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LCLM 4001_Lon

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Reflective report Assessment

A Reflective Journey: Improving Writing, Paraphrasing, and Referencing Skills

Reflecting on my experience in the CertHE Business Skills for Workplace module at UWTSD London, I can identify significant development in my academic writing, paraphrasing, and referencing skills. Utilizing Gibb's reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988) provides a structured approach to analyse my learning journey, encompassing description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action planning.

The module's comprehensive approach to academic writing has profoundly enhanced my ability to present ideas clearly and formally. Initially, the formal structure and tone of academic writing appeared rigid and unfamiliar, creating challenges in starting essays and ensuring a coherent flow of ideas. However, through various class activities and assignments, including writing an essay on a business topic, I developed a more nuanced understanding of academic writing principles. This specific task required crafting a clear introduction, organizing body paragraphs effectively, and providing a concise conclusion. Feedback from this assignment revealed the need for improved coherence and argument development, aligning with Bedford's (2020) emphasis on a clear argument and logical progression in academic writing.

One illustrative activity was the "argument mapping" exercise, where we had to visually map out the key points and supporting evidence for our essays. This method not only clarified the structure of my arguments but also enhanced my ability to link ideas logically, which is crucial in academic writing. As noted by McMillan and Weyers (2012), using visual aids like argument maps helps writers to see the relationships between their points more clearly, leading to more coherent and persuasive writing.

Another aspect of academic writing that I improved upon was the development of a formal and objective tone. Initially, my writing tended to be too informal and subjective. To address this, I practiced rewriting sentences and paragraphs in a more formal style, avoiding personal pronouns and subjective language. This practice aligned with Zhihui's (2021)

discussion on maintaining objectivity in academic writing, which is essential for producing credible and professional work.

Through continuous practice and feedback, I gradually overcame the initial challenges, understanding the importance of essay planning and the integration of structured arguments. Cottrell (2019) highlights the value of drafting and revising, a strategy that became instrumental in refining my writing skills. This experience has instilled confidence in my ability to present ideas formally and coherently, a fundamental aspect of academic writing.

Paraphrasing, another crucial skill emphasized in the module, presented initial difficulties in rephrasing technical information while retaining the original meaning. The module's exercises on paraphrasing, including rephrasing sentences and summarizing complex articles, played a vital role in developing this skill. For instance, an activity involving summarizing an article on business ethics helped me practice conveying main ideas succinctly in simpler terms. This practical approach is consistent with Zhihui's (2021) assertion that effective paraphrasing requires a deep understanding of the original text.

One effective exercise was the "paraphrase and compare" activity, where we had to paraphrase a paragraph and then compare our version with the original and a peer's version. This activity helped highlight areas where my paraphrasing was either too close to the original or deviated too much from the intended meaning. Such comparative analysis, as noted by Moon (2006), is beneficial in understanding the nuances of effective paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism.

Through these exercises and constructive feedback, I learned to apply different paraphrasing techniques, such as altering sentence structures and using synonyms, thereby improving my ability to rephrase content accurately. This practice not only enhanced my paraphrasing skills but also increased my confidence in handling complex information, a crucial competency in academic writing and research. Moreover, developing paraphrasing skills has enabled me to engage more critically with academic texts, enhancing my overall academic literacy.

Referencing emerged as a particularly challenging aspect due to the complexities involved in citing diverse sources accurately. The module's focus on the Harvard referencing style provided clarity and direction, enabling me to navigate the various formats and rules for citing books, articles, and websites. Hands-on tasks, such as creating reference lists for research papers, were instrumental in understanding the formatting rules and ensuring accurate citations. Using online referencing tools, as advocated by Cottrell (2019), facilitated the referencing process and helped in managing the intricacies of different citation formats.

A particularly useful task was the "reference list construction" exercise, where we had to compile a reference list from a provided list of sources, including books, journal articles, and websites. This exercise helped me understand the nuances of different citation formats and the importance of consistency in referencing. As highlighted by Ramsay and Roberts (2015),

constructing accurate reference lists is essential for academic integrity and the credibility of scholarly work.

Feedback on these referencing tasks highlighted common errors, such as incorrect ordering of authors and improper use of punctuation, and offered guidance on improving citation accuracy. This learning experience has reinforced the importance of accurate citation in academic work, aligning with academic integrity standards and contributing to the overall quality of my assignments. Additionally, the module emphasized the ethical implications of proper referencing, ensuring that I understood the importance of giving credit to original authors and avoiding plagiarism.

An integral part of this journey has been the exceptional support provided by our module leader, Sylvia Hoffmann. Her patience and dedication in guiding me through the complexities of academic writing, paraphrasing, and referencing have been invaluable. Given that my English proficiency is still developing, Sylvia's personalized feedback and willingness to take extra time to explain concepts have significantly bolstered my confidence and skills. Her approachability and encouragement were crucial in helping me overcome language barriers, making my learning experience more accessible and effective.

Several activities and assignments throughout the module have been pivotal in developing these academic skills. Essay writing tasks provided a platform to apply formal writing principles, receiving feedback that guided improvements in coherence and argument development. Paraphrasing exercises allowed practical application of rephrasing techniques, with feedback offering insights into refining my paraphrasing approach. Referencing tasks, including the creation of reference lists and the use of online tools, helped demystify the complexities of citation formats and ensured accurate referencing.

These activities, combined with the module's structured approach and supportive feedback, have significantly contributed to my academic skill development. Writing essays and receiving constructive feedback have honed my academic writing abilities, enabling me to present ideas formally and coherently. Paraphrasing exercises have refined my ability to rephrase complex information accurately, while referencing tasks have enhanced my understanding and application of accurate citation practices.

Moving forward, I plan to further develop these skills by continuing to seek feedback, practicing regularly, and utilizing online tools and resources. For academic writing, I will focus on outlining essays to ensure logical argument flow and coherence. To improve paraphrasing, I will practice summarizing academic articles and seek feedback to refine my technique. In referencing, I will use online tools to verify citations and stay updated on referencing guidelines to ensure accuracy.

In conclusion, the CertHE Business Skills for Workplace module has significantly contributed to my academic skill development, particularly in academic writing, paraphrasing, and referencing. Using Gibb's reflective cycle has provided a comprehensive framework to

evaluate my learning process, identifying strengths and areas for further development. The practical exercises, constructive feedback, and resources offered in the module have equipped me with valuable skills essential for academic and professional growth, laying a solid foundation for my future studies and career.

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