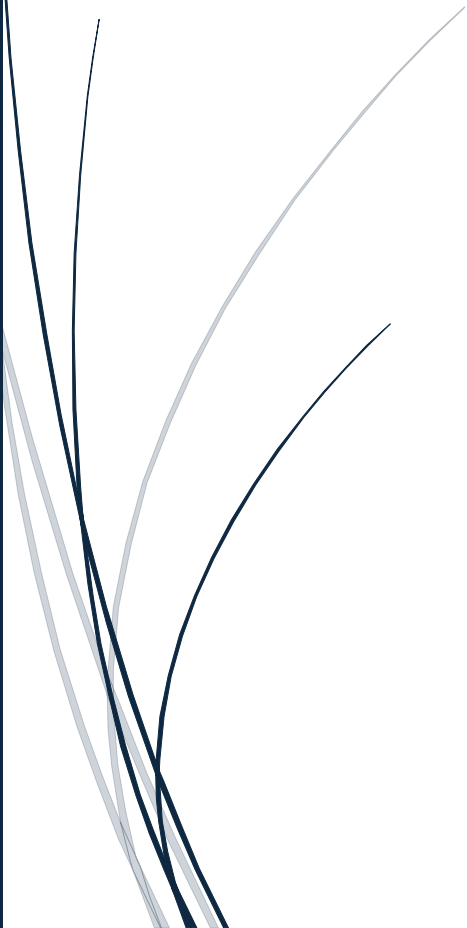




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Reflective report



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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
ACADEMIC WRITING	2
EXPERIENCE.....	2
REFLECTION.....	2
ACTION	2
NOTE-TAKING.....	3
EXPERIENCE.....	3
REFLECTION.....	3
ACTION	3
PARAPHRASING	4
EXPERIENCE.....	4
REFLECTION.....	4
ACTION	4
CONCLUSION	5
REFERENCE	5

Introduction

When I began my studies at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), I learned several key skills. These skills were writing for school, taking notes, and putting ideas into my own words. These skills help me understand and share knowledge. Each skill is different but connected. They build on each other to help me learn better. As someone who had not practised academic writing since high school in Romania, this was hard. This reflection shows how my skills improved through the ERA (Experience, Reflection, Action) model. I share my experiences, what I learned, and the steps I took to get better at these important skills.

Academic Writing

Experience

Writing academic papers was a demanding task when I re-joined university after several years. As a student born in Romania, I finished high school at 18. My academic writing abilities had not been used for years, especially in a language that was not my native tongue. My first encounter with academic writing in the UK happened during a lecture on academic skills. That class focused on structuring essays and understanding academic integrity rules. During the in-class activities, I felt out of my depth, struggling to understand the critical writing style and the nuances of paraphrasing, and citing sources. My initial attempts were clumsy, marked by a lack of clarity and organization, which only deepened my frustration (Bailey, 2014.).

Reflection

Reflecting on these experiences, I recognize my initial discomfort stemmed from my inexperience and the transition to a different educational culture. The detailed structures and expectations of academic writing in English were unfamiliar to me. However, the lecture materials emphasized the importance of the writing process, including drafting, revising, and editing, which are crucial for improving writing quality (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). By understanding these processes, I began to see academic writing not just as a task but as a skill to be developed through systematic practice.

Action

My academic writing has always been a challenge. It is not that I do not have the skills or knowledge to write well; it is just that sometimes things do not come out as they should. This realization motivated me to be more proactive in finding solutions towards enhancing my academic writing. So, since then I started dedicating much of my time to reading widely and understanding what academic English is all about. As time went by, I made use of the feedback given by my peers and lecturer

whereby I was able to see the importance of improving essay organization together with effective use of academic sources. Every time I made revisions to any of these articles – big or small – there was always this feeling that I had finally mastered another style within this world called academia.

Using the ERA model as a guide, this reflective process helped me change difficulties in academic writing into milestones. Through it, I was able to acquire not only different but also advanced writing skills than before. In addition to that, confidence has also grown inside me which makes it possible for me to feel comfortable when studying within such new environments as those found in university settings where knowledge is vast and always requires one's interpretation abilities. The more pieces of written work done under these circumstances acted as proof that now I can express myself clearly and effectively through words while within the realms of scholarly discussions.

Note-taking

Experience

In school, I first learned how to write proper essays. These essays led me to do research and make arguments with evidence. However, taking notes in class was very different. Instead of rigid essays, I had to capture information as it was spoken. My early note-taking was messy. Lectures were difficult to follow. My notes varied in length too much, being overly brief in some places and too lengthy in others. I frequently failed to make connections between points or grasp essential concepts within intricate subjects.

Reflection

I found that the skills I learned in academic writing also helped with my note-taking when I thought about these problems. Both require deeply engaging with the material. This was supported by a study by Makany et al., 2009 which revealed that good note-taking necessitates thinking. This is through the use of working memory and organizing materials for better understanding. I noted that the abilities to break down, compile and judge things which I acquired from my coursework are just as essential in taking notes effectively. According to other findings for example Morehead et al., 2019; while many may view it as a simple task, they indicated that effective note-taking is a significant cognitive work that facilitates students learning and retention.

Action

I realized I needed to improve my note-taking. I tried different methods, like the Cornell system and mind mapping. These helped me take more organized and useful notes. They let me capture the lectures better. I could make connections and find key ideas. I also used my writing skills to evaluate

the notes. This made them more than just a transcript. The notes became a thoughtful record of my learning.

This approach to developing my note-taking skills helped me do better in school. It used what I learned from writing papers. I found my notes to be a useful tool. I could review and analyse them more deeply. The process of getting better at academic writing and note-taking showed a broader learning curve. It highlighted the need for adaptability, continuous learning, and using skills from different subjects to succeed in university.

Paraphrasing

As I continued my studies at UWTSD, I learned how to paraphrase. This was an important skill after mastering notetaking. Putting another person's ideas in my own words is called paraphrasing, which is an essential skill in academic writing to avoid plagiarism (Gahan, 2023). The difficulty lies in expressing the original message differently. Although it may seem complicated, this process plays a major role in effective scholarly communication.

Experience

Initially, I found it hard to express the same idea differently. What I did first showed that altering a few words couldn't work. I had to use my own words and still maintain the original meaning. The things we did in class helped me see how tricky paraphrasing could be. I needed to look at the writings deeply, not only make small changes. This first hard time increased when I saw examples in our class. They showed I had to change both the words and form of the first writing to avoid copying while keeping the original meaning (LCLM4001, 2024).

Reflection

Upon reflection, I recognized that effective paraphrasing involved intricate cognitive processes. It wasn't just about linguistic skills but also about deep comprehension, critical analysis, and the ability to synthesize information succinctly. The research has found that it is a challenge to think differently. Because of this, it can help students understand more when they are learning new things. Additionally, people will also keep what they have learned for a longer period. This is why paraphrasing is a very important skill that students need to have in school. (Khristawan & Widiati, 2013)

Action

To improve my paraphrasing, I used some helpful strategies. I learned to use different words carefully. I also changed sentence structures to keep the original ideas. I practiced changing active

sentences to passive ones, and vice versa. This made my writing more varied and academic. With feedback from others, regular practice in these techniques gradually improved my paraphrasing. This wasn't just about avoiding plagiarism. It was about engaging with texts more deeply. This helped me better understand and remember the material (Khismawan & Widiati, 2013).

Improving my paraphrasing skills helped me with other academic skills. Paraphrasing, note-taking, and academic writing require similar thinking. By connecting these skills, I became better at processing and explaining complex information. This approach prepared me for school tests and professional communication. Being able to summarize and adapt information is very useful.

Conclusion

The development of academic writing, note-taking, and paraphrasing skills are crucial to navigating the academic environment at UWTSD. These skills are not isolated but are deeply interwoven, each reinforcing the other. Through the ERA reflection model, I systematically addressed the challenges encountered in each area, implementing targeted strategies to enhance my competencies. This holistic approach not only improved my academic performance but also prepared me for future professional endeavours, underscoring the importance of continuous learning and adaptation. The journey from initial confusion to competence in these essential academic skills highlights the transformative power of education and the critical role of reflective practice in personal and academic development.

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