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Original Paper

The Success of an EAP Programme in Tertiary Education: Using a Student-Centric Approach to Scaffold Materials in an EAP

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Abstract

Researchers and practitioners who focus on academic writing in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses have reported on the need to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with academic writing across different disciplines in tertiary education (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005; Shi, 2011; Thompson, 2013). Previous research (e.g., Crosthwaite, 2016) has predominantly measured students' progress in an EAP by comparing students' pre- and post-course scores of individual language/writing skills. Much less has been reported on the effectiveness of a detailed EAP curriculum design that scaffolds skills in stages. This study contributes to the current EAP research by examining holistically the impact of a 12-week EAP course that adopts a reading-to-write, student-centric approach to scaffold progressively difficult writing skills/knowledge to help students acquire academic writing skills by focusing on three core skills: language, text organisation, and content development. The data of this study show students' perceptions of their writing abilities and the significant improvement in academic writing skills before and after completing the course.

Keywords

EAP writing, EAP curriculum design, EAP writing process

1. Introduction

EAP refers to the language and associated practices that students need to study in English medium higher education (Hyland, 2006). The objective of an EAP course that focuses on academic writing is to provide a curriculum that equips students with the essential academic writing knowledge and skills related to the range of genres across the disciplines (Hyland & Bondi, 2006). Though studies have separately shown students' improvement in individual writing skills at the end of an EAP course (e.g., Crosthwaite, 2016), more research is needed on students' holistic improvement on essential academic writing skills such as language, text organisation, and content development, as well as the materials and

tasks that make an EAP effective.

Like many tertiary institutions, students who take EAP at the National University of Singapore (NUS) are from different disciplines. Students are taught academic writing skills that are useful in their disciplinary courses. However, the impact of the EAP course and how the materials are used to scaffold writing skills/knowledge according to difficulty levels in the course have not been reported. This study details an effective pedagogy to scaffold materials with increasing difficulty in a 12-week EAP course, and measures its impact on students' academic writing skills such as language accuracy, text organisation, and organisation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Students' Improvement in an EAP Course

Substantial research shows students' success in an EAP can positively influence their attainment in their disciplinary writing tasks (Donohue & Erling, 2012; Erling & Richardson, 2010). This is not surprising as academic language is the tool that students need to communicate their knowledge across the disciplines, in both spoken (Lockwood, 2012) and written forms (James, 2014; Plakans, 2010; Yang & Shi, 2003). Because of this critical relationship, many tertiary institutions require students to take an EAP course, particularly focusing on academic writing.

Typically, an EAP course that adopts a reading-to-write approach would include materials and tasks that require students to read, then extract and incorporate information and put it into a range of different writing tasks (Delaney, 2008; Durán Escribano, 1999; Klimova, 2015; Seviour, 2015). Some studies report on the need to teach effective reading strategies, content information, vocabulary to understand the gist of the reading materials (Delaney, 2008; Durán Escribano, 1999; Klimova, 2015; Seviour, 2015). Some EAP research focuses on teaching summarising paraphrasing and practising academic integrity/scholarly citation conventions (Ädel & Römer, 2012; Campbell, 1990; Donohue & Erling, 2012; Harwood & Petric, 2012; Hu, 2016; Pecorari, 2006, 2016). From reading and building on these fundamental writing skills, students should be taught to write a range of tasks from sources in tasks such as response essays (Delaney, 2008), expository essays (Cumming, Lai, & Cho, 2016), argumentative essays (Gil et al., 2010), open-ended versus instructor-directed writing tasks (Petric & Harwood, 2013), and science inquiry writing tasks from sources of variable reliability (Wiley & Voss, 1999). Such writing tasks allow students to practise macro- and micro cohesion, content development, and language (Lei, 2016; Pecorari, 2006, 2016). Other studies that focus on the reading-to-write approach report on students' improvement in specific types of writing such as response essays (Delaney, 2008), expository essays (Cumming, Lai, & Cho, 2016), argumentative essays (Gil et al., 2010), open-ended versus instructor-directed writing tasks (Petric & Harwood, 2013), and science inquiry writing tasks from sources of variable reliability (Wiley & Voss, 1999). Such writing tasks allow students to practise macro- and micro cohesion, content development, and language.

Results on students' performance on the reported individual specific writing skills are typically based

on the contrasts between pre- and post- EAP course scores after a single semester, from a small sample sizes. For example, researchers reported on students' improvement on the accuracy/appropriate use of grammar and lexical choices and register (Chanock, 1997; Crosthwaite, 2016; Hinkel, 2002; Polio et al., 1998, in Croswaite, 2016), verb tense/aspect (Crosthwaite, 2016), complex sentences (Crosthwaite, 2016), and students' ability to synthesis information (Crosthwaite, 2016), and draft revisions (Quinn, 2015; Tono, Satake, & Miura, 2014). Storch and tapper (2009) is one of the few studies that has reported students' improvement in an EAP holistically by analysing students' writing in terms of cohesion and coherence, linguistic accuracy and fluency, and the use of academic vocabulary of students' text. Storch and tapper (2009) attributed students' improvement in these skills to the ample modelling of texts and instructions given in the EAP course.

2.2 Scaffolding in the Writing Process in an EAP Curriculum

An effective EAP course that adopts a reading-to-write approach is one that scaffolds materials and tasks as a process rather than focusing on the final product of an assessed writing task (Carson & Leki, 1993; Escribano, 1999; Oster, 1987; Seviour, 2015; White & Arndt, 1991). Studies that focus on the writing process suggest that students should be given both formative and summative assessments because students may not be able to demonstrate accurately the taught academic writing skills in their first draft, so process writing is crucial in allowing students to recognise their strengths, and improve on their weaknesses through teacher feedback (Oster, 1987; Seviour, 2015; White & Arndt, 1991). For instance, a student writer may have difficulty organising ideas and accurately expressing ideas in the first draft but will be able to learn and fix their errors through instructors' feedback. Such a process requires more effort from teachers and students as writers and critical readers to think and rethink, and write and rewrite to make a particular text readable, but students are able to learn in the process (Oster, 1987). Hence, marks should be allocated to both formative and summative assessments (Seviour, 2015).

A more recent study conducted by Seviour (2015) revealed students' improvement in writing with better language accuracy and developing cohesion in their writing in a 5-week pre-sessional EAP which focused on process writing. After the instructor gave feedback on students first essay plan, students were asked to rewrite their plan for submission and a small percentage of marks were assigned. Students were then asked to write their first draft, submit it for plagiarism check in Turnitin, and conduct a peer review. The instructor then provided feedback and students rewrote the draft before the final draft was submitted. Again, a small percentage was allocated to students' initial draft before the final summative assessment. Students were given multiple opportunities to practise their skills and knowledge in a multiple drafting process before the final draft was submitted.

Indeed, research also shows including students in the writing process can actively engage them in the learning throughout an EAP course (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Seviour, 2015). However, the teachers must closely guide and support students in the learning and assessment activities, and ensure the right amount of work is distributed throughout the course, monitor the quality of students' work and the

effort required on an assessment (rather than focusing only the end product at the end of the course can promote deep learning). This also requires the instructors to provide sufficient good quality feedback in a timely manner and monitor students' response to that feedback throughout the course (Cook, 2016; Seviour, 2015). Essentially, this means the tasks and materials created for the course must be relevant to students' learning, and targeted to their weaknesses so that they could further improve.

To date, substantial research has examined separately the skills gained in an EAP, with less focus on how/what materials, strategies and instructions can be used during the EAP course to promote students' acquisition of academic writing skills. Hence, further empirical evidence is needed to substantiate the effectiveness of a holistic EAP curriculum that scaffolds materials with increasing difficulty. In addition, more research is needed to provide holistic picture of students' overall improvement in an EAP course.

2.3 Rationale for This Project

Students who took this EAP at NUS studied English for the past 15-17 years in Singapore, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and Vietnam. Yet, they were still fairly weak in grammar and/or English writing skills. These participants were identified as having weak academic writing skills in one or more areas: developing content (developing ideas with explanation and evidence, and referring/integrating supporting ideas from texts), organising text (coherently organising ideas within and across paragraphs), and using language (writing has numerous errors on sentence level, and across sentences) in academic writing in the Qualifying English Test (QET). Students tended to lack motivation to take this module, especially as they were busy with their content subject and we took time out of their curriculum to attend this compulsory EAP course. This means it is important to make the course meaningful we need to use authentic materials (cf. Frydrychova Klimova, 2012a, pp. 45-46), and create tasks that can make students see we add value to their learning, and that the skills they learn are relevant to their content subject.

This research project investigates the effectiveness of a 12-week EAP course that scaffolds materials in progression of difficulty level with consideration of teachers' instructions/input in teaching language, content development, and text cohesion. All materials are taught in a student-centric approach by scaffolding materials so that input is noticed (Schmidt, 1990) and comprehensible (Krashen, 1990), and providing students opportunities to practice. This is critical for an EAP curriculum as the weaker students who may feel less confident and anxious would be reluctant to partake in in-class activities (Fallah, 2014). More importantly, deep learning is more likely to occur when a subject has a special relevance to the students, or instils a sense of wonder so that curiosity is aroused. Thus, it is essential to arouse students' interest and motivate them to learn English by providing not only the fundamental rules of English, but also practical usages in written and oral communication.

Consistent with the literature, a small percentage is allocated to formative assessments and the heavier weightage is assigned to the summative assessments to promote active learning in the course to raise students' intrinsic motivation to do well in the course, especially for the weaker students (extrinsic motivation) (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2002; Seviour, 2015).

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

Participants in this study were taught by the two researchers in a 12-week non-credit bearing EAP course at the Centre for English Language Communication (CELC) at the National University of Singapore (NUS). The 90 students who participated in this study are from the Faculties of Science, Social Sciences, Engineering, and Business, as well as the School of Environment & Design. They attended tutorials in groups of 18-22, and attended two 2-hour tutorials per week.

The students in this study consented to sharing their work in class anonymously and for research purposes. They were informed their assignments scores would not be used for this study and their participation in this study would not affect their performance.

3.2 EAP Curriculum Design

As can be seen in Table 1, this EAP syllabus adopts a reading-to-write approach that scaffolds materials in progression of difficulty in four stages over 12 weeks. Themed readings (e.g., globalisation) were used as springboard texts to help students with writing and provides opportunities for analysing and organising academic texts.

As can be seen in Table 1, the course began by teaching students fundamental academic language and reading strategies **(Stage 1)**, which students were expected to use in their first piece of writing "writing summary and response essay" **(Stage 2)**, and subsequently on the problem-solution academic essay **(Stage 3)**. Strong emphasises were placed to the need for students to take active participation in and out of class, and take charge of their own learning by exploring what is taught through writing. Along with teachers' instructions and constant guidance inside/outside the class via feedback and consultations, students progressed through their writing via grammar/language tasks, class/online group discussions, peer reviews of writing assignments, ample feedback from me and multiple drafting of work.

Table 1. EAP Course Schedule

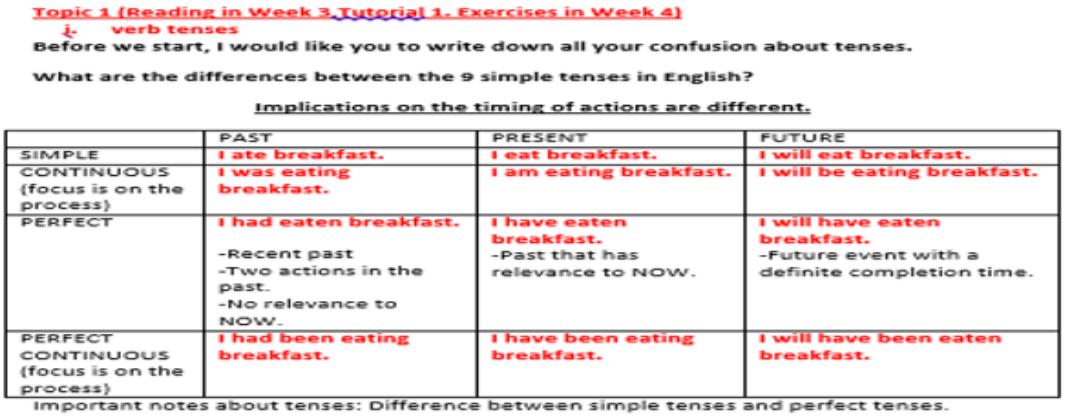
Stages of teaching and learning	Students' work submission/tutor feedback
Stage 1: Language skills	
• First writing task (diagnostic writing): • Language skills • Reading strategies	• Diagnostic writing
Stage 2. Intervention stage 1: Writing a summary and response essay	
• Feedback on diagnostic writing to raise students' awareness on the rigor of academic writing (focusing on content, organisation and language) • Skills on **summarising and paraphrasing** • Skills on **synthesising and evaluating/responding to text**	1. Instructors to provide students feedback on diagnostic writing. 2. Students to reflect on strengths and weaknesses.
Stage 3. Intervention Stage 2: Building cohesion into writing a longer and more complex essay (problem-solution essay)	
• Write **Draft 1 of synthesis & response/evaluation to a text and submit for peer feedback** (600-700 words) • Feedback: i. tutor to give instructions and students to give feedback, ii. peers to give feedback to 1 person • Submit Draft 2. Tutor to mark and give students feedback.	1. Submit draft 1 for peer review Tutor to give feedback on synthesis. 2. Tutor to give feedback to students on draft.
• Rewrite and submit **synthesis & response/evaluation to a text based on tutor feedback** • Essay Process: Developing macro- and micro structure development • Developing Thesis Statements and topic sentences • Sourcing for research articles	1. Tutor to give feedback to students on draft. 2. Students to rewrite draft.
• Discuss essay topic: deconstructing the elements of an essay prompt • Examine the macro- and micro- structure of a problem solution essays • Write draft 1 of a problem-solution essay.	
• APA Referencing Guide: in-text and end-of-text citations (See Unit on *APA Referencing Guide*) • Go through peer review instructions • Write **Draft 1 of problem solution essay and submit for peer feedback** (900-1000 words). • Engage students in peer feedback: i. tutor to give instructions and students to give feedback, ii. peers to give feedback to 1 person, iii. tutor to comment on peer feedback, and iv. students to respond to feedback (reviewer and student writer to respond to comments). • Students to revise **Draft 1 problem solution essay and submit** based on tutor assisted peer feedback. • Submit Draft 2. Tutor to give students feedback.	1. Submit draft 1 for peer review Tutor to give feedback on response essay. 3. Tutor to give feedback to students on draft.

Stage 1: Scaffolding Language Skills

To arouse students' interest to learn and improve on their language accuracy/fluency, the teaching and learning of grammar should be student-centred (Missildine, 2013). As can be seen in Table 1, in **Stage 1** of the course focuses on language skills, students were given definitions with examples a list of grammar rules such as verb tenses, verb forms, word forms, subject verb agreement, punctuation marks and transitions/conjunctions, as well as sentence structures.

Students primarily improve on language accuracy/fluency from the three set main writing tasks: diagnostic writing, reader response, and problem-solution essay. After each task, each student was given in-depth feedback on the language errors. Beyond instructors' feedback on each student written tasks, common language errors from students' work were used as grammar discussion points and class activities. This brings more relevance to their learning and they would be more interested to learn (Frymier & Shulman, 2009; Olivos et al., 2016).

For instance, students in the EAP course were often confused about the correct usage of past, present, and future perfect tenses versus simple present and past tenses. In this section, students were given basic definitions and examples of verb tense correct (Figure 1), followed by correct usage of tenses extracted from students' works (Figure 2).



Topic 1 (Reading in Week 3,Tutorial 1, Exercises in Week 4)

i. verb tenses

Before we start, I would like you to write down all your confusion about tenses.

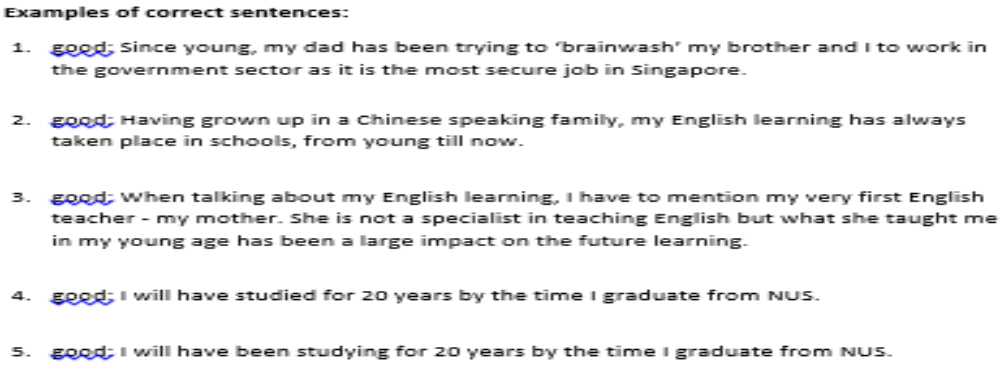
What are the differences between the 9 simple tenses in English?

Implications on the timing of actions are different.

	PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
SIMPLE	I ate breakfast.	I eat breakfast.	I will eat breakfast.
CONTINUOUS (focus is on the process)	I was eating breakfast.	I am eating breakfast.	I will be eating breakfast.
PERFECT	I had eaten breakfast. -Recent past -Two actions in the past. -No relevance to NOW.	I have eaten breakfast. -Past that has relevance to NOW.	I will have eaten breakfast. -Future event with a definite completion time.
PERFECT CONTINUOUS (focus is on the process)	I had been eating breakfast.	I have been eating breakfast.	I will have been eaten breakfast.

Important notes about tenses: Difference between simple tenses and perfect tenses.

Figure 1. Summary of How Different Verb Tense are Used in English

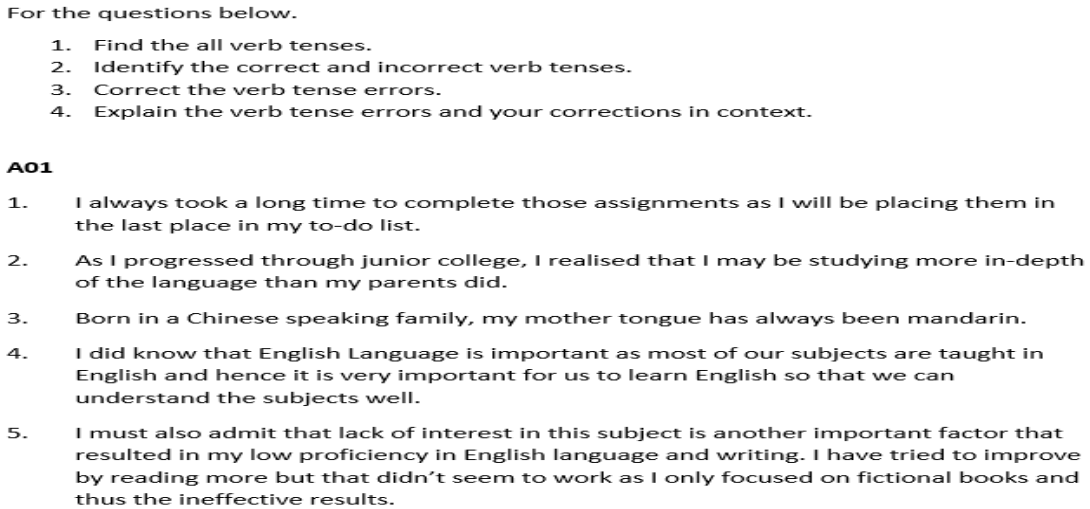


Examples of correct sentences:

1. good: Since young, my dad has been trying to 'brainwash' my brother and I to work in the government sector as it is the most secure job in Singapore.
2. good: Having grown up in a Chinese speaking family, my English learning has always taken place in schools, from young till now.
3. good: When talking about my English learning, I have to mention my very first English teacher - my mother. She is not a specialist in teaching English but what she taught me in my young age has been a large impact on the future learning.
4. good: I will have studied for 20 years by the time I graduate from NUS.
5. good: I will have been studying for 20 years by the time I graduate from NUS.

Figure 2. Examples of Good Use of Verb Tenses (with Particular Focus on the Use of perfect and Simple Tenses)

Once the class discussed the use of tenses, students were challenged to work as a group after class to correct sentences, and refer to online resources for explanations. The students had to work in groups to explain the errors and reasons for the corrections (Figure 3).



For the questions below.

1. Find the all verb tenses.
2. Identify the correct and incorrect verb tenses.
3. Correct the verb tense errors.
4. Explain the verb tense errors and your corrections in context.

A01

1. I always took a long time to complete those assignments as I will be placing them in the last place in my to-do list.
2. As I progressed through junior college, I realised that I may be studying more in-depth of the language than my parents did.
3. Born in a Chinese speaking family, my mother tongue has always been mandarin.
4. I did know that English Language is important as most of our subjects are taught in English and hence it is very important for us to learn English so that we can understand the subjects well.
5. I must also admit that lack of interest in this subject is another important factor that resulted in my low proficiency in English language and writing. I have tried to improve by reading more but that didn't seem to work as I only focused on fictional books and thus the ineffective results.

Figure 3. Example of Verb Tense Errors That Students Have to Correct and Discuss in Next Class

Learning was further reinforced using authentic articles, with information that they find relevance to (e.g., information about the Late Singapore Prime Minster Lee Kwan Yew). Figure 4 was used to explain how the present perfect and future tenses are used. Once a language item was discussed in class, students were required to try to apply it in writing. Instructors then provide feedback accordingly.

Figure 4. Example of an Authentic Article Used to Teach Present Perfect and Future Tenses

Note. Retrieved from https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/sporeans-will-determine-countrys-future-coming-ge-says-pm-lee

Language skills were taught using such authentic exercises are taught in the Weeks 1-3 (**Stage 1**), and they were reinforced in other writing tasks all through the semester in an attempt to increase students' language accuracy and fluency. Students were taught basic definitions with examples that illustrated how different language elements were used, and then students were actively engaged as they were required to discuss how to correct errors using authentic examples that they found relevant, and progressed in difficulty as the application of language rules required more thinking.

Stage 2: Scaffolding reader response (summarising, paraphrasing, citation and evaluation skills)

In **Stage 2**, Table 1 (Weeks 3-4), students were taught summarising, paraphrasing, and citation skills (Figure 5), and then challenged to writing a response essay where they learned to evaluate the validity of arguments and questioned the why, what, when, where, and how the original writer made, explained and supported a claim. Again, basic definitions and examples were given to students first, and the students were required to apply summarising and paraphrasing, as well as evaluation skills (Figure 5).

1. Summarising:

After reading a passage (i.e., a sentence, a paragraph, several paragraphs, a chapter, an essay, a report or even a longer piece of writing such as a book), you should break down a passage/article into the following levels and ask yourself the related questions:

Level 1: Central claims—examine the title. The title gives you an overview of the topic/the writer's main viewpoint.

Level 2: Main ideas—look for the reasons/points that the writers use to support the central claims. The main ideas are *usually* in topic sentences. What are the key or main points?

Level 3: Supporting details—there are two elements of supporting details: the first element is the explanations for reasons/points that the writers use to elaborate on the central claims. The second element is the examples (i.e. case studies/statistics/ illustrations) that are used to support the explanations.

Tasks for the following examples on summarising in class (for class discussion of possible summaries):

- Find main idea and explanation/example
- Report ideas in your own words, but keep key terms
- Report the source

Example 1:

Appropriate use of quotations in note-taking (Lester, 1976)

Original: "Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final research paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes."

Summary:

-Students should only make a limited amount of notes in direct quotation in order to help minimize the amount of quotes used (Lester, 1976). Or…Only 10% of students' work should contain quotations (Lester, 1976).

Example 3:

Original: "In any one nation, there are both very wealthy and very poor individuals and families. When sociologists conduct research on these disparities, they frequently analyze secondary data that originally were collected by the World Bank and the United Nations. These data focus on quality-of-life indicators such as wealth; income; life expectancy; health; sanitation; the treatment of women; and education for high-income, middle-income and low income nations."

Source: Kendall, D. (2004). *Social problems in a diverse society* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Summary:

Kendall (2004)* reports that sociologists measure disparities based on indicators used by the World Bank and the United Nations such as wealth; income; life expectancy; health; sanitation; the treatment of women; and education for high-income, middle-income and low income nations.

2. Paraphrasing:

- Rewrite in your own words, but keep key terms
- Combine ideas or information and highlight information that is relevant to you.
- Report using your own words.
- Can be about the same length as the original.

Consider changing: Word choice / Sentence structure / Sequence of ideas

Original: "Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final research paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes."

Paraphrase: In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester, 1976).

3. *Citation Conventions: Introduction to primary in-text citations (End text citations will be taught later in the module)

When introducing an idea, acknowledge the source from which it is taken, using the APA (American Psychological Association) convention: http://www.waikato.ac.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/51632/APA_Referencing_6th_ed.pdf .

Example

Surname (year of publication) reporting verb summary

Moisse (2010) states that **children conceived via assisted reproductive technology are more likely to be plagued with obesity, hypertension and Type 2 diabetes.**

Label the various parts (summary/author/date) of the following paraphrase:

OR…Children conceived via assisted reproductive technology are more likely to be plagued with obesity, hypertension and Type 2 diabetes later in life (Moisse, 2010).

Figure 5. Summarising, Paraphrasing and in-text Citing Skills Instructions

The article 'Facebook Fans Do Worse in Exams' shown in Figure 6 is chosen as the group activity and class discussion. Students are asked to summarise the article using Levels 1, 2 and 3 and then paraphrase (as shown in Figure 5). The article is chosen because ideas were poorly organised and students to have to go draw links between paragraphs to identify the central claim, explanations and examples. Students then presented the ideas to class.

Facebook fans do worse in exams

Facebook users may feel socially successful in cyberspace but they are more likely to perform poorly in exams, according to new research into the academic impact of the social networking website.

The majority of students who use Facebook every day are underachieving by as much as an entire grade compared with those who shun the site.

Researchers have discovered how students who spend their time accumulating friends, chatting and "poking" others on the site may devote as little as one hour a week to their academic work.

The findings will confirm the worst fears of parents and teachers. They follow the ban on social networking websites in many offices, imposed to prevent workers from wasting time. About 83% of British 16 to 24-year-olds are thought to use social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Bebo, to keep in touch with friends and organise their social lives.

"Our study shows people who spend more time on Facebook spend less time studying," said Aryn Karpinski, a researcher in the education department at Ohio State University. "Every generation has its distractions, but I think Facebook is a unique phenomenon."

Karpinski and a colleague questioned 219 US undergraduates and graduates about their study practices and general internet use, as well as their specific use of Facebook.

They found that 65% of Facebook users accessed their account daily, usually checking it several times to see if they had received new messages. The amount of time spent on Facebook at each log-in varied from just a few minutes to more than an hour.

The Ohio report shows that students who used Facebook had a "significantly" lower grade point average (the marking system in US universities) than those who did not use the site.

"It is the equivalent of the difference between getting an A and a B," said Karpinski, who will present her findings this week to the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. She has not yet analyzed whether a student's grades continue to deteriorate the longer he or she spends on Facebook.

Some UK students have already spotted the potential danger. Daisy Jones, 21, an undergraduate in her final year at Loughborough University, realised the time she was spending on Facebook was threatening her grades - prompting her to deactivate her account. "I was in the library trying to write a 2,000-word essay when I realised my Facebook habit had got out of hand," she said.
"I couldn't resist going online. You do that, then someone's photo catches your eye. Before you know it, a few minutes turns into a couple of hours and you haven't written a thing." She is among the few to have recognised the risks. According to Karpinski's research, 79% of Facebook-using students believed the time they spent on the site had no impact on their work.

Facebook said: "There is also academic research that shows the benefits of services like Facebook. It's in the hands of students, in consultation with their parents, to decide how to spend their time."

Leake, J., & Warren, G. (2009, April 12). Facebook fans do worse in exams. *The Sunday Times*. Retrieved from http://www.timesonline.co.uk

Figure 6. Example of an Authentic Article Used to Scaffold Summarising Skills

Subsequently, students were taught how to extend a summary of text into a reader response by firstly learning how to evaluate ideas and provide evidence to support ideas (See Figure 7) and how to organise a reader response (Figure 8).

Chanda (1997) correctly noted the problem of deforestation. **Writer's own opinion + explanation + evidence (you can choose other sources or refer to the same article given)** To a large extent, this act of deforestation has to be stopped now to prevent the loss of habitat for millions of species. According to the Rainforest Action Network, if deforestation continues at this rate the rainforest will be entirely lost by 2060 **Note: Here, the writer used another source to support his/her own viewpoint** (Walsh-Alker,2011). Imagine the amount of biodiversity loss in the process. It is important that our future descendants are still be able to enjoy the lush greenery as well as the fresh air. The earth's resources are not unlimited and many valuable resources can be found from the forests.

Figure 7. Content of a Reader Response

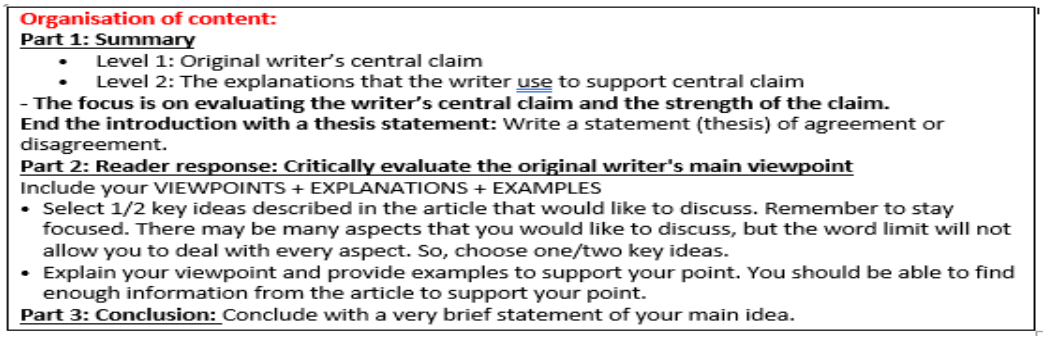


Figure 8. Organisation of Content for Reader Response

To reinforce learning, students scaffolded a longer passage where they had to identify the content and organisation of the text in groups and class discussion. The sample was then shared with students (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Example of a Reader Response

Summarising, paraphrasing, citation, and evaluation skills were taught using authentic texts. Once students completed these tasks, students were expected to complete an assignment. In the assignment, students were asked to submit draft 1 for peer and tutor feedback, and face-to-face consultations. Key summarising, paraphrasing, citation and evaluation skills were reinforced in the feedback process. Students were actively engaged throughout the whole learning process as they were required to discuss and apply the skills they learned to correct errors.

As can be seen from **Stage 3** in Table 1, the core academic language and essential writing skills, such as content development and organisation of content learned from reader response, were required in the writing of an academic **problem-solution essay**. In this task, students were taught to analyse an essay prompt, integrate information from various sources into an essay, organise ideas according in essay structure, and complete an essay.

In class, instructors explained to students the logic and need to write a problem-solution essay in an academic setting, introduced students to the structure, and examined the content of a problem-solution essay using an example where they explored how to explain and illustrate the impact of a problem, came up with existing and own solutions, and thought about the sequence information as: identify the problem and its impact→evaluation of the problem→provide existing solutions→ proposed own solution.

Table 2. Possible Structures of a Problem-solution Essay

OPTION 1 STRUCTURE Introduction	i. Background: Briefly state the problem and one or two solutions ii. Thesis statement and scope: 1 problem and 2 solutions
Body Paragraph 1 Problem 1 > solution 1	A. Topic sentence B. Explain and support one solution. 1st BRIEFLY describe ONE existing solution 2nd BRIEFLY EVALUATE its effectiveness (evidence) 3rd Explain what evidence shows: why effective/not effective in fixing the problem? Think about why the solution may still be a problem. 4th Propose your OWN solution. Think about the context in which your proposed solution can be possible. What steps need to be taken to make the solution(s) work? 5th Concluding sentence.
Body Paragraph 2 Problem 2 > solution 2	A. Topic sentence B. Explain and support one solution. 1st BRIEFLY describe ONE existing solution 2nd BRIEFLY EVALUATE its effectiveness (evidence) 3rd Explain what evidence shows: why effective/not effective in fixing the problem? Think about why the solution may still be a problem. 4th Propose your OWN solution. Think about the context in which your proposed solution can be possible. What steps need to be taken to make the solution(s) work? 5th Concluding sentence.
Conclusion or recommendation – sum it up	A. Restate problem and solutions B. Call to action- leave readers with something to think about
OPTION 2 STRUCTURE Introduction	i. Background: Briefly state the problem and one or two solutions ii. Thesis statement and scope: 1 problem and 2 solutions
Body Paragraph 1 Problem 1 > 1st solution	A. Topic sentence B. BRIEFLY describe problem [why is it a problem?] C. Explain and support one solution. 1st BRIEFLY describe ONE existing solution 2nd BRIEFLY EVALUATE its effectiveness (evidence) 3rd Explain what evidence shows: why effective/not effective in fixing the problem? Think about why the solution may still be a problem. 4th Propose your OWN solution. Think about the context in which your proposed solution can be possible. What steps need to be taken to make the solution(s) work? 5th Concluding sentence.
Body Paragraph 2 Problem 1 > 2nd solution	A. Topic sentence B. Explain and support the solution. 1st BRIEFLY describe ONE existing solution 2nd BRIEFLY EVALUATE its effectiveness (evidence) 3rd Explain what evidence shows: why effective/not effective in fixing the problem? Think about why the solution may still be a problem. 4th Propose your OWN solution. Think about the context in which your proposed solution can be possible. What steps need to be taken to make the solution(s) work? 5th Concluding sentence
Conclusion or recommendation – sum it up	A. Restate problem and solutions B. Call to action- leave readers with something to think about Please write four paragraphs in this essay, or more if appropriate.

In groups, students were asked to work through an example of a problem-solution essay to identify these elements of a problem-solution essay, examined the explanation, evidence used in each part, and noted the organisation of information presented. Students were asked to colour code the different elements of the problem-solution essay. This was followed by students presenting their work in class. The sample (Figure 10) was shared with students.

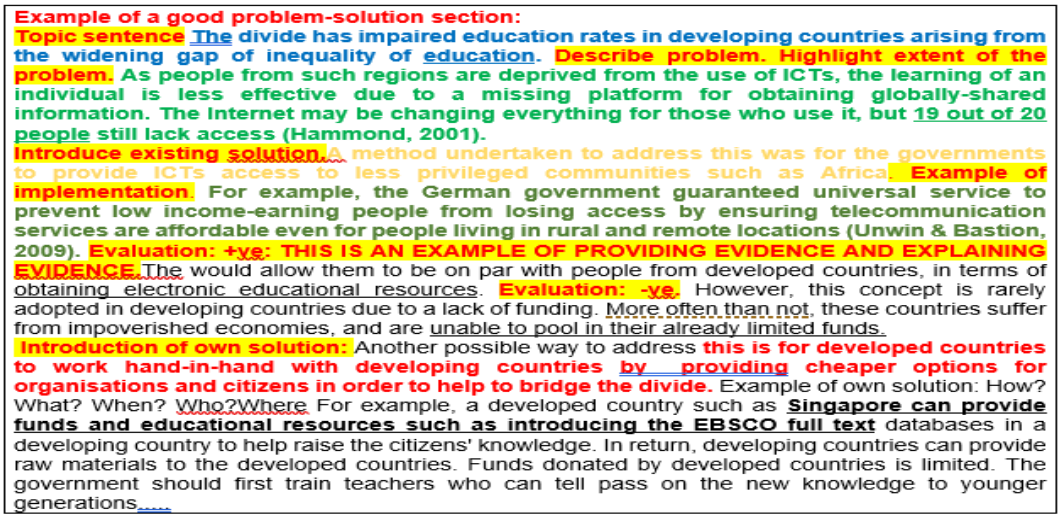


Figure 10. Example of a Problem-solution Essay Sample Shared with Students after the Class Activity

To reinforce learning, students were asked to identify the key sections of a short problem solution essay, and examine the purpose of the given information in each section. The sample (Figure 9) was then shared with students after class discussion.

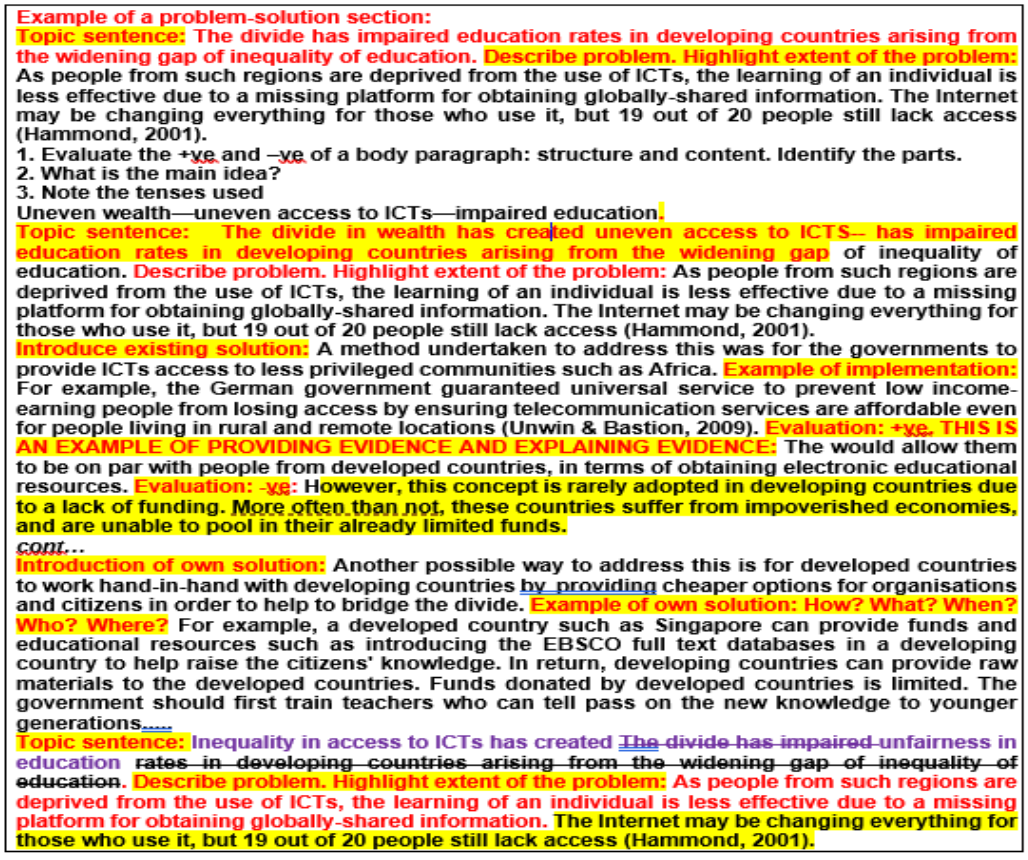


Figure 11. Outside Class Task (to Identify Elements of a Problem-solution Section)

After the core skills were taught, students were required to select a topic of the problem solution essay. The topic must be related to the theme for the semester (in this case environmental impact of globalisation). Similar to the reader response, students were tasked to submit draft 1, where students received peer and tutor feedback, and tutors met students for face-to-face consultations. Students were actively engaged throughout the whole learning process as they were required to discuss apply the skills they learned to correct errors.

3.3 Data Analyses and Results

3.3.1 Data Analyses and Results of Students' Perception of Their Writing Abilities

a. Data analyses of students' perception of their writing abilities

To analyse students' self-perceptions of their language, content, and organsation skills, they completed pre- and post- course surveys. The weighted averages of pre- and post- perceptions were calculated and compared on the this scale: 1=strong disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strong agree.

b. Results of students' perception of their writing abilities

i. Language

The results in Table 3 show that students' weighted average of their perceptions on language abilities increased from pre- to post-course (2.7 and 3.0 respectively). In general, more students **agreed** that they were able to use a range of language devices such as verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, word choice, and expressing ideas more clearly after the 12-week EAP course. The biggest increases were on the use of prepositions and ability to clearly express ideas, but quite a number of students indicated they were weak in word choice. This is not surprising as improving students' vocabulary was not the focus in this course.

Table 3. The Weighted Percentage of Students' Perceptions of Language Abilities in pre- and post- EAP Course

Language	**PRE-COURSE**				**WEIGHTED AVERAGE**	**POST-COURSE**				**WEIGHTED AVERAGE**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	
I can use verb tenses accurately in writing.	1 1%	23 25%	59 66%	7 8%	**2.8**	0 0%	14 16%	63 70%	12 14%	**3.0**
I can use subject-verb agreement accurately in writing.	1 1%	22 24%	59 65%	8 9%	**2.8**	0 0%	9 10%	70 78%	11 13%	**3.0**
I can use prepositions accurately in writing.	1 1%	36 40%	50 56%	3 3%	**2.6**	0 0%	10 11%	66 73%	14 16%	**3.1**
I know the rules of English grammar well.	1 1%	25 28%	60 67%	4 4%	**2.7**	0 0%	9 10%	71 79%	10 11%	**3.0**
I have no difficulty with	9	53	26	2	**2.2**	3	29	50	9	**2.7**

choice of words in writing.	10%	59%	29%	2%		3%	32%	55%	10%	
I am able to identify and correct grammar errors in my written work.	2 2%	17 18%	66 74%	5 6%	**2.8**	1 1%	14 15%	66 73%	10 11%	**2.9**
I am able to clearly express my ideas and points of view in an academic setting.	3 3%	36 40%	49 54%	2 2%	**2.6**	0 0%	9 10%	73 81%	9 10%	**3.0**
Total averages:					**2.7**					**3.0**

1=strong disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strong agree.

ii. Organisation of text

The results in Table 4 show that students' weighted average of their perceptions on their ability to organise texts in academic writing increased from pre- to post-course (2.7 and 3.1 respectively). After the 12-week EAP course, more students **agreed** that they were able to write more coherently in essays/assignments, organise information in a paragraph, and connect ideas in paragraphs, as well as writing a thesis statement and topic sentence. Interestingly, the weighted averages of students "knowing" what thesis statements and a topic sentences are higher than their perception that they 'can' to write thesis statements and topic sentences in both pre- and post- course.

Table 4. The Weighted Percentage of Students' Perceptions of Organisation Skills in Academic Texts in Pre- and Post- EAP Course

Organisation	**PRE-COURSE**				**WEIGHTED AVERAGE**	**POST-COURSE**				**WEIGHTED AVERAGE**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	
I know the value of having coherent ideas in my essays/assignments.	2 2%	14 16%	56 62%	18 20%	**3.0**	0 0%	3 3%	65 72%	23 25%	**3.2**
I can write coherently in my essays/assignments.	1 1%	26 29%	59 66%	4 5%	**2.7**	0 0%	3 3%	72 80%	15 17%	**3.1**
I know what a thesis statement is.	1 1%	27 30%	50 56%	12 13%	**2.8**	0 0%	3 3%	60 67%	27 30%	**3.3**
I can write an effective thesis statement.	4 5%	43 48%	41 46%	1 1%	**2.4**	0 0%	6 6%	73 81%	11 13%	**3.1**
I know what a topic sentence is.	1 1%	14 16%	57 63%	18 20%	**3.0**	0 0%	1 1%	61 68%	28 31%	**3.3**

I can write an effective topic sentence.	3 4%	34 38%	49 54%	4 5%	**2.6**	0 0%	9 10 %	70 78%	11 13%	**3.0**
I can write a well-organized and clear paragraph.	2 2%	40 45%	46 51%	2 2%	**2.5**	0 0%	7 7%	71 79%	12 14%	**3.1**
I can effectively connect one idea to the rest of the ideas in the paragraph.	4 5%	41 46%	43 48%	1 1%	**2.5**	0 0%	7 7%	71 79%	12 14%	**3.1**
I can edit and improve the organization of my essays/ assignments.	2 2%	25 28%	57 63%	6 7%	**2.7**	0 0%	6 6%	70 78%	14 16%	**3.1**
Total averages:					**2.7**					**3.1**

1=strong disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strong agree.

iii. Content development

The results in Table 5 show that students' weighted average of their perceived ability to develop ideas in an academic text increased from pre- to post-course (2.5 and 3.1 respectively). Of the three criteria, content development has the highest increased weighted percentage. After the course, more students **agreed** that they were able to develop an academic text, use supporting details to develop a thesis statement and paragraph, paraphrase and summarise and integrate and cite ideas from other different sources into their own texts. More importantly, in the post course, there was a higher percentage of students who **agreed** they were able to apply what they learned to higher order skills to evaluate and respond other people's writing and continue to develop own academic writing skills and edit own work.

Table 5. The Weighted Percentage of Students' Perceptions of Content Development Skills in Academic Texts in pre- and post- EAP Course

Content	**PRE-COURSE**				**WEIGHTED AVERAGE**	**POST-COURSE**				**WEIGHTED AVERAGE**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	
I can write an effective academic essay.	5 6%	52 57%	31 34%	2 2%	**2.3**	0 0%	7 7%	70 78%	13 15%	**3.1**
I can logically support a thesis with detailed supports.	1 1%	39 44%	48 53%	2 2%	**2.6**	0 0%	11 12%	66 73%	14 15%	**3.0**
I can develop the content of a paragraph logically.	3 3%	26 29%	55 61%	6 7%	**2.7**	1 1%	1 1%	66 74%	22 24%	**3.2**

I can write effective specific supporting information for the topic sentence.	3 3%	39 44%	43 48%	4 5%	**2.5**	0 0%	9 10%	69 77%	12 14%	**3.0**
I can summarize the main ideas of an academic text.	4 4%	35 39%	50 55%	2 2%	**2.6**	0 0%	5 5%	73 81%	13 14%	**3.1**
I can paraphrase another writer's viewpoints.	1 1%	27 30%	58 64%	4 5%	**2.7**	0 0%	7 7%	70 78%	13 15%	**3.1**
I can integrate another writer's ideas into my writing.	2 2%	19 21%	66 74%	3 3%	**2.8**	0 0%	5 5%	72 80%	13 15%	**3.1**
I can cite sources using APA style.	7 8%	38 43%	36 40%	8 9%	**2.5**	0 0%	7 7%	59 66%	24 27%	**3.2**
I can evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of another writer's ideas.	5 5%	56 63%	27 30%	2 2%	**2.3**	1 1%	8 9%	68 75%	14 15%	**3.0**
I can respond critically to another writer's ideas.	5 6%	50 55%	33 37%	2 2%	**2.4**	0 0%	6 7%	72 80%	12 13%	**3.1**
I can continue developing my academic writing skills on my own.	2 2%	54 60%	33 37%	1 1%	**2.4**	0 0%	7 7%	74 82%	10 11%	**3.0**
I can edit my own writing.	0 0%	24 27%	62 69%	4 5%	**2.8**	0 0%	7 7%	71 79%	12 14%	**3.1**
Total averages:					**2.6**					**3.1**

1=strong disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strong agree.

3.3.2 Data Analyses and Results of Students' Writing Abilities

a. Data analyses of students' writing abilities

The data in this study were collected from students' perception survey of their abilities, and textual data from the QET and final exam papers. To investigagte whether students improved on a range of academic writing skills in developing content, organising information and improving on language accuracy and fluency, quantitative data were collected using SPSS ensured that the data was efficiently processed to provide results and conclusions that can be considered valid and reliable. **Paired sample t-tests** were conducted to ascertain whether or not significant differences appeared between students' pre- (QET paper) and post- course (final exam) writing. In this research project, students' work was rated accordingly: 5=strong, 4=good, 3=fair, 2=poor, 1=very poor and 0=does not exist. Textual analyses were also conducted to assess students' writing performance based on three criteria: content development, organisation of text and language usage.

Three markers who had taught this course for at least 2 years were trained to mark the QET papers and the final exam according to the descriptors given. Each instructor was trained on marking using 5 test scripts seclected and discrepancies amongst the marking were addressed. The researcher then randomly checked the marking of the QET papers and the final exam.

These writing skills were taught and evaluted in the students' pre- and post- course writing tasks:

i. language usage: students were rated on their ability to develop ideas with a very high level of language accuracy and fluency (i.e., very few errors and fully comprehensible), using accurate/appropriate syntax, grammar vocabulary, word usage & idiomatic expressions, as well as fluency & cohesion.

ii. organisation of text: students were rated on their ability to coherently and cohesively development of ideas throughout the essay from the introduction, to the body paragraphs and conclusion.

iii. Content development: students were rated on their ability to demonstrate a clear understanding of the prompt and fully develops ideas with relevant evidence throughout the essay by producing an accurate response to the prompt, main and supporting ideas, and their ability to integrate sources into the essay: paraphrases, summarises, evaluates and synthesizes ideas from sources.

b. Results on students' writing abilities

Overall, results show that students' academic writing skills in developing content, cohesion and coherence in text organisation, and language accuracy and fluency improved significantly in these three areas from the QET to the final exam. The greatest improvement (mean differences) that students made was in the way they organised text cohesively and coherently in their writing (x=3.473, t=10.056, df=183, p=0.004), followed by content development (x=2.804, t=8.241, df=183, p=0.000) and language (x=3.239, t=2.682, df=183, p=0.000).

It is perhaps not surprising to find students were able to more significant improvement in text organisation and development than in language. A majority of students who took this proficiency course have, by and large, a fairly good command of English as they use English daily (though may not be aware of the formality of academic English required for writing). These students have been learning English language usage and accuracy since primary school. In contrast, students were never taught the rigour of academic text organisation and the importance of content development in academic writing until they reached university. Thus, they showed the greatest improvement in learning text cohesion and coherence and developing content with credibility.

i. Language usage

In terms of language usage, students were required assessed on developing ideas with a very high level of language accuracy and fluency (i.e., very few errors and fully comprehensible). Students also showed significant improvement in language accuracy and fluency in the following areas:

-syntax which includes the use of various sentence types to achieve intended purpose or meaning; and shows a full range of simple, compound and complex structures (x=.418, t=6.874, df=183, p=0.000).

-**grammar** which includes the use of verb forms/tenses (x=1.049, t=9.866, df=183, p=0.000), and a

range of grammatical items such as word forms nouns/pronouns, parallel sentences, subject-verb agreement, fragments, connectors and transitions, modal verbs (x=.228, t=4.099, df=183, p=0.000).

-**expressions** which include the use of vocabulary, word usage & idiomatic expressions, and reporting verbs for integrating sources (x=.380, t=6.138, df=183, p=0.000).

-fluency & cohesion which include the use of transitions/connections to presents ideas fluently and cohesively (x=.408, t=6.652, df=183, p=0.000).

-punctuation (x=.418, t=7.231, df=183, p=0.000).

-formality which includes the use of style, tone and register (x=.337, t=6.625, df=183, p=0.000).

ii. Organisation of text

Students were assessed on text cohesion and coherence in presenting ideas throughout the essay. The results showed students made the most significant improvement in in text organisation in the following key areas:

-Writing an explicit thesis statement and topic sentences that clearly respond to the task. Students improved significantly in the way they wrote thesis statement with specific controlling ideas and scope (x=.772, t=6.220, df=183, p=0.000), and a topic sentence in each body paragraph relevant to the thesis and captured the body paragraph (x=.538, t=6.103, df=183, p=0.000).

-Developing paragraphs that are cohesive and coherent throughout the essay, with a clear a relational pattern (e.g., problem-solution sequence and cause-effect pattern). Students improved significantly in writing an introduction that funnels/narrows the focus that leads to the topic (x=.668, t=8.614, df=183, p=0.000) and organising the text coherently at a macro- level (x=.516, t=8.311, df=183, p=0.000) by ensuring each point from the central claim is presented logically and micro level by ensuring the text has cohesive within the body paragraphs with topic sentence, explanation and evidence (x=.495, t=7.002, df=183, p=0.000), and drawing a conclusion that addresses the thesis thoughtfully and is in sync with the rest of the essay, and drawing on consequence of action/implications (x=.484, t=6.068, df=183, p=0.000).

iii. Content development

In terms of content development, students were assessed on their understanding of the prompt and fully develops ideas with relevant evidence throughout the essay. Students showed significant improvement in the following key areas:

-Writing a response to the prompt that required them to appropriately select relevant information from the texts as a basis for generating a relevant response. The results showed students improved significantly in narrowing the essay prompt focus with an accurate thesis (x=.380, t=4.076, df=183, p=0.000) that is supported by the student's main supporting ideas, and select relevant information to address the complexity of the issue rasied in their central claim (x=.342, t=6.178, df=183, p=0.000).

-Developing main and supporting ideas that required them to accurately extract information from the prompt and show a clear understanding of the complexity of the topic by producing original, relevant and logically developed ideas in the introduction (x=.783, t=9.567, df=183, p=0.000), the body

paragraphs (x=.413, t=5.548, df=183, p=0.000), and the conclusion (x=.571, t=7.348, df=183, p=0.000). **-Integrating relevant sources into the essay** that required them to paraphrase, summarise, evaluate and synthesise ideas from sources (x=.351, t=4.440, df=183, p=0.000).

4. Discussion

Consistent with previous research (AsenciÓn Delaney, 2008; Durán Escribano, 1999; Klimova, 2015; Seviour, 2015), this study further supports the benefits of adopting a reading-to-write approach to develop students' academic writing skills in an EAP module, which starts by teaching students to read, extract and incorporate information into a range of different writing tasks that progress in difficulty—from summarising/paraphrasing/synthesising, to responding to a summarised text and then a full academic essay (such as the problem solution essay). The results of this study revealed that students *perceived* they had improved on three essential aspects of academic writing: language accuracy/fluency, ability to develop content, and organised text. Furthermore, students improved in all core academic writing skills: language, content development and text organisation. The greatest significance was found in the way students developed content in their writing by explaining the main points and supporting main points with evidence, and organised text to provide macro- and micro-levels coherence and cohesion.

Students' improvement could be attributed to writing tasks and scaffolding materials in a reading-to-write approach that progresses in difficulty. For an EAP course to be successful, instructors must provide clear and explicit instructions on tasks and use ample examples to raise students' awareness of the input (that is, models of good and bad essays). As seen from the results, students themselves recognised that they *knew* of certain important features of writing, such as writing thesis statements and topic sentences, but they were not able to do it well. Therefore, students must be given opportunities to explore their learning, practise and improve of the core academic writing skills through effective peer and instructor feedback to reinforce learning.

Ultimately, for students to want to learn and strive to improve their academic writing abilities in an EAP, they must see value in what they learn and the reason for putting in so much time and effort. Students in this course were willingly takes out time from students' heavy workload in their core modules, to want to learn and put in effort—even to the extent of reviewing their peers' work. This is only achievable because students could see the EAP could value-add to their knowledge/skills, and they saw their own improvement throughout the 12-week learning journey. In these 12 weeks, students were allowed to explore their learning along the way and were actively engaged to make improvements through class discussions, set activities, multiple drafting in the formative assessments with peer and instructor feedback. Students were engaged in the whole learning process, and this process is essential in developing students' confidence in academic writing.

Teachers' instructions and effort in teaching does not necessarily equate to students' learning (Cook, 2016). This study also suggests that simply raising students' awareness by 'telling' is insufficient to

help students learn. EAP researchers and practitioners must design an EAP curriculum undergird by the basic fundamental principles of second language acquisition theories. Firstly, learning must be initiated with the instructors raising students' awareness so that they can "notice" the taught skill (Schmidt, 1990), so that input is comprehensible (Krashen, 1985, 1989). Comprehensibility of input is increased if the exposure is meaningful, interesting, understandable, and relevant is sufficient to draw readers' attention (Krashen, 1989), and the input can be reinforced in the writing and peer and instructor feedback process. The collaborative construction of opportunities should be given to learners to develop their mental abilities (Lantoff, 2000, cited in Walsh, 2006). This elaborate process of teaching and learning is more likely to lead to higher order thinking and writing skills, where students are able to apply evaluative skills (Cook, 2016; Durán Escribano, 1999; Krashen, 1989; Tsang, 1996).

5. Conclusion

Consistent with previous research, this study indicates students' academic writing skills improved in an EAP course that progressed in difficulty in a writing process. Beyond this, this study posits that an effective EAP must incorporate clear instructions, and authentic materials and tasks that students find relevant. Students are more likely to be engaged in learning when they could see their academic writing abilities improve as they progress through the tasks in the EAP course. This means students must have opportunities to apply the skills they learn and improve on their work, recognise their own strengths and weaknesses from hands-on tasks, and understand what they need to do to improve from tutor feedback. Future EAP curriculum designers must consider an effective pedagogy that can engage students in the materials and tasks in the writing process so that they are *inspired* to learn.

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