Enhancing ESL Students Academic Writing Skills through the Term-Paper

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ABSTRACT

Tertiary ESL students find writing the academic term-paper a complex process as they grapple with issues about academic writing conventions and ethics. This paper examines tertiary students' thoughts and perceptions in co-constructing knowledge about academic writing and how multi-drafting and feedback strategies enhance their academic literacy skills through term-paper writing. In particular, we examine the use of the term-paper as a pedagogical instrument incorporating the process approach to writing for developing academic writing skills among tertiary level students in Malaysia including the importance of multi-drafting, where students reflect on the writing of the multi-drafts and evaluate their learning while working in groups. The respondents are 38 Diploma in Business Management students from a Malaysian university enrolled in an academic writing course. Focus group interviews, group observations and respondents reflective journal entries provided the qualitative data. Our findings show that group multi-drafting and feedback processes enhanced students understanding of writing as a recursive process and sharpened their academic writing literacy knowledge in the areas of referencing, planning, idea generation, editing and revising. We conclude that the multi-draft term-paper approach as a pedagogical tool seems to be a feasible solution to heightening the academic writing skills and confidence of tertiary students.

Keywords: Term-paper, multi-drafting, feedback, reflection, recursive process

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing (AW) is any written work or assignment given to students in any academic setting and is a central component of teaching and learning in any higher education context. Students in

higher education are required to engage in academic writing of, for example, term-papers, essays and reports which require the knowledge of specific academic writing conventions. A popular AW assessment is the term-paper.

In the context of this paper, a term-paper in higher education is defined as a research based paper written by students in English and due at the end of an academic term. Many ESL students find writing the research based academic term-paper a daunting process (Foster, 2006; Rohayah & Naginder, 2006; Abu Rass, 2001), and this is because writing is generally viewed as a spontaneous reaction but AW skills require deliberation and reflection, including the knowledge of specific writing rules (Arumugam, 2011; Foster, 2002). AW requires organisation of thoughts as students have to create ideas to produce facts following the academic conventions of their specific disciplines through logical reasoning. Most ESL students who struggle with AW conventions often try to find easy ways out by 'cutting and pasting' because they fail to understand the procedures of referencing conventions and do not see their importance apart from the lack of AW ability (Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Abasi et al., 2006; The University of Adelaide, 2004; Leask, 2004). We cannot blame the students as they are unfamiliar with academic language for paraphrasing and introducing quotes (McGowan, 2005).

The ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted through formal instructional practices (Rohayah &

Naginder, 2004; Kim & Kim, 2005). Hence, in order to enhance students' skills, academic writing should be taught and developed through effective approaches such as feedback and collaborative multi-drafting in tertiary English language classrooms (Bowker, 2007; Heffernan, 2006; Wei, 2004; Coffin et al., 2003).

Studies on the teaching of AW skills to students from various disciplines enrolled in ESL writing classrooms have paid close attention to "how students learn AW and how multi-drafting contributes to learning" (Cumming & Riazi, 2000, p. 57). These studies have mainly focused on collaborative writing in general (Brown, 2008; Mason, 2006; Chen, 2004), peer feedback (Arumugam, 2011; McGarrell & Verbeem, 2007; Rohayah & Naginder, 2006; Rollinson, 2005), and reflective writing processes (Granville & Dison, 2005; Zhu, 2004). The findings of these studies have shown that when students collaborate, they improve their writing competence and academic achievement (Brown, 2008; Lee, 2007; Hirst & Slavik, 2005).

Research on peer and teacher feedback have highlighted the positive effects on writing classrooms, where ESL students are able to further develop and refine their emerging language knowledge (Kim & Kim, 2005; Nassaji & Swain, 2000). In addition, Li and Lin (2007) and Chandler's (2003) work showed that teacher feedback improve students' accuracy in academic writing.

Studies of reflective writing processes (Lucas, 2008; Selvester & Rich, 2007; Granville & Dison, 2005) have demonstrated

that ESL students' academic writing ability is further enhanced when they are able to reflect on their experiences. For example, Rollinson (2005) highlighted the importance of peer collaboration and the significance of reflexivity, where writers can revise based on feedback from their peers. He argued that feedback from peer writers "can and do revise effectively on the basis of comments from peer readers" (p. 24). This argument is further supported by Mason (2006) and McGarrel and Verbeem (2007), who point out that the reflective component of writing and formative feedback motivate revisions of drafts and help students to understand the significance of their experiential learning apart from providing students opportunities to interact and learn from peers, create meaningful interaction among them and accelerate language learning.

Studies investigating the effectiveness of multi-drafting in the academic writing context have shown that multi-drafting empowers students by enabling them to make clearer decisions about the direction of their writing through discussion, drafting, feedback, and revision, which encourages students to take responsibility for their learning (Romova & Andrew, 2011; Rohayah & Naginder, 2004; Clenton, 2005; Lim, 2002;). Previous studies have reported that collaborative multi-drafting contributes to the development of learners' writing skills, creating an avenue for students to go through their writing back and forth repeatedly until they are satisfied with their writing (McGarrel & Verbeem, 2007). Fong, Kwan and Wang, (2008) claim that

multi-drafting, as an effective pedagogical approach, provides opportunities for students to improve their writing. They further elaborated that multi-drafts make a shift in the writing pedagogies, focusing on the significance of the writing process in revising students' drafts to improve their AW skills. Other researchers (Arumugam, 2011; Mason, 2006; Iwai, 2004) note that collaborative multi-drafting reduces anxiety and creates a risk-free and friendly environment.

Much needs to be learnt about how Malaysian tertiary students' acquire AW literacy through the multi-draft term-paper approach and how they come to understand their own learning. This study focused on investigating tertiary students' thoughts and perceptions in the co-construction of knowledge about AW, and how multi-drafting and feedback strategies enhanced their academic literacy skills through term-paper writing.

This study draws on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the process approach to writing (Badger & White, 2000, Flower & Hayes, 1981). One part of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) posits that language learning takes place when people interact socially. This notion of learning postulates that knowledge is constructed through joint activity where learning is then mediated by different learners within the group. Hence, knowledge of a subject matter is socially constructed through cooperative efforts towards shared objectives, or through discussions and challenges brought about by interaction among learners (Solomon, 1993).

A stress free environment is created when learners work cooperatively, helping one another to revise their writing which leads to meaningful interactions in a naturalistic educational setting (Nason & Woodruff, 2004; Mariam, 2004; Iwai, 2004).

The process approach to writing is not a linear process but rather a recursive process and focuses on several steps such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and evaluating (Badger & White, 2000; Flower & Hayes, 1981). Learners can move from one step to another and go back and forth around the steps. Leki (1991) states that the process approach to teaching writing emphasises the stages of the writing process than on the final product. By focusing on the writing process, learners may come to understand themselves more, especially, when they reflect on the strategies and the thinking behind their writing.

Zamel (1983) points out that writing is a process through which students can explore and discover their thoughts, construct meaning and assess it at the same time. Thus, "writing in process approaches is seen as predominantly to do with linguistic skills, such as planning and drafting, and there is much less emphasis on linguistic knowledge such as knowledge about grammar and text structure. In this approach students are taught planning, drafting, revising and editing" (Badger & White, 2000, p. 154).

Hence, by putting together Vygotsky's conception that learning is a social enterprise which leads to cognitive development and Johnson and Johnson's (1999) claim that students work better in cooperative learning groups, with the process approach to writing, the study sought to probe the benefits of teaching AW through multi-drafting using the term-paper as a pedagogical tool. In addition, the study infuses reflective practices into the writing of the multi-drafts to foreground meta-cognitive awareness during the process of writing the term-paper (Kathpalia & Heah, 2008).

METHODLOGY

A case study approach was used in this qualitative study. One intact academic writing class, consisting of thirty eight Business Management students, was selected for the study. There were 25 female and 13 male students. All the participants were enrolled in a compulsory academic writing course to improve their English language competency. The course is offered by the Language Academy at a branch campus of a public university in Malaysia. Each of the 38 students was randomly assigned to nine different writing groups. Each group consisted of 3 - 4 members to avoid the occurrence of free riders (Brown, 2008). The students had six contact hours per week over 14 weeks with each lesson lasting two hours. The intact class was instructed to carry out the writing tasks in their groups.

The study consisted of two phases. Phase one was the multi-drafting phase based on student-to-student feedback, whereby the group members edited multi-drafts and provided feedback. During this phase, the respondents had to continuously revise their term-paper based on peer feedback. The second phase was the instructor feedback

phase where the respondents handed-in their revised drafts from the peer feedback for instructor feedback.

The Term Paper Writing Task

The students wrote six term-paper drafts collaboratively: three descriptive and three argumentative. These writing tasks provided practice in AW and were conducted during class hours. The students were given a choice of 8 topics: four descriptive (Keys to healthy eating, Hypermarkets and sundry shops in our lives, Consequences of Smoking and Road accidents) and four argumentative (Who is to be blamed for abandonment of babies? Sex education must be introduced in school system; The government should control facebook networking, and College students should wear uniforms). Students had to choose three descriptive and three argumentative topics to write on. The six group writing tasks were graded in order to motivate the students to improve their writing for better grades and to also ensure that the students took their work seriously.

Research Instruments

The main instruments used in this study consisted of a guided reflective journal, a semi-structured focus group interview question checklist (Appendix A) adapted from Ingleton *et al*. (2000), and a group observation checklist (Appendix B). The primary data came from the focus group interview and data derived from the reflective journal commentaries, group discussions and observations complement that of the focus group interview.

Group Observation and Discussions

The researchers observed all the ten AW groups while they were discussing their multi-drafts of their term paper based on a checklist. The checklist consisted of items which were categorised according to themes and or categories (see Appendix B). The groups were observed during the two hour lesson with the researchers positioning themselves at different positions in the lecture room and ticking a category or theme if it occurred on the checklist. Data were analysed by comparing all the three researchers' checklist to ascertain agreement in terms of what was observed using frequency counts of occurrences of a certain category. In the case of the group discussions, the collaborative writing sessions were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Conversation analysis procedures (Ten Have, 2007) and inductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008) were used to analyse the discussions.

Focus Group Interviews

The primary data for this study came from the focus group interviews. A semi-structured focus group interview was conducted to gather information about the participants' personal views and perceptions of their collaborative academic writing experiences. The focus group interviews were conducted after the last multi-drafting writing session and were audio recorded. The interviews were conducted by a non-participant observer of the research team and each interview lasted between 15-30 minutes. All 38 students were interviewed in

their own writing groups. The students were given the opportunity to check the transcripts for accuracy. In this study, the researchers view the focus group interview responses as retrospective reflections. Three researchers analysed the transcribed data using an open coding system. The recorded responses were transcribed and analysed verbatim. The data were divided into categories and scrutinised for commonalities. Here, the researchers identified lexical and thematic patterns within the data (Brice, 2005; Glaser, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Emerging trends and patterns were identified and then subjected to inductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). All excerpts and quotes are assigned pseudonyms R1 – R38.

Guided Reflective Journal

Farrell (1998) claimed that 'reflective practice is becoming a dominant paradigm in the ESL classroom' and 'maintains that reflective sessions provide opportunities for students to reflect on their work' (p. 10). The students were given guidelines to help guide their reflections on their writing experiences in order to maintain standardisation, ease of data coding and analysis. The guided reflective journal provided students with a clear direction of what to reflect on. The students were asked to reflect on (1) the aim of the written assignment, (2) the learning that has taken place, (3) their progress or lack of progress, (4) their opinions regarding the process of multi-drafting in groups including explaining their opinions on how the group members worked together to complete their assigned tasks, and (5) the

challenges encountered and the benefits gained when engaged in drafting their term-paper. They were asked to write a reflective commentary of about 100 words.

The students' written commentaries from the guided journal reflections were analysed using open coding by the three researchers. The data were analysed using inductive content analysis, where emerging themes, trends and patterns were identified (Elo & Kyngas, 2008).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings discussed in this paper are drawn mainly from the focus group interviews and triangulated with data from students' reflective journal commentaries and group observations. The current study identified a number of themes from the data but we describe and discuss four prominent themes: (1) the challenge of in-text citations and referencing; (2) The learning capital inherent in the multi-drafting of the term-paper; (3) Translation as a support for learning, and (4) The impact of student and instructor feedback.

The Challenge of In-text Citations and Referencing

In-text citations and referencing are important elements in academic writing and many ESL students find this aspect to be a challenge (Romova & Andrew, 2011; Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Abasi *et al*., 2006; Newfields, 2003). The majority of the respondents (36 respondents) found in-text citations, referencing techniques and conventions to be the most challenging

aspects in the writing of the academic term-paper and this was clearly evident from the focus group interviews and the journal entries. In-text citations and referencing techniques appeared to be new to these respondents. An interesting revelation was the fact that the respondents felt that it was 'acceptable to lift from other materials without acknowledgment and this is reflected in R32's journal commentary, where he said that "I never thought it was an offence to lift from other materials without citing coz we always do it in our other courses and nobody says anything."

One respondent (R 16) shared that "Term-paper writing course give a lot of emphasis to in-text citations and references. In other coursework and reports, we were not given much insight on this. We would just copy ideas from various parts of the articles to complete our assignment. The in-text citations or acknowledging the authors were not emphasised." R32's reflection and R16's comments are representative examples of similar responses by the majority of the respondents (30 respondents). R14 and R22 said similar things during the interview, where R14 said "I often copy paste from PDF files," and R22 explained that "It takes too long to paraphrase and rewrite and cite so I just copy and paste because I often do last minute work. But now I cannot submit my term-paper without acknowledging my facts."

This above finding corroborates with Leask (2004), who highlighted that students copy paste but do not provide proper source because they are not aware of academic referencing conventions.

The respondents also found paraphrasing an arduous task. During the interview, R27 said, "We have learnt summary writing in our secondary school so we somehow managed to summarise. But, it is very difficult to paraphrase ideas as we did not learn to do this." Another respondent, (R29), agreed with R27 when she revealed that she was often tempted to just 'lift' from the article because paraphrasing is too difficult. She added that "it is easier to 'lift' as everything is well written, and so easy to just copy. Sometimes, I wonder why I have to struggle to reword the same content." These respondents' dilemma concurs with that of McGowan (2005) study which revealed that students are enveloped in plagiarism because of their incompetence in paraphrasing and referencing conventions.

During the multi-drafting stage of the term-paper, students began to realise the importance of in-text citations and referencing conventions. R11 said, "I just realised that I must note down details of the articles read, name of author, page number, and the source of information." Thirty five (35) respondents admitted that they had the habit of copying especially when they wrote a report or any academic paper without realising that they were in fact committing an academic offence. R6 said, "Referencing following the APA format is a 'head-ache' especially with referencing and in-text citations about writing the authors' full name or just the surname." R30 admitted that, "I still have problems with referencing and still learning from my friends and the instructor.

This is new. I am often so confused *lah.*"

The students in this study appeared to be struggling with the challenges of referencing because firstly, they are for the first time learning about in-text citations and referencing techniques in AW and are gradually becoming more aware of the importance of referencing. Secondly, they appeared to be confused with its usage because other academic courses do not emphasise the importance of referencing. Finally, the interview and journal commentary data reveal that students problem stem from their inability to summarise and paraphrase well, as pointed out by R24 where she states that "I think my friends will agree with me that one of our biggest problem is knowing how to summarise and paraphrase properly so that we don't copy and paste" (Five other students echoed her sentiments during the interviews by saying: 'yes, we agree'). This was further exemplified by fifteen (15) respondents' journal commentaries. A report prepared by the University of Adelaide (2004, p. 17) explicitly highlighted that inadequate knowledge in referencing and academic writing skill as the contributing factor for plagiarism.

The Learning Capital Inherent Multi-drafting the Term-paper

The recursive process of drafting and redrafting the academic term-paper produced interesting results, wherein some respondents in this study commented on what they had gained or what was 'capital'. We interpret learning capital as learning

that has brought about transformation and is beneficial for the students (Romova & Andrew, 2011). Our study identified three key subthemes within this theme: editing and proof reading, planning and reflectivity (includes retrospective reflections from focus group interviews). These subthemes corroborate with those described by Romova and Andrew (2011).

We observed all the ten groups during the two-hour academic writing session. Groups 2, 4, 5, 6 and 9 took between one and a half to two hours brainstorming the outline and organisation of the term-paper including editing and proof reading their drafts. Groups 1, 3, 7, 8 and 10 spent less time planning the term-paper but took more time to edit and proof read their drafts.

Editing and Proofreading

As pointed out earlier, groups 1, 3, 7, 8 and 10 paid closer attention to editing and proofreading the drafts of their term-paper, and in the process, they discovered the importance of editing and proofreading. R3 said "I normally rush through writing my term-paper but now I take more time to edit and proofread my drafts using my friends and instructor's feedback. Most importantly, I also now know how to edit my own work and do my own corrections. I find this exciting." When probed further about what she meant by 'exciting' she explained "… I know how to edit and teach other friends how to edit …uum now easy for me to see mistakes." R25 shared the same sentiments as R3 when he said "I am more conscious of making sure that my sentences make

sense and I am using the right connectors and also I keep going back to check my grammar, spelling and overall organisation of the text because I know that if I can correct my work, I can get better grades." R3 and R25's realisation of the importance of being able to self-edit and proofread their drafts is representative of a majority of the respondents (27 respondents).

The journal entries revealed similar comments. R19, who belonged to group 5, wrote that "I spend less time editing and always rushing towards the end to correct my mistakes. Big mistake! I should spend more time because my instructor gave so many comments and so many red marking on my draft. This make me sad. So I must do better." Here, we see a realisation of the importance of editing and proofreading in AW and a yearning to do better.

Li and Lin (2007) point out that editing and proofreading make student pay more attention to the same mistakes they had also made in their own texts and they would perhaps think over their correction and discover different ideas that had not occurred to them.

R19 further elaborated that she noted that friends who spend more time on editing their drafts received better grades. She wrote "Hanna and gang got good grade because they told me they spend more time working on editing and correcting their work. The next time I want to spend more time with my instructor's help- maybe I can learn from my friends." This shows that R19, like R3 and R25, sees the benefits of editing and proofreading which

is consistent with Chandler (2003) who highlighted the value of editing. Seventeen (17) respondents equated editing to a process of 'discovery' and excitement. This emerged from 17 journal commentaries, where the respondents said that each time they read and re-read their drafts they found something to correct, change, restructure or rewrite and they found this exciting. For example, R33 wrote "Every time I re-read my work I always find something to correct - it is like *perjalanan baharu* (new journey). *Jumpa benda baharu* (discover new things) - exciting." Similarly R15 wrote "it is like a game so it becomes fun, you keep going back to look for something- to find something that maybe *kita tertinggal* (we left out). R27's entry echoed R15 and R33's thoughts where she noted that "editing and proofreading is like going on a journey to find mistakes and it is fun." Li and Lin (2007) advocated such outcomes from editing and proofreading of peers' work.

Planning

Students found planning and organisational skills such as topic development, outlining, prewriting, brainstorming and drafting which is part of the composing process (Hayes, 1996) assets in AW. This finding supports previous studies which investigated the process approach to writing involving multiple drafts (Lee, 2007; Rohayah & Naginder, 2006; Kim & Kim, 2005).

R25, R26, R27 and R28, who are members of group 7, agreed with each other that systematic planning of the term-paper was really important. They were driven

to spend time brainstorming the outline and organisation of the draft of their term-paper including the generation of ideas. R26 said, "I found that it was important to begin with a thesis statement before starting any planning. Then from there, our group organise what we want to say and what information we have to find. Like that we can organise our ideas better and we take shorter time to write." R25 agreed that beginning with the thesis statement was important when he said "the thesis statement helps to guide the outlining of the term-paper and then it gives me direction for prewriting because I can control my ideas *supaya saya lebih fokus* (so that I can be more focused)." Another member of the group R27 said "I have learnt how to organise my ideas and I must take time to think about what I want to write. Before, I just write without planning. Now I know thesis statement is important."

Brainstorming the outline emerged as a valuable activity when R28 said, "during the drafting time I learnt brainstorming, asking questions, give focus for outlining and prewriting. I can see what the important idea is and what is not important idea." She added that "brainstorming help me to organise my ideas clearly so that I can write without wasting time."

Triangulating data from the journal commentaries showed that 28 respondents wrote that brainstorming, planning, outlining and drafting is the key to writing a good academic term-paper. For example, R35 shared what she learnt when she wrote that "brainstorming make me to be focus on the thesis statement and I use this as a guide to prepare my outline. From there, I started to plan my term–paper draft." The value of brainstorming, planning, outlining and drafting in AW is further supported by R38's journal entry. R38 wrote "outlining is very important. My outline guided my writing so that I can write with better control. Now I know when I redraft I can go back to my outline and improve it." This suggests that the respondents learnt that planning at the initial stage of writing the term-paper is crucial as revealed by previous studies (Arumugam, 2011; Brown, 2008; McGarrell & Verbeem, 2007; Mariam, 2004).

Importance of Multi-drafting Collaboratively

This study confirms that collaborative multi-drafting in AW helps to reduce anxiety (Arumugam, 2011; Mason, 2006; Iwai, 2004) for students are able to support each other as they go through the recursive process of writing a term-paper. R32 said "I don't feel stress when I work in the group to write many drafts. I think if work alone then very stress. In the group, we can joke and laugh about our not so good work." Another student R4 said "We laugh a lot in our group at our silly mistakes. We can talk in Malay *lah* also but we also learn from each other to understand AW when do many draft. So, work in group *tak gila* (don't go mad)…not stress. If work alone very stress."

Our observations show students laughing and joking at their silly mistakes as they work in groups. In addition, the students point out that multi-drafting collaboratively is important to them. Twelve

(12) students commented in their reflective journals that multi-drafting collaboratively helped them to see the value of working together to make sense of AW conventions and to produce better work. For example, R12 said "Without the group I don't think I can work confidently. Our group share a lot with each other like how to correct a paragraph, how to paraphrase…also we brainstorm the topic together then plan the outline together and we discuss how to do better." Then we revise and revise to come up with good writing." This sentiment was shared by R17 who said "When we multi draft, the group members help each other to see the mistakes and how to write better from the instructor feedback."

The students' comments suggest that students feel very strongly about working in groups on their multi-drafts as AW is still new to them. Students maintain that during the multi-drafting stage, they are able to revise the content and organisation of their writing to produce a better writing task when they are supported by their peers. This is consistent with a previous study by Fong *et al.* (2008).

Reflectivity

Our findings suggest that students found reflecting on their experiences of going through the multi-drafting process in writing the academic term-paper as beneficial. This finding is similar to that of Romova and Andrew (2011). R10 said that the process of reflecting on what she had learnt was new for her. She said "learning to think about what I did or what I was doing is new to

me and it made me think about why I keep having the same problems with the way I organise my ideas." R2 further expanded R10's opinion during the interview. She said "I now consciously look for mistakes or unnecessary information in my writing before I submit to my instructor."

Interestingly, two students' journal commentaries showed critical self reflections. For example, R6 wrote "I thought that I am already good at writing a term-paper because I am always getting high marks in my business course. But in this AW class I learnt that my writing is not good enough because I don't think much about my outline - now I become more aware of starting my writing with an outline." Another respondent, R25, wrote "I always thought that my English was good because in school my teacher use my writing as an example but now this AW class my friends and my instructor are always correcting my style of writing, my vocabulary and my organisation. This shocked me and I learnt that academic writing conventions is different from general writing where I have to do a lot of referencing. So, now when I write I try to remember about referencing." This was an unanticipated finding.

The students' reflections of their experiences during the drafting stages suggest that they have become more aware of their problems and were now learning how to write better. In short, they were learning how to develop academic literacy. The findings suggest that reflectivity helps students to re-evaluate original assumptions, relate new data to what is already known, and seek relationship among information

apart from creating opportunities for learning (Selvester & Rich, 2007; Mezirow *et al.,* 1990; Boud *et al.,* 1985) and finally help them to become autonomous learners.

Translation as a Support for Learning

The analysis of the recorded group discussions revealed that translation played an important role in helping the ESL students to identify and generate appropriate vocabulary and to clarify meaning during the multi-drafting stage.

The following is an example of meaning clarification involving vocabulary from group six (R21, R22 & R23). R23, who is a member of group 6, asked "What is hypermarket and sundry shop in Malay?" R21 explained "I think hypermarket is *pasaraya besar* (big supermarket)", and R22 said "sundry shop" is *kedai runcit* (grocery shop). Another example of translation for clarification of meaning is that of group two (R5, R7). R5 asked, "What is passive smoking?", to which R7 replied and explained "passive smokers means *orang yang tak merokok tapi dia duduk bersama-sama orang yang sedang merokok* (people who do not smoke but sit among smokers). These people are called passive smokers." Our findings showed that there were students who needed translation to support their AW process. R27 wrote in her journal "*Saya minta rakan tolong terjemah perkataan atau frasa dari Melayu ke Inggeris, Inggeris ke Melayu bila saya tak faham atau keliru dengan maksudnya*" (I often have to ask my group to help me translate from English to Malay or Malay to English when I am not sure of the meaning of some words or phrases).

Translation enabled the respondents to understand the assigned work better. This also encouraged the passive learners to attempt writing without feeling ostracised, as pointed out by Canagarajah (2005) and Kow (2003).

The Impact of Peer and Teacher Feedback

The most striking result to emerge from our data is that of feedback. Feedback is an important process in AW (Depaz & Moni, 2008; Nassaji & Swain, 2000) as it provides students with detailed information on how to revise and improve the drafting of their term-paper. In our study, students had to write a minimum of three drafts during the monitoring phase of the writing of the term-paper. Multi-drafting of the term-paper involves evaluative feedback from not only the peers but also the instructor. These feedbacks provide students with information of their strengths and weaknesses in certain specific aspects. For example, the instructor's feedbacks on a student's use of articles help change that student's perception of his grammatical ability. R32 said "The multi-drafting of the term-paper help to improve my AW skill. I learnt when to use the articles 'a', and 'the' based on my friends and instructor's feedback. Previously, I would always not use them." A clear benefit of feedback that emerged in this study is that of how useful instructor feedback was for the students. The findings are consistent with those of Romova and Andrew (2011).

R26 said, "My instructor gave me immediate feedback on my use of subject-verb-agreement use of tenses. This was very useful for me as she showed me where my errors were and how l could correct them. I now know how to use 'is - are' and 'was -were', past, present and future tense markers."

In her reflective journal, R26 wrote "practise of correcting errors from my instructor's feedback and my friends' feedback help me to understand grammar and also identify what words to use or not to use. The feedback gave me more confidence to write the term-paper." Another respondent, R17 for example wrote in her reflective journal "I write the sentence, *'Teenage pregnancy is because of parents free thinking. Many teenagers to go out with any people'* and the instructor write on my feedback the suggested correct sentence, '*Teenage pregnancy is on the rise because of some parents' liberal thinking. They do not monitor who their teenage daughters friends are and allow them to go out with anyone. In addition, parents today are too busy and do not have time to provide their daughters with sex education'.* I learn sentence structure, how to use connector 'in addition' how elaborate my topic sentence. This really made me excited and motivated."

Our data showed that 23 respondents wrote in their reflective journal that both the peer and instructor feedback were very useful but pointed out that they benefited most from the instructor's feedback and that the instructors feedback had profound impact on them because the instructor provided clearer explanations regarding their problem areas. As R37 said "I prefer the instructor feedback as it is more reliable I think and when the instructor show me my mistake it has more impact for me and I want to learn more."

The data revealed that the instructor's feedback enhanced students' confidence in redrafting the term-paper and as seen from the students' comments. The recursive process of drafting along with the feedback, ensured engagement in the learning process, enabled language and knowledge transfer and increased awareness and consciousness of the importance of academic literacy. Depaz and Moni (2008) pointed out that feedback is vital to the success of students and suggested that instructors should give constructive feedback encouraging students to act on to sustain increased learning outcomes.

Our data also revealed negative reaction towards instructor and peer's feedback in multi-drafting. R36 and R20 did not find instructor and peer feedback useful. For example, during the interview, R36 disclosed that "I found multi-drafting to be time-consuming and stressful because I have to revise the same term-paper three times. He explained "it will be better for me to get feedback from the instructor directly and continue with a new topic. I feel that I could learn more when I start with a new topic. Not revise… revise." R15 shared the same sentiments as R36. He explained that "this process take so much of time and I feel *bosan dengan* (bored of) the same topic for three sessions." Negative

reaction on instructor and peer feedback were found in five journal commentaries. This finding demonstrates that there were respondents who did not enjoy the multi-drafting process. However, the number is small.

The instructor in this course found that during the monitoring and feedback stage her workload increased and she felt most overwhelmed with having to give feedback for each draft. She said "it was really challenging and time consuming for me to give quick and good feedback to the students during the class hour. You can really see that the students really want to learn and it was not just giving comments on the drafts but also verbally explaining to them where they went wrong. At the end of the day I am really exhausted." Here, the instructor is aware of the importance of her feedback on students learning but found the task of providing feedback on multiple drafts too tiring. In order to overcome instructor fatigue and to ensure that students get the most out of their AW course, we suggest team-teaching.

CONCLUSION

Our findings imply that multi-drafting of the AW term-paper enhances students' AW skills and in the long term help them to develop academic literacy. The findings indicate that peer and instructor feedback during the generative process appear to be effective in improving students' AW skills as well as enhancing their confidence (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000), where students revealed that they were more confident in writing their term-paper.

Our study also suggests that students become more aware of the importance and ethics of in-text citations and referencing although they found this to be very challenging. In addition, students began to develop paraphrasing and paragraphing skills, thus indicating that the students' knowledge of what constitutes academic literacy was further enhanced during the multi-drafting of the term-paper.

Writing the multi-draft of the term-paper within the context of AW sharpened their awareness of the importance of developing good process writing strategies. This can be seen in the students' comments where they reported that they were not only aware of the importance and benefits of acquiring the ability to edit and proofread their work but had also gained confidence. An implication of this is the possibility of designing a course to teach students not only editing and proofreading skills but also referencing skills to empower them to write more confidently.

The students also reported that it was important to systematically plan the term-paper in order to devote time to brainstorm the outline, and organising information before writing. On the whole, students reported that they realised that brainstorming, prewriting, outlining and drafting are key strategies in writing a good term-paper. In addition, the findings also suggest that students found peer and instructor's feedback useful and that they learnt that it was important to pay attention

to grammatical problems and text structure.

A major finding which emerged from our data is that of feedback, where students reported that receiving and responding to feedback from their peers and instructor, helps them to learn how to improve their own writing and at the same time they co-constructed new knowledge through group collaboration and discussions (Vygotsky, 1978). This co-construction of knowledge and understanding was also seen in the use of translation to support students understanding of meanings of words and phrases. In general, therefore, it seems that when students work collaboratively, peer support plays an important role. It is an unexpected positive outcome of the integration of the reflective journal in AW session, creating avenue for students to express their predicaments in preparing the term-paper. The finding suggests that students should be guided to learn about AW through multi-drafting in groups in the initial learning stages. Apart from this, students also commented that working collaboratively on the multi-drafts created a stress-free environment because they received support from their peers.

Although the use of multi-drafts and recursive writing process brought about positive changes in the students work, it also had its drawbacks. Students reported that multi-drafting was time consuming. In addition, the instructor reported that her workload increased especially during the monitoring and feedback stage. It is important for institutions to look into introducing team-teaching for AW courses so that students can be given close guidance as a single instructor who has to teach large classes of more than 20 can be overwhelmed and may not be able to provide a more focused feedback.

The results of this research support the view that instructors and students at tertiary level should be exposed to early multi-drafting approach of AW (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000). In short, the value of providing students with empirically validated multi-drafts to teach AW to improve students' writing skills cannot be over looked. A pedagogical focus on the process of managing the term-paper assessment suggests that students have co-constructed new knowledge from the multi-drafting experience. Thus, multi-drafting of the term-paper seems to be an effective pedagogical tool to help students elevate their academic writing literacy.

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APPENDIX A

Structured Focus Group Interview Questions

	GENERAL QUESTIONS
1.	What have you learnt from this academic writing course?
2.	Do you think feedback from your peers and the instructor enabled you to write better? Why? And how did it help?
3.	Do you think multi-drafting of the term-paper helped you to write better? Why?/ If so in what way?
4.	In your opinion, has the process of writing the term-paper given you the confidence to write independently? Please explain.
5.	What challenges did you encounter while preparing the term-paper? Depending on the response(s)- why is this a challenge? or Why are these challenges?

	GROUP COLLABORATION
6.	How did you feel about working in groups collaboratively on the term-paper? Can you explain your feelings?
7.	Do you think working collaboratively on the term -paper is a good way to learn about academic writing? Why?
8.	Were you able to help your friends who faced problems in preparing the term-paper? If yes- How were you able to help them? What aspects were you able to help them with? If No-Why?

	GENERIC SKILLS
9.	Did multi-drafting and revising enhance your communication skills?
10.	Did multi-drafting and revising enhance your understanding of academic writing? If yes - How? In what way? If No-Why?

	WRITING PROCESS
11.	What did you learn about the academic writing process?
12.	What did you learn about the planning, drafting, revising and editing stages? Did you encounter any problems at any of these stages? Please explain/
13.	What did you learn about referencing skills? Did you encounter any problems?
14.	Was the reflective journal writing helpful for you in thinking about academic writing? If Yes – Why?, How was it helpful?; If No, Why?

	NEGATIVE ASPECTS
15	Do you feel that you have wasted time revising and explaining the process to your group members?
16	Do you think multi-drafting is time consuming? If Yes –Why?, If No, Why?

Adapted from Ingleton (2000)

APPENDIX B

Group Observation Checklist for Academic Writing (AW) of Term Paper

Group No: Observed by: Date:	1st hour			2nd hour		
No. Categories/ Theme	10 mins	20 mins	30 mins	10 mins	20 mins	30 mins
1. Work and discuss in group						
2. Work individually						
3. Work individually then come together for discussion						
4. Plan the paper collaboratively						
5. Brainstorm ideas before writing						
6. Organise ideas before writing: AW conventions: Topic sentence, supporting details, elaboration, conclusion						
7. Outline for term-paper before writing						
8. Write draft						
9. Revise draft						
10. Edit draft (point out grammatical errors: verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, organization, text structure)						
11. Ask questions						
12. Ask friends for feedback						
13. Ask instructor for feedback						
14. Appear to be thinking (then ask questions/discuss) * Reflective aspect						
15. Use AW writing convention checklist						
16. Discuss referencing techniques						
17. Joke, laugh and argue						