs felt that they were very qualified to address the cultural and linguistic needs that arise when working with English learners (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016).

There are a number of barriers and limitations to accurately assessing the language skills of English learners. These include similarities between typically developing English learners and English learners with a language impairment, a shortage of developmental data for English learners, and a lack of cultural...
consideration in standardized assessment. Language impairment is a type of language disorder identified in children who show deficits in either receptive (understood) or expressive (used) language skills compared to peers with the same amount of language exposure (Bedore & Peña, 2010). When compared to their monolingual peers, English learners can show similar expressive and receptive delays as children with language impairment (Bedore & Peña, 2010). Therefore, it can be difficult for an SLP to differentiate between typically developing English learners and those with language impairment.

More issues arise when testing English learners because there are very few bilingual SLPs and little data on typical and atypical development in languages other than English (Paradis, Schneider, & Duncan, 2013). Many SLPs rely on standardized tests to assess English learners (Caesar & Kohler, 2007). However, these tests often do not include English learners in the normative sample, nor do they take cultural factors into account (De Lamo, White, & Jin, 2011). For example, children from culturally diverse backgrounds may not have experience completing standardized tests. Of the 55 frequently used standardized tests of language, only 13 report acceptable levels of sensitivity and specificity (Betz, Eickhoff, & Sullivan, 2013), defined as 80% or higher (Plante & Vance, 1994).

Due to the lack of appropriate assessments available for English learners, SLPs risk under-identifying or over-identifying these students as having language impairment (Muñoz, White, & Horton-Ikard, 2014). Under-identification of English learners can occur when SLPs either delay or choose not to assess a disorder because they do not feel confident in the assessments available for English learners (Muñoz et al., 2014). When SLPs under-identify English learners with language impairment, students may not receive the appropriate
services they need. These services may include therapy focused on reading, writing, and the development of language skills to better equip the child in academics and communication (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2017d).

In contrast, over-identification in English learners occurs when SLPs label a student as having an impairment when they are developing normally. Over-identifying English learners violates the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which states that a child cannot be identified as having a disability based on a lack of English proficiency (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, 2006). Both under- and over-identification violate ASHA’s Code of Ethics, which requires SLPs to competently provide their services and to not discriminate based on culture, ethnicity, or dialect (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2017b, para. 30 & 32).

In response to these issues, recent research has provided new ways to accurately differentiate typically developing English learners from English learners with language impairment. These methods include using a combination of dynamic assessments, such as test-teach-retest, response to intervention (i.e. teach-test-teach), assessment of information processing skills, and language sampling. Dynamic assessments allow a professional to consider the child’s environment, home, and culture, while standardized assessment compares English learners’ knowledge to norms that are culturally and linguistically biased, dynamic assessments allows SLPs to analyze English learners’ learning processes (Paradis et al., 2013; Pieretti & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2016; Rosa-Lugo et al., 2010). Since difficulty learning new information is an indicator of language impairment, this feature of dynamic assessments allows an SLP to identify English learners with language impairment without being proficient in
their native languages (Peña et al., 2014). The importance of this type of assessment can be seen in one study that found dynamic assessments identified English learners with language impairment with 80.6% to 97.2% accuracy (Peña et al., 2014).

Current research suggests that monolinguals with language impairment have the most difficulty with verbs, particularly those that mark tense, such as third person singular -s and past tense -ed (Rice & Wexler, 1996; Rice, Wexler, & Cleave, 1995). Individuals with language impairment show a significant difference in their acquisition of grammatical knowledge and do not appear to understand that tense marking in main verbs is a requirement of the language (Rice et al., 1995). Therefore, experts in the field suggest the use of verb tense as a clinical marker for language impairment in monolinguals (Rice & Wexler, 1996; Leonard, 2014).

Research conducted in the last ten years shows that English learners with language impairment also have particular trouble with verbs (Blom & Paradis, 2013; Gutierrez-Clellen, Simon-Cereijido, & Wagner, 2008). Blom and Paradis (2013) found that English learners with language impairment demonstrated particular trouble with regular past tense markings on verbs in English, whereas typically developing English learners achieved higher accuracy in this area. Taken together with research showing verbs are also more difficult for monolingual speakers with language impairment, these results suggest that difficulty with verbs is a hallmark of language impairment, regardless of the child’s first language.

This honors project will add to the current research on identifying English learners with language impairment, furthering the knowledge of English learners’ language development and leading to more appropriate assessments for
The writer probably needs to moderate or qualify her claims. It is unlikely that a single study by a novice researcher will cause such a significant change in the field.

This paragraph makes several moves common in conclusions of literature reviews that introduce a research project:
(1) It explains the purpose of the present study—in particular, how it will fill a gap in knowledge or build on existing knowledge.
(2) It gives the research question or hypothesis.
(3) It gives a brief summary of the methods it will use to answer the research question.

This literature review was followed by a methods section, project outline, and timeline—not pictured in this document.
This article, which appears in a scholarly journal, does not report the findings of an original research project. Rather, it reviews existing research and then proposes a decision-making framework. This article is, in fact, a type of literature review. Review articles like this one may be considered part of “the literature” on a topic.

This literature review draws from 27 sources. Some kinds of literature reviews require far fewer sources, and some require far more. Check with your professor or adviser to find out the appropriate range for your literature review. Also worth noting is that this literature review drew from several different types of sources, which are discussed in subsequent annotations.

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References


The author of this literature review uses several government sources—a piece of legislation, a national assessment, and a press release—to provide background on her topic.

