DEVELOPING NON-NATIVE POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC
WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH USING GOOGLE DOCS

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Teaching English as a Second Language)

Faculty of Education
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

JULY 2014

To
My Father
Ms Peerzadeh
Mr Farzad Abareshi
Dr Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor
Who Took Me on a Voyage of Writing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would have been impossible without my inspired supervisor, examiners, parents, husband, friends, and of course participants.

Associate Professor Dr. Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor, your commitment, enthusiasm, expertise, and ability to assist me from the breadth to the depth throughout my doctoral studies have enriched my learning immensely. It has been an absolute privilege working so closely with you and you forever have my gratitude. I hope this is just the beginning of a collaborative research relationship.

My panel of examiners, **Associate Professor Dr. Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan Abdullah** and **Associate Professor Dr. Hadina biniti Habil,** I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks for your constructive feedback, comments, and suggestions.

My dear **mom** and **dad** without you and your heart-warming motivating prayers and ongoing support I would not have embarked upon my postgraduate studies. Your loving support definitely means a lot to me. Dear **Roohollah**, your love, resourcefulness, and patience made a real difference in the creation of this thesis. Thanks are hardly enough…. By the way, now we can go and buy our farm.

Dear **Dr Hamidreza Kashefi** , **Dr Fariba Mirzaei**, and **MojibMajidi** thank you very much for your kind presence during difficult times. **Dr. Zahra Samare**, thank you for all the chats. Simply put, I would not have been able to tackle my fear of doing this without your inspiration. You are a scholar of a great insight. **Dr. Hajihassani**, thank you for trusting me to share your writing drafts with me. Your manuscripts provided the basic idea for this research. My **research participants**, I wish to thank you for making up my online classes. Your commitment to advancing writing research have continually spurred me to keep doing my studies. I hope this manuscript will be a nice reminder of our delightful time working on your literature reviews.

Anyway, I do thank all these people, but I am responsible for what you are going to read, not them. I have just been lucky enough to lean on their knowledge, skills, input, and kindness.

ABSTRACT

Research on academic writing has suggested the use of dialogic feedback, however little is known about its effects and the ways it can be offered. Therefore, this research attempted to develop the skills of writing and revising the literature review genre among four non-native postgraduate students of Civil Engineering by offering dialogic feedback in Google Docs (GD) environment. The objectives of the study were to investigate: i) learners' experiences, ii) the effects of dialogic feedback on learners' subsequent drafts, and iii) the influence of interactions in GD on the learners' writing behavior. To meet these objectives, the learners were asked to i) study some reading materials on how to write the literature review, ii) review some journal articles, and iii) draft their literature reviews in GD. Then, a writing e-moderator together with a subject e-moderator provided dialogic feedback for each of the learners in the form of synchronous and asynchronous interaction in GD. Virtual participant observation, focus group interviews, learners' journal entries, interactions, learners' drafts, and the subject e-moderator's reflections were sources of data. Results of the study showed firstly, dialogic feedback through GD provided timely support and guidance for the learners, stimulated learning from comparison and discussion, engaged the learners in revising, and developed a sense of readership in them. Secondly, dialogic feedback led to better revisions by drawing outlines, constructing topic sentences, developing cohesion and coherence, and constructing scientific arguments. Thirdly, the interactions in GD enhanced the learners' self-regulatory behavior in discovering genre features by developing better understanding of the revising stage, summarizing, and paraphrasing techniques. This study suggests that using dialogic feedback in GD improved the quality of the learners' drafts written in their disciplines. Moreover, GD could facilitate successfully timely and referable written dialogic feedback. Such breakthroughs have introduced a new dimension in academic writing pedagogy.

ABSTRAK

Kajian dalam penulisan akademik telah mencadangkan penggunaan maklum balas dialogik, walau bagaimanapun sedikit yang diketahui tentang cara ia boleh digunakan atau kesan-kesan yang mungkin timbul. Oleh itu, kajian ini berusaha untuk membangunkan kemahiran menulis dan menyemak genre kajian literatur antara empat pelajar pascasiswazah antarabangsa (non-native) dari Kejuruteraan Awam dengan menawarkan maklum balas dialogik dalam persekitaran Google Docs (GD). Objektif kajian ini ialah menyiasat: i) pengalaman pelajar, ii) kesan maklum balas dialogik ke atas draf berikut pelajar dan iii) pengaruh interaksi dalam GD pada tingkah laku penulisan pelajar. Bagi memenuhi objektif ini, pelajar dikehendaki i) mengkaji beberapa bahan bacaan mengenai bagaimana menulis kajian literatur, ii) mengkaji beberapa artikel jurnal, dan iii) menggubal ulasan literatur mereka dalam GD. Kemudian, e-moderator penulisan bersama-sama dengan e-moderator subjek memberikan maklum balas dialogik bagi setiap pelajar dalam bentuk interaksi segerak dan tak segerak dalam GD. Pemerhatian penyertaan secara maya, temubual kumpulan fokus, catatan jurnal pelajar, interaksi, draf pelajar, refleksi oleh e-moderator subjek adalah sumber data. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan pertamanya, maklum balas dialogik melalui GD memberikan sokongan yang tepat pada masanya dan panduan kepada pelajar, merangsang belajar melalui perbandingan dan perbincangan, melibatkan pelajar dalam menyemak semula, dan membangunkan rasa pembaca di kalangan pelajar. Kedua, maklum balas dialogik membawa kepada semakan yang lebih baik dengan merangka garis kasar, membina topik perenggan, membangunkan kohesyen dan koherens dalam penulisan, dan membina hujah-hujah saintifik. Ketiga, interaksi dalam GD meningkatkan tingkah laku kawal selia sendiri pelajar dalam penemuan ciri-ciri genre dengan membangunkan pemahaman yang lebih baik di peringkat penulisan semula, teknik ringkasan dan parafrasa. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa menggunakan maklum balas dialogik dalam GD meningkatkan kualiti draf pelajar yang ditulis dalam disiplin mereka. Selain daripada itu, GD berjaya memudahkan rujukan bertulis maklumbalas dialogik tepat pada masanya. Penemuan ini memperkenalkan dimensi baru dalam pedagogi penulisan akademik.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CALL   -   Computer Assisted Language Learning

CMC   -   Computer Mediated Communication

EAP   -   English for Academic Purposes

ESP   -   English for Specific Purposes

GD   -   Google Docs

ILrMRD   -   Review-Methodology-Result-Discussion

SCM   -   Summary-Comparison Matrix

SFL   -   Systemic-Functional Linguistics

SLA   -   Second Language Acquisition

ZPD   -   Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Postgraduate research students most often present the results of their investigations in the form of single-authored texts such as theses, dissertations, and journal articles. It is critical to these students to know how to construct these genres to be able to fulfill the requirements of the degree they are perusing (Bitchener and Turner, 2011). Naturally, these genres and their sub-genres (also known as part-genres) vary in functions and purposes; and therefore, their contents, writing moves, and strategies differ from one another (Bitchener, 2010, p: 3; Cheng, 2007, 2008). There is a plethora of publication on the features and complexities of these genres that postgraduate students may need to write. However, helping postgraduate students to develop the skills of effective communication in written genres has remained a fundamental research question (Wingate, 2012). To contribute to this line of research, the current study investigated how dialogic feedback might contribute to the quality of postgraduate students' written products and their writing behavior.

This thesis begins by providing an overview of current state of knowledge, which follows by introducing the gap of the literature and research problem, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, significance of fulfilling these objectives, the conceptual framework of the study, and the operational definitions of frequently used terms. In the second chapter, a comprehensive review of literature is presented on the areas of academic writing and computer-based

academic writing instruction. The ultimate aim of the second chapter is to provide an in-depth account of the current knowledge relevant to the research objectives. Chapter three describes and justifies the methodological approach, the research design, the data collection and analytical process of this research. Chapter four, five, and six present the findings of this investigation and discuss the meaning and significance of the results with reference to previous research. Ultimately, Chapter seven reviews the achievements of the study, discusses the pedagogical implications of the findings, acknowledges the limitations of the study, puts forward some recommendations for further research, and concludes the thesis.

1.2   Background of the Study

Assisting non-native postgraduate students with writing in English has always been the goal of writing advisors. Acquiring the skills of academic writing not only paths postgraduate students' way to be awarded postgraduate certificates, but also helps them to be accepted as members of their discourse community. This section reviews the latest developments in the area of academic writing.

Academic Writing has become an expanding field of research, especially when genre studies brought new dimensions in the 1990s to writing instruction. Over the past two decades, studies have tried to initiate pedagogical changes by moving academic writing instruction toward Writing in the Disciplines. To do so, they have attributed the responsibility of teaching academic writing to subject experts (Monroe, 2003), integrated writing instruction into disciplinary courses (Wingate, 2012), provided situation in which writing and subject experts could collaborate and provide collaborative feedback on student writings (Kumar and Kumar, 2009), encouraged writing advisors to facilitate dialogic feedback (McDowll *et al.*, 2008), guided novice writers to understand how the purposes of different genres affect their content and discourse moves (Kuteeva, 2010), and used technology and the Internet to facilitate peer mentoring and collaborative writing (Syed Hamid and Wan Mansor, 2012; Syed Hamid *et al*, 2012).

It has been argued by these researchers that academic writing is best learnt through communication in a meaningful context (Gaskell and Cobb, 2004). This notion stresses that learning to write in the disciplines happens when the learners could make sense of the content and the context (Ellis, 2005). It also emphasizes that learners in the process of text construction are in need of receiving help and guidance (so-called feedback) from peers, advisors, supervisors, lecturers, instructors, and so on (Kumar and Kumar, 2009). Such ongoing guidance could provide opportunities for learners to gain awareness of academic writing requirements in general, and discipline specific conventions in particular. Such awareness could help the learners in the process of revising their manuscripts.

In recent years, literature on academic writing has introduced a great number of initiatives to make genre approaches practical. Genre in these approaches is a communication with specific pattern between members of a specific discourse community (Swales, 1990). Genre approaches in these studies integrated writing and discipline specific content (Mitchell and Evison, 2006; Wingate and Tribble, 2011) on the one hand, and on the other hand provides ad hoc dialogic feedback (Gaskell and Cobb, 2004; Kumar and Kumar, 2009; McDowll *et al.*, 2008).

Genre approach has an analytical tool (Ellis, 2004) that is used by teachers and students to analyze disciplinary texts (Drury, 2004). Through these text analyses, the learners are expected to discover, gain awareness of the conventions of the different genres of their disciplines (Bitchener, 2010; Wingate, 2012), and eventually apply these findings while constructing texts (Drury, 2004; Ellis, 2004). In this process, teachers should guide learners to notice their errors and acquire some degrees of metalinguistic justification (Ellis, 2005). Such guidance is widely known as written corrective feedback in writing pedagogy.

Generally, written corrective feedback is an important aspect of academic writing pedagogy. It places major emphasis on improving the accuracy of written products, and many researchers have showed its efficacy in this regards (among others Ferris and Helt, 2000; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2003; Chandler, 2003; Bitchener and Knoch, 2008). A range of studies introduced the effectiveness of

explicit (Chandler, 2003; Bitchener, Young, and Cameron, 2005; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008) and implicit types of feedback (Lalande, 1982; Ferris and Helt; 2000; Ferris, 2003). Some other researchers, however, suggested that offering a combination of explicit and implicit feedback is efficient (Davis and Carroll, 2009; Ellis, 2005). Ellis (2005) emphasizes that considering some metalinguistic explanation in addition to meaning-focused feedback is beneficial.

Metalinguistic explanation in Chomsky's (in Gombert, 1992) words is explaining the structure, function, and usage of linguistic elements. The studies done by Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) and Sheen (2007) suggest that metalinguistic explanation may positively affect error treatment through feedback. Gaskell and Cobb (2004) studied feedback in the form of concordance and corpora and found that negotiation and dialogue encouraged attendance to feedback and ultimately revisions. Similar findings were also reported by Kumar and Stracke (2007), Stracke and Kumar (2010), and Wingate (2012). However, it is argued by Bitchener and Knoch (2008) that the circumstances of providing the feedback may affect the efficacy of it.

Despite positive attitude toward dialogic feedback, how to provide such feedback has remained the salient aspect of feedback application. Scholars such as McDowll *et al*. (2008) suggested that in order for the feedback to be effective, learners need to receive individualized, detailed, clear, and prompt feedback. Noticeably, dialogic feedback in face-to-face writing classrooms may provide situation for negotiation of meaning, asking for explanation, metalinguistic discussions, and instant assistance. Yet, such feedback requires trained tutors for such immediate interactions and considerable time (Ferris, 2003). In addition to these, Walker (2009) added to the mentioned qualities that useful feedback should also be timely, reusable and referable. These features were also suggested by Erkens *et al*. (2005), Kovačić, Bubaš, and Orehovački (2012), McDowll *et al*. (2008), and Noël and Robert (2004), but practically these qualities are hard to frame in face-to-face dialogic feedback. Here is the place that the technology may mediate such feedback.

In the last decade, there has been a growing body of research on integrating computer and the Internet in writing instruction. Dominated by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, tools such as web-based communication applications, forums, blogs, and wikis were introduced to facilitate written collaboration and dialogism in the process of learning to write. Recently, the research on the application of wiki in writing instruction has been influenced by the genre theory. Kuteeva (2010), for example, found that the dynamic nature of wiki in facilitating interaction between the readers and writers caused better understanding of authorship. Kuteeva (2010) also found that scaffolding from tutors and peers in wiki environment affected learners' revising behavior positively. Learners' revising activities that were observed by Kost (2011), improved the quality of the text from both meaning and form aspects. The features of wiki that have been introduced in the literature suggest that it is an efficient tool in improving the writing skills and revising behavior of the learners (Blau and Caspi, 2009). Therefore, given the scope of the present study, wiki was used in terms of the environment for practicing writing in the discipline and providing dialogic feedback.

1.3   Problem Statement

This section provides a description of the issues that were addressed by this current study. As explained in the background of the study, currently academic writing instruction is under the influence of genre approaches. These approaches suggest encouraging learners to discover metalinguistic features of their disciplinary genre (Drury, 2004; Ellis, 2004, 2005; Wingate, 2012). Feedback would assure the success of these approaches in assisting learners with writing in the discipline (Gaskell and Cobb, 2004). Researchers have suggested that in order for feedback to be successful, it should be individualized, dialogic, referable, and timely (Erkens *et al.,* 2005; Kovačić *et al.,* 2012; McDowll *et al*., 2008; Noël and Robert, 2004). Moreover, it should be provided by writing and subject experts (Kumar and Kumar, 2009; Wingate, 2012).

Based on the findings and suggestions of past research, in an ideal writing environment the social context of writing would be taken into consideration. This gives the opportunity to the learners to practice writing by constructing texts that their disciplines require them to construct. Therefore, the learners would practice writing the content that make sense to them. In addition to this, they would receive good examples of texts and feedback from subject and writing experts. Thus, the metalinguistic analyses would be done on good exemplars written for their own disciplines. In addition, the learners would be supported by a writing and a subject advisor in the process of text construction. The individualized feedback from these advisors would be dialogic, timely, and referable, which would encourage learners to revise their texts.

The writing environment that was described in the previous paragraph is an ideal writing environment. However, there is little research integrating on all these aspects at the same time. In fact, the majority of the researchers focused only on particular aspects of writing pedagogy. The current knowledge of the mentioned issues is particularly gained from the studies that have been done in writing classrooms and workshops. Additionally, the texts that the participants of these studies constructed were rarely discipline specific. Other than these, the current understanding of the nature of dialogic feedback is rather inadequate, which raise questions such as: How to deliver dialogic feedback? How to encourage learners to participate in the dialogue? What errors should be targeted by dialogic feedback? And what should the dialogue entail? Answering such questions could help practitioners, writing advisors, and supervisors to consider providing novice writers with dialogic feedback.

The above paragraphs described a perfect learning environment for academic writing and particularly writing in the disciplines. In addition, an overview of the shortcomings of the past literature was provided. It is also worthwhile to consider the real experiences of non-native postgraduate students of writing in the disciplines in English. Anecdotal stories suggest that nonnative students start their postgraduate studies with limited, intermediate, or high General English proficiencies. The three groups have their own specific needs in writing in English in the disciplines. The

first two groups are in need of focus-on-form feedback. Such feedback can be provided by the peers in the third group. They can moderate the demands of these weaker peers for grammar and lexical correction. The third group, however, need to receive assistance for understanding particular language and presentational characteristics of different written genres. Based on the preliminary discussion that I randomly had with some cases with good General English proficiencies, the prerequisite academic writing courses could not prepare them fully for the demands of Writing in the Disciplines. The help and feedback they received from their supervisors entailed samples of theses written by former students and suggestions for taking their manuscripts to proofreading centers.

Such experiences do not mean that supervisors cannot assist novice writers in the discipline, rather it suggests that supervisors and subject experts need to gain the skills of moderating writing in the discipline. In recent years, the nature of supervisors' feedback has gained considerable attention (Abdullah and Evans, 2012; Bitchener and East, 2010; Bitchener, Basturkman, and East, 2010; Eshtiaghi, Robertson, and Warren-Myers, 2012). The aims of these studies were particularly on understanding the nature of supervisors' feedback, assessing the quality of supervisors' feedback, and students' expectations. These studies showed that learners would like to have face-to-face meetings after receiving written feedback for negotiation of meaning and scaffolding. This particular finding support the necessity of dialogic feedback. However, arranging face-to-face meetings may take time and the sessions may not be well documented for further reference. As a result, the need for prompt and referable feedback may not be satisfied, unless face-to-face meeting are substituted by virtual meetings.

Therefore, to contribute to the existing knowledge of academic writing pedagogy and written feedback, this research studied four non-native postgraduate students in the process of constructing the genre of literature review. During this process a writing e-moderator and a subject e-moderator facilitated dialogic feedback for the learners. A genre approach was adopted to design the feedback. The e-moderators provided exemplars for the learners to help them discover the gaps between what they have produced and what they needed to produce through

metalinguistic analysis. In this process of discovery, the e-moderators asked questions to stimulate the learners' critical thinking. These communications were done in the wiki environment of Google Docs, where the learners could revise their drafts and have discussions with the e-moderators at the same time. This study also observed the learners' writing behavior to track down possible behavioral changes.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Previous sections discussed that genre approaches in writing in the discipline has not considered the real contexts that novice writers are supposed to handle. Additionally, the discussion showed that the feasibility of dialogic feedback and its effects on learners' writing behavior in real life has not been established. Based on these gaps, this current study was designed to moderate writing in the disciplines in the wiki environment of Google Docs by providing dialogic feedback directed toward postgraduate non-native civil engineering students' needs in writing the genre of literature review in English. Therefore, the objectives of the study were set as follows:

1. To investigate the learners' experiences of writing and revising the literature review in Google Docs environment.
2. To identify the effects of feedback through Google Docs on the learners' subsequent drafts.
3. To investigate the influence of interactions in Google Docs environment on learners' writing the literature review behavior.

1.5 Research Questions

According to the mentioned objectives, there were three research questions that this study aimed to answer:

1. What were the learners' experiences of writing and revising the literature review in Google Docs environment?

2. How does dialogic feedback through Google Docs affect the learners' subsequent drafts?

3. How do the interactions in Google Docs environment influence learners' writing the literature review behavior?

1.6 Scope of the Study

This investigation was conducted to understand how dialogic feedback and genre approach contribute to the quality of learners' writing drafts and behavior. The participants of the study were postgraduate students in civil engineering disciplines and the drafts they produced were literature reviews. The study was done on a homogenous group of participants to minimize the intervening factors that might emerge because of the conventional differences of disciplines. The study was conducted in August, September, and October 2013 in Google Docs environment.

Due to the fact that the participants of the study were working on parts of the articles they were writing for publication, the confidentiality of their drafts was significant. This was one of the reasons that Google Docs was selected as the wiki environment to implement the study. This wiki environment is a web-based password-protected word-processor freeware developed by Google as one of the services of Google Drive. Google Drive is a cloud storage that provides a safe online space to upload and store files on the Internet. Google Docs is also user-friendly and does not require high speed Internet. The users of Google Docs can decide to whom they share their files with (Bettoni *et al*., 2011). These features made this environment the right choice for implementing this study in.

The participants engaged in the study voluntarily. They were four Iranians who were doing their PhD studies in a prestigious research university in Malaysia. At the time of conducting this research, all of the participants were in the process of writing their theses for final examination. English for them was a foreign language

and all of them had similar educational backgrounds. The participants had average IELTS writing test band score of 7. This was a privilege, since on the one hand I could focus on the writing behavior of student writers who had minimal difficulties in General English. On the other hand, they could communicate with the e-moderators in English. This reduced the time of data analysis significantly, since the interactions and participant journal entries were in English and no translation was needed.

The genre of literature review was the focus of this current study. It was reportedly heard from postgraduate students that writing the literature review is a very daunting task. Furthermore, the literature review had the potential to create obligatory opportunities for the use of other research findings in a new context. This provided great opportunities for investigating academic writing skills, such as summarizing, paraphrasing, synthesizing, referencing and developing cohesion, coherence, and arguments.

It is worthwhile to mention that, within the scope of this study the unique features of dialogic feedback were introduced for writing practice, rather than comparing the effects of feedback types on learners' written products and writing behavior.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This section explains the importance of conducting this current study. It discusses the rational, relevance of the study to existing conditions. It also explains how faculty members, and English Support Centers of universities can benefit from the results of this study. Additionally, it explains the possible contributions to the state of knowledge and expected implications of the study.

As explained earlier, this study aimed at providing an eclectic writing platform for non-native postgraduate students who had good command of General English. In this environment, firstly the learners were asked to construct a specific

genre in their own disciplines individually in Google Docs. That is, the learners were given the opportunity to practice writing a specific genre for the audience specialized in their own disciplines. The piece of writing they supposed to construct was the literature review section of the journal articles they planned to publish in scientific journals of their own field of study. Therefore, they could make sense of the context and the content. Additionally, the learners were provided with dialogic feedback.

As for the setting, Google Docs was chosen to facilitate providing written dialogic feedback. These feedback were planned to offer by a writing and a subject e-moderators during the revising stage. The e-moderators offered on-going, referable, timely feedback in discussion form. As a result, this research could study the efficacy of dialogic feedback. Additionally, since the feedback was provided by a subject and a writing e-moderators, the effects of the dialogic feedback provided by them on subsequent drafts could be investigated. Therefore, introducing feedback with such qualities is the contribution of this current study to the fund of knowledge.

The results of this study are expected to benefit faculty members and English Support Centers of universities. Faculty members, namely, coordinators, supervisors, and course designers are expected to gain comprehensive understanding of providing dialogic feedback for novice writers in the disciplines. Moreover, the structure of the provided feedback in this current research could give ideas to the supervisors for assisting students with good English proficiencies who are still inexperienced in writing in the disciplines.

The findings of this study are expected to inform the language centers of universities that there is a need to redefine academic writing support programs. In fact, this study informs that postgraduate students need constant help during their studies. Although acquiring the general skills of academic writing is vital, non-native students need to receive constant feedback in the process of writing what they have to write while doing their studies. Such ongoing assistance could develop experts with good command of academic writing.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a written or visual presentation that explains the key concepts and factors and the tentative relationship among them (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p: 18). Figure 1.1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study.
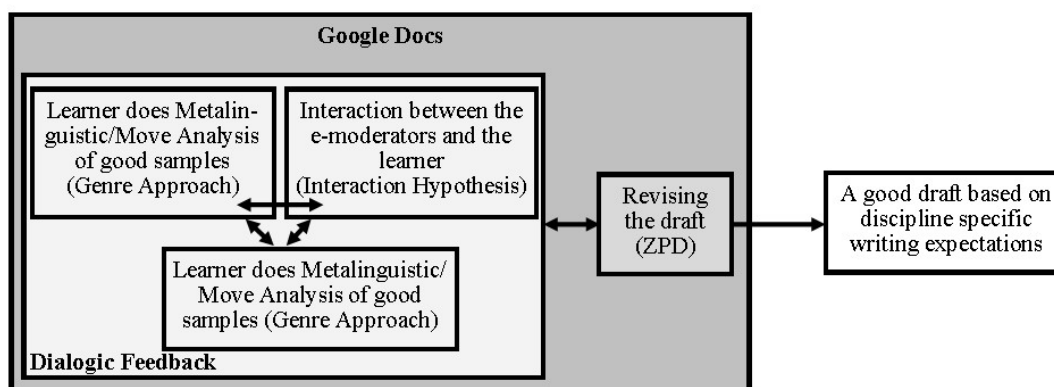
Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1.1 shows that the e-moderators facilitated the process of revising the drafts by providing dialogic feedback. The e-moderators considered genre approach to design and provide dialogic feedback. According to the genre approach the learners were provided with good samples of the focused genre and guided to analyze the moves and metalinguistic aspects of them. The e-moderators were available to support the learners in this process of discovery. The support was offered by asking questions. The questions basically investigated the understanding of the learners of the moves and metalinguistic features of the exemplars. These dialogues stimulated the learners' critical thinking. Additionally, the learners had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their doubts about text features with the e-moderators, a notion that is well described by Interaction Hypothesis.

The dialogue between each individual learner and the e-moderators continued to the revising stage. Here, the learners had to apply their discoveries to their own drafts, while the e-moderators provided support to the learners who were in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). As a result of this process the learners could

revise their texts. The final drafts of the learners' literature reviews were reviewed by an expert from their own discipline. The report (Appendix C: C5 and C6) shows that the revisions were successful from a subject expert point of view.

1.9   Definitions of Terms

1.9.1   Dialogic Feedback

According to Kumar and Strake (2007), supervisors' written feedback of thesis drafts is a type of communication in general. This communication provides a wide range of information from content details to academic writing conventions for the learners. In this current study, feedback was directive under the influence of genre approach. The study also was done in Google Docs environment to facilitate communication and dialogue between the e-moderators and the learners. The dialogue feedback included suggestions, questions, and instructions that helped the learners in move and metalinguistic discovery and revising stage. The dialogues could happen between the subject e-moderator or the writing e-moderator and a learner. There was also a third type of feedback, which was collaborative dialogic feedback. This type of feedback involved both subject and writing e-moderators and the learner in the discussion.

1.9.2   E-moderator

According to Salmon (2003, p: 9) e-moderating is a new type of teaching in higher education. This concept is emerged when higher education started to adopt networked computers for teaching and learning. E-moderators in this enhanced mode of education are teachers and facilitators who provide support and training. In this current study, e-moderators were online facilitators who provided dialogic feedback for the learners. The e-moderators of this study by no means claim

proficiency in the aspects they were giving feedback on. Their aim was sharing linguistic and disciplinary knowledge.

1.9.3 Interaction

Interaction is a process through which individuals influence each other (Gilbert and Moore, 1998; Wagner, 1994, 1997). In this research, interaction closely relates to computer-mediated communication (CMC). CMC, as stated by Wan Mansor and Zakaria (2008, p: 309), involves "human-to-human" synchronous and asynchronous interaction through the Internet. Synchronous interaction takes place on a real-time environment, while asynchronous interaction is communicating at different times. Wikis are characterized as collaborative environments, which support both synchronous and asynchronous interactions. They increase learners' and teachers' knowledge sharing and negotiation in learner-centered environments. In such environments, teachers are the facilitators of learning in a sense that instruction changes to construction and discovery through dialogic feedback. In the current research, all the interactions happen in a wiki environment synchronously and asynchronously in the forms of e-moderators-learner discussions.

1.9.4 Google Drive

Google Drive is a free cloud storage service on the Internet. It allows users to store their documents, photos, music, and so on in one place. Users can synchronize their information with their smart phones, computers, and other mobile devices. If the user makes changes from one device, the change also is applied automatically on other devices. Drive comes with various tools. It allows creating new documents. It also lets the users share their documents and collaborate with others users.

1.9.5   Google Docs

This application is embedded in Google Drive. It keeps files and users comments and contributions on the same page. It allows interaction among users in real time and saves comments for further reference and asynchronous interaction.

1.9.6   Negotiation of Meaning

In this study, negotiation of meaning was a process of interaction among e-moderators and individual learners. It could be seeking clear understanding of the e-moderators' feedback, asking questions to check learners' reasons for performing a certain writing behavior, and discussing the moves and metalinguistic features discovered by the learners.

1.9.7   Metalinguistic Analysis

It is critically analyzing written texts for discovering specific features of forms, structure, moves, and other aspects of a specific genre. Such analyses are expected to help writers to acquire knowledge of writing in the disciplines.

1.9.8   Move

Theoretically, each move is done with a local purpose to make the overall rhetorical purpose of a text happen.

1.9.9   Process of Writing

In this study, writing was a non-linear, exploratory, and generative phenomenon (Zamel, 1983, p: 166). The e-moderators tried to engage learners in reading → planning → drafting → analysis → discussion → revising (Cheng, 2007, 2008) to facilitate leaning to write the literature review.

1.9.10 Wiki

The wiki environment used in this study was Google Docs. Google Docs is a web-based application that allows users of Google Drive to open uploaded and shared manuscripts in an online word processor. Google Docs in this research was an environment for the participants of the study to construct and modify their individual literature reviews under collaborative moderating of a writing and subject e-moderators. It facilitated receiving feedback and was embedded with tracking system where users, who shared the environment, could view the history of revisions.

1.9.11 Writing Behavior

It is the range of actions that the participants of the study took and the strategies they developed in response to the e-moderators' dialogic feedback, the interaction with e-moderators, and the wiki environment. It includes all the synchronous or asynchronous, voluntary or involuntary, spontaneous or unspontaneous, conscious or subconscious actions that the participants carried out.

1.10   Conclusion

After providing an overview of the contents of the thesis, this chapter introduced the background of the research and the problems this study aimed to deal

with.   The objectives and the research questions were specified.   Then the significance of the study for academic writing instruction in the disciplines and CMC research was emphasized. The scope of the study was also defined. The theories on which this research was grounded were introduced. This chapter ended by defining the important terms used in the context of this study.

This chapter argued that dialogic feedback should be practiced to assist wiring in the disciplines. This kind of feedback scaffolds revising stage in the process of text construction and the learners gain the opportunity to have discussions with the supervisors. Moreover, genre researchers suggested leading the learners to do text analysis to discover the relationship between the content and metalinguistic choice of different genres (Hyland, 2004; Swales, 2004). To integrate these two suggestions, this current study considered this genre approach in designing dialogic feedback. Additionally, the learners were asked to construct their manuscripts in Google Docs. Google Docs was expected to facilitate timely, referable dialogic feedback, the qualities that feedback researcher suggested previously. This study was done to bring awareness to what some postgraduate students' experience of receiving dialogic feedback and its effects on their drafts and writing behavior. The following chapter provides an in-depth account of the literature and theories that led to framing the objectives discussed in this introductory chapter.

offering metalinguistic explanation are also needed for comparative studies of the effectiveness of this type of feedback.

There is a critical relationship between research and practice for teaching academic writing to postgraduate students. Writing research in disciplinary contexts affects professional practice. Therefore, there is a need to gain more understanding in terms of the effects of dialogic feedback on written products. To develop such understanding research needs to investigate the transitions from face-to-face supervision to online supervision and from being supervised by subject supervisors to being supervised simultaneously by subject and language e-moderators. Other than this there is a need to investigate the burdens of using technologies like Google Docs from both postgraduates and supervisors' points of view. This is because Google Docs is completely Internet-dependent. That is, when no Internet is available practically it is not possible to provide real-time dialogic feedback in this environment.

The suggested topics of research are diverse, but at the same time they provide information for planning professional practice in academia. The goal of all these topics is helping the students, developing more learner-centered academic systems, decreasing the workload of supervisors, and also helping novice writers to acquire academic standards and conventions.

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