**Lesson 11: Literary reading and writing methodology**

**1-The literary text:**

The notion of the literary text – and therefore of authors and readers – is obviously one of the constitutive elements of literature and criticism, and central to Theory. The connotations of ‘text’ have a particularly long and complex history which I will not go into here – anyone undertaking literary research undoubtedly already has a sufficient sense of this. What follows are some quickly sketched points on relatively recent turns that the term has gone through under the aegis of Theory. [[1]](#footnote-2)

Understanding the connotations of ‘text’ has been considerably less problematic than grasping what makes a text literary. One sort of conventional recourse has been to find some formal description general enough to contain the myriad variety that is recognised as literary, encapsulating all the fluid generic and subgeneric categories and rhetorical/linguistic possibilities that can be plausibly registered as such. [[2]](#footnote-3)

This has been attempted from a vast range of theoretical positions: in terms of Theory’s division of the field, by Russian Formalists (like Yuri Tynyanov and Mikhail Bakhtin), by Structuralists (like Roman Jakobson, Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov), by Phe nomenologists (like Roman Ingarden), by the uncategorisable Northrop Frye, among numerous others. The raison d’être of such attempts has been questioned so insistently – as being ahistorical, insensitive to sociopolitical contexts and ideological leanings, indifferent to readerly or interpretive constructions, simply philosophically untenable, etc. – that such characterizations of the literary text have largely been abandoned. A relatively rare and

recent attempt at presenting a formal-linguistic theory of literary texts by Antonio García-Berrio in A Theory of the Literary Text (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992) can be cited to briefly convey the ambition of such an enterprise. [[3]](#footnote-4)

**2-How to choose representative research literatures:**

As we write dissertations, we often encounter the problem of what materials are representative literatures.

**2.1 The root of the problem:**

According to Professor Hongcai Wang, the root of this problem, for researchers, is the lack of qualitative analysis of the literatures.

Zhenguo Yuan points out that “literature research methodology” include non-structured qualitative analysis and structured quantitative analysis. They access to and process information contained in literatures from different perspectives. Generally speaking, literatures are descriptions of the nature, functions and characteristics of objects.

These qualitative descriptions seldom show the variable relationship of research subject, so researchers tend to apply logical reasoning to explore the logical relations among objects rather than the quantity relationship.[[4]](#footnote-5)

In general, qualitative analysis is to classify information contained in literatures, to select typical examples to re-organize and come to conclusion on the basis of qualitative description. The qualitative analysis of literatures has special values in distinguishing the past trends and forecasting future models.

Qualitative research of literatures does not focus on the quantity and completeness of literature materials. It focuses on personal literature researches and chooses small samples or characteristics of cases according to the interests of the researches and subject requirements.[[5]](#footnote-6)

Qualitative analysis is to study whether the objects under researches have certain nature or to study chance reasons and process analysis. The base of qualitative analysis is philosophy method. It compares the similarities and differences between things through reasoning, sums up the types of things and grasps the rules of things. The common reasoning process of qualitative analysis is as follows: what is the problem? What is the definition of the concept? What are the facts? What is the reason? What is the conclusion of the study? Qualitative analysis commonly applies seven methods, respectively,: causal analysis, comparative analysis, conflicts analysis, the results and functional analysis, induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis and scientific abstract method. [[6]](#footnote-7)

**2.2 Strategies to overcome the problem:**

Professor Hongcai Wang provides three strategies to overcome this problem, to talk with scholars, to identify the grade of literatures and to enhance theory knowledge.[[7]](#footnote-8)

After we have collected as many literatures as possible related to our research subject, we must sort them out and analyze to determine what representative research literatures are and what general references are. In the determination of the representative literatures, several principles must be followed: One is purpose: Literature materials must be pertinent, valuable for the subject under research, are the theoretical base or background information of the research subject and are typical examples. Researchers could use these materials to find out the past trends and to predict future relevant to these materials. The second is. Authority: The author of the literature has reputation or is representative in this research field, or is academic leader, or authority editor of key discipline research bases, and has published articles in national famous magazines. The authority of literature can also be known by identifying how many times the literature has been cited. Under normal circumstances, only literature with authority could earn trust and be given references. The third one is effectiveness. Research materials are valuable for the research subject. The values are reflected through being good for abstracting, being beneficial for obtaining arguments, being conducive to the formation of research thoughts. [[8]](#footnote-9)Therefore, research data must be accurate, comprehensive, profound and typical, not out of date.

The stronger the effectiveness is, the more likely the true scientific conclusions could be achieved. The literature then is representative. The fourth one is reliability: The reliability of literature includes authenticity of the literature and the reliability of the contents. When researchers refer to certain literature, they must first make sure whether these literatures are authentic, or fakes or modified, especially for historical documents describing issues. Because the formation time of them is far from our times, it is hard to determine its authenticity. After identifying the authentity of literatures, we must also verify whether the facts or data recorded in the literature are reliable, such as whether the literature faithfully records the truth and whether the concepts and date in the literature and data are accurate, and so on. [[9]](#footnote-10)

1. Suman Gupta : **The place of theory in literary, The Handbook to Literary Research,** Edited by Delia da Sousa Correa and W.R. Owens,Second edition 2010

   P118 -121 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Suman Gupta : **The place of theory in literary, The Handbook to Literary Research,** Edited by Delia da Sousa Correa and W.R. Owens,Second edition 2010

   P118 -121 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Suman Gupta : **The place of theory in literary, The Handbook to Literary Research,** Edited by Delia da Sousa Correa and W.R. Owens,Second edition 2010

   P118 -121 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Yuan, Zhenguo. Education research methodology. Higher Education Press, Guijuan Lin : Higher Education Research Methodology-Literature Method, International Education Studies Xiamen Software College,, vol , no 04 , 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Guijuan Lin : Higher Education Research Methodology-Literature Method, International Education Studies Xiamen Software College,, vol , no 04 , 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Guijuan Lin : Higher Education Research Methodology-Literature Method, International Education Studies Xiamen Software College,, vol , no 04 , 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Wang, Shouheng. Basis of education scientific research methodology. Hefei: Anhui University Press, Guijuan Lin : Higher Education Research Methodology-Literature Method, International Education Studies Xiamen Software College,, vol , no 04 , 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Guijuan Lin : Higher Education Research Methodology-Literature Method, International Education Studies Xiamen Software College,, vol , no 04 , 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Guijuan Lin : Higher Education Research Methodology-Literature Method, International Education Studies Xiamen Software College,, vol , no 04 , 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)