

INSIGHTS FROM STUDENTS' WRITING OF LITERATURE REVIEW VIA  
ONLINE WRITING CLINIC WITH E-TUTORS ON GOOGLE DOCS

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ONLINE WRITING CLINIC WITH E-TUTORS ON GOOGLE DOCS

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To my dad, mum, brothers, and sister

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## ABSTRACT

Previous studies have lent credence to the fact that wiki has been widely used as a platform for teaching and learning. Google Docs is considered to be a distinguished platform because it enables both synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication as well as offline usage. Given the various benefits offered by Google Docs, the present study aims at: i) examining the e-tutors' pedagogical practices in tutoring students writing the literature review via Google Docs; ii) clarifying the e-tutors' prominent evaluation criteria in tutoring students writing literature review via Google Docs; and iii) determining the effects of e-tutoring via Google Docs. The participants of the study consists of three e-tutors and four students. In employing qualitative approach, the data collection methods of the study comprise virtual observation, documents such as writing draft and students' journal entries as well as interview with both the students and e-tutors. Content analysis was employed when analyzing the data. Findings emanated from the study revealed that the e-tutors had engaged in some pedagogical practices such as frequent use of direct feedback, playing a dominant role, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the students, and providing metalinguistic feedback. Besides, the e-tutors also adhered to some prominent evaluation criteria, namely: i) expansion of pertinent subject matter, ii) inclusion of citation, iii) coherence and cohesion, iv) language usage, as well as v) organization. Apart from that, the effects of e-tutoring via Google Docs on students' writing encompass awareness on the gravity of plagiarism, emulating expert writers' writing practice, acknowledging the importance of planning prior to writing, revising their own work, addressing the significance of coherence, properly organizing ideas/points and performing wide readings. From the findings, it is implied that the e-tutors had taken into account some factors when tutoring the students. The factors include audience factor, task factor, and objectives of the task. Moreover, the e-tutors' adherence to certain prominent evaluation criteria highlights the salient features that constitute a good quality of literature review. Thus, the features should be considered when evaluating novice student writers' literature review. A working framework for online writing clinic is derived from the findings.

## ABSTRAK

Dapatan kajian lepas membuktikan bahawa wiki kerap dimanfaatkan sebagai platform untuk pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Google Docs merupakan platform yang unggul kerana ia membolehkan kedua-dua komunikasi sinkron dan asinkron serta penggunaan luar talian. Memandangkan pelbagai manfaat ditawarkan oleh Google Docs, kajian ini bertujuan untuk: i) mengkaji amalan pedagogi para e-tutor dalam pengajaran penulisan kajian literatur melalui Google Docs; ii) meninjau penekanan pedagogi para e-tutor dalam pengajaran penulisan kajian literatur melalui Google Docs; dan iii) mengenal pasti impak pengajaran penulisan kajian literatur melalui Google Doc. Sebanyak tiga orang e-tutor dan empat orang pelajar terlibat dalam kajian ini. Analisis secara kualitatif dilaksanakan di mana instrumen-instrumen kajian seperti pemerhatian atas talian, dokumen seperti draf penulisan dan penulisan diari pelajar serta temubual dengan para pelajar dan para e-tutor dipraktikkan. Kaedah analisis isi digunakan untuk menganalisis data yang dikumpul. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa para e-tutor mempraktikkan amalan-amalan pedagogi seperti kekerapan penggunaan maklum balas secara langsung, memainkan peranan yang dominan, menunjukkan kekuatan dan kelemahan pelajar, dan penggunaan maklum balas secara metalinguistik. Selain itu, para e-tutor juga mempraktikkan beberapa penekanan pedagogi, iaitu: i) perkembangan topik-topik yang berkenaan, ii) penyataan sumber rujukan, iii) kohesi dan koheren, iv) penggunaan bahasa, serta v) organisasi. Di samping itu, dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa para pelajar berjaya memaparkan beberapa ciri penulisan yang baik, iaitu: menyedari keseriusan plagiat, mencontohi amalan penulisan penulis-penulis yang berpengalaman, menyedari kepentingan merancang sebelum menulis, menyemak penulisan sendiri, kecelikan akan kepentingan koheren, penyusunan idea/poin dengan sesuai, dan pelaksanaan bacaan yang meluas. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa para e-tutor mengambil kira beberapa faktor semasa pengajaran atas talian, iaitu faktor penerima, faktor tugas, dan objektif tugas. Selain itu, beberapa penekanan pedagogi yang diberi oleh e-tutor menonjolkan ciri-ciri yang penting dalam membentuk kajian literatur yang bermutu. Oleh itu, ciri-ciri tersebut perlu dititikberatkan semasa menilai penulisan kajian literatur pelajar. Kerangka kerja untuk klinik penulisan atas talian telah dibentuk dari dapatan kajian.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

GD	-	Google Docs
LR	-	literature review
OWC	-	online writing clinic
DCF	-	direct corrective feedback
TML	-	technology-mediated learning

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

In the context of higher education, students are often assigned with writing tasks. This is why the students' writing skill is pivotal as it is one of the key factors in ensuring success in the academic setting (Finch, Nadeau, and O'Reilly, 2012). A plethora of studies foregrounding writing in higher institution report that virtual environment is indeed a viable platform in teaching writing (Komperda *et al.*, 2010; Samira Yadollahi Kakh, 2010; Deed & Edwards, 2011; Safynaz Kazem Syed Hamid & Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor, 2012).

Komperda *et al.* (2010) present a noteworthy study in which the participants are pharmacy students involved in a virtual writing club. The findings revealed that virtual writing club contributes to a high percentage of paper acceptance in prestigious journals. In conducting a study in utilizing email attachment in teaching writing, and giving feedback, Samira Yadollahi Kakh (2010) found that the students took shorter time to make revision and displayed higher motivation in making revision. Deed and Edwards (2011), when asking the undergraduates to blog in their study, found that the undergraduates achieved higher degree of competence because they performed active

thinking and learning as well as had widen their knowledge on the assigned topics. In assigning students in collaborative writing, Safynaz Kazem Syed Hamid and Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor (2012) found that the participants of their study experienced improvement in terms of writing skills via online collaboration conducted on wiki.

After reviewing previous empirical studies, it is apparent that there is a growing interest in employing the use of wiki in teaching writing. According to Baumeister, Reutelshoefer and Puppe (2011), wiki is actually a virtual platform that allows its users to engage in knowledge creation, knowledge management, and knowledge sharing. In the context of teaching and learning, one might question, why employ wiki instead of face-to-face mode of interaction? It is cumbersome to arrange a face-to-face meeting because both parties have to be physically available at the same time and appear at the same venue to meet and discuss. If compared with virtual communication, particularly asynchronous mode of communication, both parties do not have to be physically present at the same venue in order to 'realize' the communication. Both parties can reach for each other at their convenience as long as they are asynchronously connected to the Internet.

Another mode of virtual communication, which is synchronous in nature, requires both parties to be present virtually but physically, they can be at different places, as long as they are connected to the Internet simultaneously. It is apparent that both synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication complement each other because synchronous mode enables its users to obtain immediate reply whilst asynchronous mode enables its users to reply to each other at their own pace. Nonetheless, wikis normally support asynchronous mode of communication; this turns out to be a setback when the students need immediate feedback on some short inquiries. The wiki that enables both synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication is Google Docs. The only requirement to use it is to have a Gmail account.

The fundamental features of Google Docs encompass enabling the users to: a) upload their word processor files and convert them to Google documents; b) format the documents with the variety of functions available such as changing the margins, fonts, and colours; c) ask other people to be a part of the document such as having them to view and comment; d) chat with the people via the document; e) retrace the document's revision history and transfer the document to previous version before the edited version; f) download the Google document into personal computer or for personal storage; as well as g) email and attach the Google document to others.

In employing wiki to teach writing, myriads of studies disseminate on the use of wiki for collaborative writing (Hewitt & Peters, 2006; de Paiva Franco, 2008; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009; Bradley, Lindstrom & Rystedt, 2010; Kessler & Bikowski, 2010; Zammit, 2010; Kost, 2011; Chao & Lo, 2011; Dell & Hakeem, 2012; Woo, Chu, & Li, 2013) but scanty amount of studies revolve around individualized writing. The researcher of the present study contends that the use of wiki should not be limited to collaborative writing because not all authentic writing tasks require collaborative effort. Some writing tasks might demand individualized effort. For example, in some higher institutions in Malaysia, the final-year undergraduates are required to produce a written report individually based on their small-scaled study.

During the first phase of producing the written report, the students have to produce a comprehensive proposal. A comprehensive proposal denotes the first three chapters of a dissertation (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). During the second phase, the students have to complete the proposal with at least two more chapters in elaborating the findings, discussions, and conclusion. Prior to producing the first three chapters, the students have to undergo steps such as identifying a focus and pertinent critical questions as well as outlining a rationale (Vithal & Jansen, 2008). Literature review is paramount in assisting the students to perform all the above mentioned steps. Therefore, in the present study, individualized writing via wiki or Google Docs and writing literature review are foregrounded.

Nonetheless, the students would not be learning anything if they are asked to individually deal with the written task. They will just recursively make the same mistakes or errors. If compared with peer feedback, empirical study proves that students actually prefer to have teacher feedback because teacher feedback is able to lead to more enhanced performance in terms of writing (Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006). Moreover, since the subject lecturer is the one who evaluates students' writing, it would be plausible to have the subject lecturer in tutoring the students. Consistent with this, the present study selected the subject lecturer as the e-tutor.

In line with this, the present chapter introduces the study by including sections such as background of the study, statement of problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and definition of terms. The background of the study captures the previous studies that concern the use of wiki in teaching writing. Statement of problem delineates the gap or the issue yet to be resolved among the existing empirical studies as well as body of knowledge. Objectives of the study and research questions specify the outcome of the study. Significance of the study elucidates justifications in conducting the study. Scope of the study succinctly deals with the focus of the study such as the participants' details, duration of study, and the nature of data collected. Theoretical framework discusses the underpinning theories of the present study whereas conceptual framework discusses the guiding principles of the present study. Finally, definition of terms emphasizes on the definition of key terminologies of the study.

## **1.2 Background of the study**

To reiterate, writing tasks are often assigned at higher institution context. At the final stage of undergraduate study, the students at some universities in Malaysia have to produce a report on their small-scaled study. Supervision takes place where the

students are guided by their supervisors whereby supervision meetings are carried out from time to time in order to guide the students in completing the project. Producing the project would normally require the student to go through various processes such as the process of deciphering content knowledge, the process of negotiation of meaning with the supervisor, and the process of writing. The extent that such process occurs is still an experience worth investigating in a non-traditional way.

Based on the researcher's personal experience of witnessing a student's proposal presentation session, one of the examiners or panel commented that the student needed to *write 20 times* in order to convey the meaning effectively (Lai & Ng, 2012). This implies that writing is a non-linear process which requires constant revision and rewriting so that it is easy for the readers to comprehend the intended meaning of the writer. During the supervision process, the supervisor acts as the reader and provides verbal feedback as well as written feedback (Määttä, 2011). However, it is burdening for the supervisor to attend to content and language simultaneously, particularly when the students are weak in writing (Cho, 2009).

Congruent with this, the researcher of the present study believes that the teaching of academic writing can be effectively implemented online with the help of an e-tutor, which is also the students' subject lecturer. The presence of e-tutor facilitates students' writing process in that the e-tutor provides written feedback in consolidating the students' writing skill. In line with this, the present study examines the ways in which e-tutor facilitates students' writing process via wiki environment, Google Docs. By gathering insights from the students' experience in writing literature review online with the help of e-tutors, the researcher intends to propose a working framework for online writing clinic that facilitates students in producing intelligible writing product. Writing clinic is not something unheard of and is pretty common. A few clicks via a search engine, Google, revealed that multiple prestigious universities have established their own writing clinics in facilitating students' writing such as Harvard University, Yale University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Michigan, Princeton University and so on. Besides, online tutoring service is available in universities such as Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and

Stanford University.

At Harvard University, according to its website, their writing clinic is known as writing center. Online tutoring service is provided to distance learners where the learners can connect with their e-tutor via a synchronous networking tool, Skype. Nonetheless, the medium of interaction can be negotiated if Skype cannot be accessed by the learners. The e-tutors will help the students in terms of “...writing-related issues, such as organization, focus, style, grammar, citation of sources, documentation, and writing a thesis,” (<http://www.extension.harvard.edu/resources/writing-center>). Akin to Harvard University, Stanford University provides e-tutoring to the learners via synchronous networking mode, Skype or Google Chat. During the e-tutoring session, help is provided on “brainstorming, focusing a topic, organization, research skills, integrating ideas from various sources, transitions, style,” (<https://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/hume-center/see-tutor/what-expect>). The Hume Center for Writing and Speaking of Stanford University highlights that proofreading and editing services are not provided, but the learners are taught on strategies that can be employed in proofreading and editing.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, on the other hand, provides e-tutoring that differs from the e-tutoring service provided by Harvard University and Stanford University in terms of type of virtual environment. The e-tutors and learners in Massachusetts Institute of Technology connect with each other using asynchronous networking mode, email. The learners are required to email to their e-tutor and wait for their e-tutor’s comments. During the consultation, the learners can get advice regarding “...any writing difficulty, from questions about grammar to matters of style, including difficulties common to writers, such as overcoming writer’s block, organizing papers, taking essay exams, revising one’s work, or presenting scientific information.”. The website even emphasizes that proofreading service is not provided and the writing center regards “writing as a process... and promote techniques of good writing,” (<http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/>).

Congruent with the feasibility of e-tutoring, a plethora of previous studies disseminated on the use of wiki in conducting e-tutoring. Bubas and Kermek (2007) found from their case study that wiki can be used for the development of Internet-based communication literacy, the joint creation of course content and peer-to-peer learning, and can contribute to students' learning experience. de Paiva Franco (2008) foregrounded peer-correction in wiki environments and found that wikis provide learners with many benefits in developing their writing skills. Dell and Hakeem (2012), in their study, employed wikis as tools in teaching writing and proved that wiki increased students' motivation to write. Moreover, students who participated in the wiki get better results in midterm exams than those participated in blogging. They enjoyed joint writing in wiki environment and established rapport with the instructor. Zammit (2010) performed action research in examining primary students engaging in collaborative writing. The results depicted that wiki serves as a useful platform for the students to form their interpersonal skills and practice computer skill in completing an academic task. The teachers also admitted to have gained something from the wiki-integrated activity as they adjusted their discourse in order to facilitate or assist the students in completing the wiki activity.

### **1.3 Statement of problem**

At tertiary level, students find writing formidable (Wang & Li, 2011). Hasrati (2005), when exploring doctoral supervision process, found that engineering lecturers tend to comment on language aspect and ignore the content aspect which culminate in students' frustration. This leads to a notion that language is viewed as a pivotal medium that connects the readers with the content in the engineering field. Also, Hasrati (2005) reported another noteworthy findings that social science lecturers manifested willingness in helping the students to write. Ferris *et al.*'s (2011) findings resonate with Hasrati's (2005) findings, as they reported that some college writing lecturers give more attention, help, and support to weak student writers. However, other lecturers simply ask the students "to go elsewhere for extra help" (Hasrati, 2005:

218). In a similar vein, Wang and Li (2011) discovered that a social science student expressed frustration as his supervisor expects him to write like professional writers. To be exact, significance of writing clarity is parallel to content accuracy (Torraco, 2005; Reio Jr, 2010). In light of this, the researcher of the present study contends that students can join writing clinic and get help from writing tutors, as espoused by Ferris *et al.*'s (2011) findings.

At tertiary level, students enrolled in distance education might find it cumbersome to constantly meet face-to-face with the instructor to get help on their writing. With the presence of synchronous and asynchronous networking, these students can get help from their instructor regardless of time and space. Breuch and Racine (2000) expound that e-tutoring, albeit dehumanizes an interaction, enables both the e-tutor and student to focus on the e-tutoring itself. Moreover, the researcher of the present study believes that e-tutoring enables synchronous networking and asynchronous networking; the student or e-tutor can choose which type of mode to utilize when initiating on a topic or issue.

Synchronous networking is more like face-to-face interaction (Fuente, 2003), as the interaction is spontaneous; whilst asynchronous networking is a delayed type of interaction where both the e-tutor and student can respond in a non-spontaneous manner. When responding in a non-spontaneous manner, both e-tutor and student can take time and reflect on each other responses, ergo, probe further into each other's statements, and this gives rise to dialogic writing between both parties (Coogan, 1995; Samira Yadollahi Kakh & Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor, 2014). Dialogic writing is believed to be able to make the students decipher the feedback given by the e-tutor and produce a higher quality of writing (Samira Yadollahi Kakh & Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor, 2014). The student can also retrace the comments made by the e-tutor whenever necessary. Succinctly, the benefits offered by virtual environment are unrestricted by time and space, sufficient time to reflect on each other responses, and ability to retrace feedback provided by the e-tutor. In contrast, face-to-face interaction is flawed because the student and tutor does not have the privilege to choose to interact asynchronously and not to mention, retrieve the comments made by the tutor. Hence,

the benefits offered by virtual environment and the flaws of face-to-face interaction motivate the researcher of the present study to employ virtual environment in tutoring the students' writing.

Wiki has been a popular platform that many researchers have explored and proved its ability in supporting collaborative writing (Hewitt & Peters, 2006; de Paiva Franco, 2008; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009; Bradley, Lindstrom & Rystedt, 2010; Kessler & Bikowski, 2010; Zammit, 2010; Kost, 2011; Chao & Lo, 2011; Dell & Hakeem, 2012; Woo, Chu, & Li, 2013). However, research on one-on-one writing via wiki is rather scarce (Samira Yadollahi Kakh & Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor, 2014). Since previous studies proved that wiki is able to facilitate collaborative writing, the researcher of the present study contends it remains a fascinating question as to whether Google Docs is able to support individualized writing. In the authentic context, not all writing tasks require collaborative effort and some might require individual effort. In the present study, this gap is filled; which is whether wiki is able to support individualized writing.

Google Docs, one of the wiki sites, is a free virtual word-processor application that enables its users to virtually create their word processor file or they can upload their word processor file online (Samira Yadollahi Kakh & Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor, 2014). The word processor file created or uploaded is stored in Google Drive, a cloud computing system which enables files to be stored in the network. The users also do not need to install any software if they are using Google Docs online. Besides, Google Docs can automatically save the users' work (<http://www.pcworld.com/article/2456460/google-docs-3-incredibly-useful-tools-for-edits-and-revisions.html>). Google Docs, unlike other wiki environments, offers multiple functions, such as allowing its users to: a) asynchronously and synchronously communicate with others; b) access, view, and make changes to the file offline; c) share their work with another person or e-tutor; and d) retrace the conversation details between the e-tutor and student.

Besides, the act of plagiarizing is quite rampant where the students commit verbatim copying in completing written assignments. Another disheartening fact is that assignment writing service can be easily available for the students; this implies that there are actually demands for assignment writing service that culminate in the ease of accessibility of the service. When opting for assignment writing service or plagiarism, the students do not put their content knowledge and writing skill into use. The students merely pay the assignment writing service provider or commit verbatim copying. Instead of punishing the students, which definitely does not have any far-reaching implication, the educators should consider why the students choose to plagiarize or opt for assignment writing service. Possible answer might be that the students are unable to write on their own, even at tertiary level. In cognizance with this issue, the present study hopes to facilitate student writing via wiki or Google Docs and offer e-tutor help.

Some scholars argue that anti-plagiarism softwares can deal with academic misconduct and the softwares can even be employed in helping students to produce academically ethical written products (Lampert, 2004; Ledwith & Risquez, 2008; Rolfe, 2011; Betts *et al.*, 2012). In examining the use anti-plagiarism software in supporting learning, Ledwith and Risquez (2008) and Betts *et al.* (2012) concurred that the students displayed decreased proclivity to academic misconduct. Nonetheless, Warn (2006) asserts that anti-plagiarism softwares do have their caveats; and being aware of these caveats enables the students to circumvent the detection of academic misconduct by the softwares. In view of this issue, the researcher of the present study believes that implementing e-tutoring via wiki is indeed a better option in dealing with the act of plagiarism.

Furthermore, Warn (2006) suggests that students should be taught on how to cite and make reference appropriately. In this way, it is believed that students' confidence in writing can be elevated and ergo, it is less probable that they will resort to verbatim copying. As mentioned in Background of the Study, final-year students at some research universities in Malaysia are required to write a report on their small-scaled study. In the report, the second chapter, which is known as literature

review, requires the students to review previous pertinent literature and situate the reported study within the existing body of knowledge for the topic (Nirmala, Silvia, & Suni, 2011). In other words, when constructing literature review, the students need to cite other scholars' work. It is the researcher's concern that the students might resort to plagiarism or assignment writing service when writing literature review. Therefore, in the present study, students were taught on how to construct proper literature review.

Apart from that, the potential learning of academic writing through e-tutoring has yet to be tapped. Online medium offers conducive environment in acquiring academic writing skills, especially, in writing literature review. Previous studies prove the potentials of wiki in supporting teaching and learning such as acting as a platform for the students to develop their writing tasks or project paper as well as assisting students in contemplating the ways in which information can be arranged (Ferris & Wilder, 2006) insofar as fostering students' higher-level cognitive development and encouraging student engagement (Hewitt & Peters, 2006). In conjunction with this, the present study employed Google Docs as the platform for the students to perform individualized writing, which is to construct literature review with the assistance of an e-tutor.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

In this section, the goal or end-product of the present study is explicitly stated. There are some objectives that motivate the present study, which are:

- a. to examine the e-tutors' pedagogical practices in tutoring students writing literature review via Google Docs;
- b. to clarify the e-tutors' prominent evaluation criteria in tutoring students writing literature review via Google Docs;
- c. to determine the effects of e-tutoring via Google Docs on students'

writing.

## 1.5 Research questions

The research questions that guide the present study are:

- a. What are the e-tutors' pedagogical practices in tutoring students writing literature review via Google Docs?
- b. What are the e-tutors' prominent evaluation criteria in tutoring students writing literature review via Google Docs?
- c. What are the effects of e-tutoring via Google Docs on students' writing?

## 1.6 Significance of the study

As mentioned in Statement of Problem, writing tasks assigned at higher institution level is indeed formidable (Wang & Li, 2011). The researcher of the present study asserts that possessing good writing skill is pivotal, particularly for undergraduates who intended to pursue their education at a higher level. This is because at postgraduate level, students are expected to be more active in conducting research and publishing their findings in leading journals of the field. In light of this, the present study enables the undergraduates to put their writing into practice in preparing them to pursue their postgraduate study. That is, the present study is the initial stage in *shaping scholars* and it is hoped that this study serves as the cornerstone for future studies that aim at *shaping scholars*. Further, as mentioned in background of study, undergraduates are required to produce a research report on a small-scaled study

at certain universities in Malaysia. In familiarizing themselves with their field of study, they need to read and cite the previous literature. Therefore, the researcher was intrigued on how e-tutoring can help students with writing literature review in the present study.

Besides, the teaching of writing the literature review is to strengthen the students' writing skill. This is because writing skill is not only crucial in the academic context; it is equally important to demonstrate good writing skill at workplace setting. Unlike verbal communication where the listener can engage in negotiation of meaning with the speaker if there is communication breakdown; written communication does not usually occur with the simultaneous presence of both writer and reader. Not having good writing skill will cause a lot of inconvenience insofar as the reader might not be able to understand or even misunderstand the meaning of the writer. In order to avoid all these, the present study assists students in producing a readable writing or literature review. With a consolidated writing skill, it is hoped that the students' marketability can be enhanced.

Apart from that, the use of virtual environment in conducting the teaching of writing makes it convenient for both the e-tutor or e-teacher and students, particularly distance education students, because both can communicate without time and space constraints. The advent of technology enables the students to choose whether to get the teacher's help via synchronous mode or asynchronous mode of communication. Additionally, the use of virtual environment is beneficial for the teacher as well. The teacher can put their technology literacy into practice when utilizing virtual environment in interacting with the students. The teacher's technology literacy is vital because he can use technology for networking and collaborating with other teachers or academics for professional development.

Other than that, as mentioned in Statement of Problem, it is proven that asynchronous mode of communication can often lead to dialogic writing (Coogan, 1995; Samira Yadollahi Kakh & Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor, 2014). In dialogic

writing, both interlocutors, in this case, the students and the teacher, critically discuss certain points and issues, which certainly helps the students to have a deeper comprehension on the points or issues of discussion. The delayed nature of dialogic writing enables the teacher to refine their writing (Coogan, 1995) and enhance the clarity of his text. After experiencing dialogic writing, the teacher can retrace the dialogue and reflect on his teaching practice and pedagogy, ergo, the teacher can develop professionally. The researcher believes that this can make teaching a more rewarding and satisfying experience for the teacher.

Moreover, as mentioned in Statement of Problem, studies on the use of wiki usually foreground collaborative writing (Hewitt & Peters, 2006; de Paiva Franco, 2008; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009; Bradley, Lindstrom & Rystedt, 2010; Kessler & Bikowski, 2010; Zammit, 2010; Kost, 2011; Chao & Lo, 2011; Dell & Hakeem, 2012; Woo, Chu, & Li, 2013), and that the focus on individualized writing is rather scarce (Samira Yadollahi Kakh & Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor, 2014). The present study is able to contribute to the existing body of knowledge as the present study examines the use of wiki for one-on-one writing. The teachers can also benefit from the study and emulate the use of virtual environment in teaching writing. Additionally, the teacher can share the result of one-on-one e-tutoring, or the virtual document with other students for learning purpose as Google Docs enables *sharing*.

## **1.7 Scope of the study**

In the present study, four undergraduates in their final year of study were involved. They needed to complete an undergraduate project that qualifies them to attain their first degree. The project's aim is to expose the students towards the big picture of means of conducting and reporting on their small-scaled study. Before proceeding to writing literature review, the students were asked to read journals and books to obtain more information on the topic of their interest. After reading, they

needed to compile the readings in their project in a coherent manner using proper citation method. Not only that, the students need to do some synthesizing; the students need to explain how their study is related with previous studies. In the current study, the students experienced the learning of writing literature review via Google Docs for six weeks. The e-tutor provided written feedback to the students on their writing. The data of the present study yielded from instruments such as interview, virtual observation, and documents.

## **1.8 Theoretical framework**

There are salient theories which serve as the backbone of the present study, namely input hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, cognitive process theory, comprehensible output, and theory of affordances. Prior to presenting the figure depicting the theoretical framework of the study, elaboration on the theories is presented first in this section.

The input hypothesis, an essential part of monitor theory advocated by Stephen Krashen, stipulates that comprehensible input is necessary for acquisition to take place (Krashen, 1982; Lems, Miller, & Soro, 2010; Mitchell, Myles & Marsden, 2013). According to Krashen (1982), comprehensible input is understood as the level of language input being slightly higher than the students' comprehension ability ( $i + 1$ ). Therefore, the language input should be adequate in facilitating students' acquisition process. Nonetheless, the researcher postulates that the notion of comprehensible input should not be limited to imparting language knowledge. In terms of imparting content knowledge, the notion of comprehensible input is applicable as well. Akin to imparting language input, content knowledge should suffice in facilitating students' acquisition process. In this case, the students in the present study are novice writers; it is inevitable that they need to learn a lot from their in order to produce an intelligible piece of literature review writing. In providing sufficient input to the students before

they went through the process of writing literature review, they were given sufficient input via face-to-face on the ways to construct an outline that guides them in writing literature review such as referring to journal articles' headings and subheadings and coming up with table of references (that summarize their readings). The table consists of columns that are filled with citation, objectives, methodology, findings, conclusion, and the reason why they think the reading is useful.

Krashen (1982) also emphasizes that  $i+1$  is imparted when the communication is successful and that the students are able to understand what is imparted to them. In relation to the present study, the researcher contends that in order to make the input, or the content knowledge for teaching writing *comprehensible*, the students' background knowledge is taken into account so that the students can easily associate the new knowledge with their existing knowledge. Before taking this subject that requires them to produce a report on a small-scaled study, the students actually took a subject that requires them to work collaboratively in conjuring up a proposal (where literature review is one of the components of proposal). However, that subject exposes students on proposal construction in a superficial manner. Hence, in practicing the  $i+1$  principle, the researcher conducted a face-to-face session in imparting the essence of literature review and ways to use Google Docs. The pertinent slides are as illustrated in Appendix A. Besides, input was also provided by the e-tutors on students' writing draft. The e-tutors also took into account of the fact that the students were exposed to proposal writing in a superficial manner before. Therefore, the e-tutors opted for direct corrective feedback and metalinguistic feedback so that the teaching and learning of literature review writing is more effective.

After receiving input from the e-tutor, Krashen's (1982) monitor hypothesis delineates that there are certain conditions that have to be met in order to ensure acquisition takes place. The conditions encompass time, focus on form, and aware of the rule. The students should have sufficient time in contemplating and applying what they have learned. In relation to the present study, the students should have sufficient time in addressing their e-tutor feedback because the feedback provided is in written form; the students can take their time in responding to the feedback and amending their

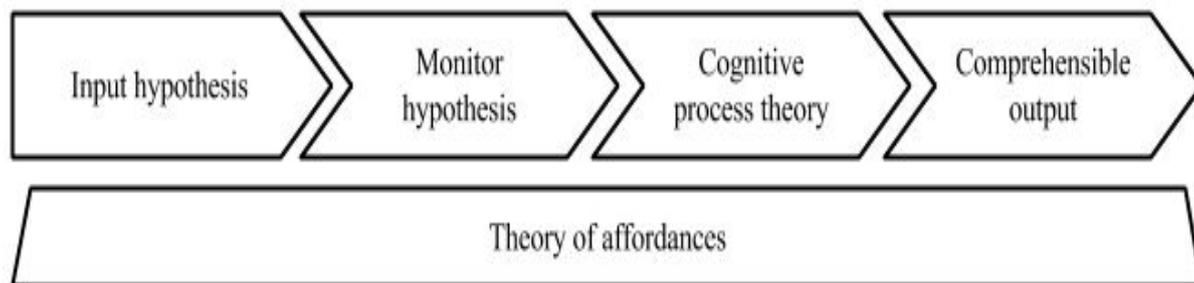
writing draft. Another condition, focus on form, is about considering about accuracy. Since the students in the present study are future language teachers, it is expected that the students can independently focusing on attaining accuracy. This is because in the future, they are expected to lead the students in attaining accuracy. The final condition, being aware of the rule, concerns the fact that the students should be aware of the language rule. The researcher posits that this condition, too, can be applied in acquiring knowledge. In acquiring knowledge or this condition can be possibly fulfilled when the students are provided with justifications by the e-tutors on the highlighted mistakes. In this way, the students would be able to aware or decipher why their mistakes are corrected and learning would be simultaneously more meaningful and effective.

Apart from engaging in the three conditions in monitor hypothesis, the students proceeded to constructing literature review writing on Google Docs. According to cognitive process theory, writers make use of their cognition non-linearly when constructing their writing (Flower and Hayes, 1981). The writers are unequivocal of the objectives of their writing, which is ‘what’ they are going to produce at the end of their writing. The objectives encompass sub-objectives that are more specific and assist the writer in achieving their writing objectives. In constructing literature review writing in the present study, the objectives could be completing the literature review or proposal on a specific deadline and sub-objectives could be identifying appropriate sources, locating references, organizing the references, structuring their writing, and proceeding with writing. Additionally, Flower and Hayes (1981) elucidate that writing involves recursive process where the writers roughly plan for their writing, engage in writing, refine their plan, carry on writing, revise, and rewrite. Since writing is a recursive process; as the students in the present study embarked on the writing process on Google Docs, they might find themselves locating for more references and restructuring their writing. After going through the recursive process of writing, it is believed that the students produce comprehensible output.

Comprehensible output, as Swain (1985:252) postulates, is able to “provide opportunities for contextualized, meaningful use to test out hypotheses about the target

language, and to move the learner from a purely semantic analysis of the language to a syntactic analysis of it.” In analogizing Swain’s (1985) notion of comprehensible output in the present study, the students can test their understanding of input in producing comprehensible output after going through the recursive process of writing. Besides, the researcher believes that content knowledge can be acquired when the students attempted in addressing the e-tutors’ feedback as they amend their writing draft. When amending their writing draft, the students are actually producing output by testing their understanding of the feedback. Swain and Lapkin (1995) augment that noticing is essential in enabling the students to realize their problems or mistakes, and ergo, they refine their output based on their realization. This actually overlaps with one of the conditions in monitor hypothesis, being aware of the rule.

The researcher believes that the functions available via Google Docs enable the practice of theories such as input hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, cognitive process theory and comprehensible output. The notion of *enabling* is consistent with the theory of affordances. Theory of affordances is advocated by Gibson (1977). He expounds on the natural properties of the environment such as terrain, shelters, water, fire, objects, and tools that enables it to “afford” animals to survive. Differently put, the characteristics that the environment possesses make it possible for the environment to “afford” or support the growth and survival of animals. Norman (2004) postulates that not every potential of “affordances” of objects are known. Motivated by this fact, the researcher is cognizant of the fact that Google Docs is a virtual environment that replicates word processors where its functions “afford”: the students in creating and editing the document by making use of input provided (consistent with input hypothesis), going through the recursive process of writing (consistent with cognitive process theory), experiencing the three conditions stated in monitor hypothesis, and eventually producing comprehensible output. The functions of Google Docs also “afford” the e-tutors in providing input to students (consistent with input hypothesis) by using *Comment* function or Suggest Edit function. Besides, Google Docs also “affords” or supports synchronous and asynchronous networking and offline usage. Sarimah Shamsudin (2008) augments that virtual environment “affords” less face-threatening and less-stressful atmosphere which is conducive for learning to take place. Figure 1.1 illustrates the deployment of theories in the present study.



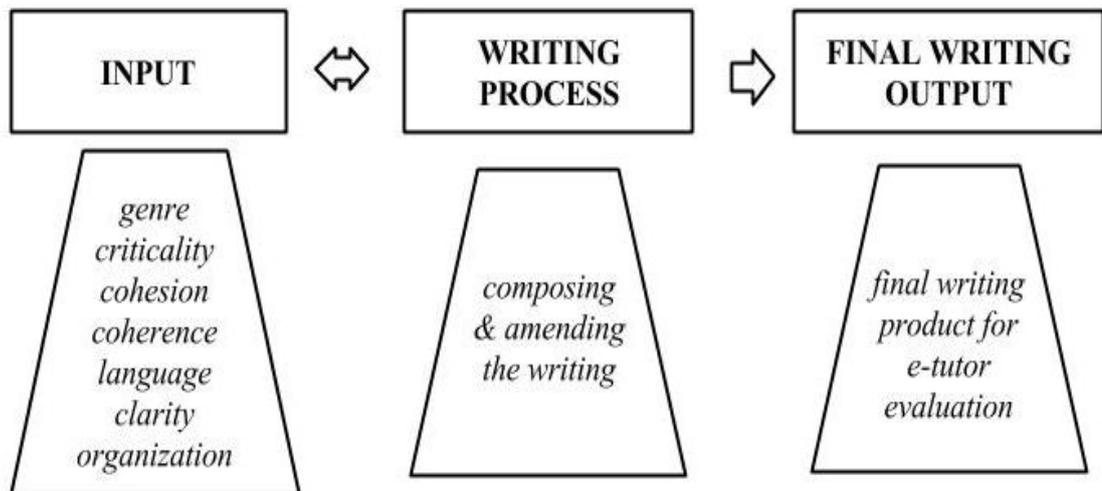
**Figure 1.1:** Theoretical framework of the study

To be precise, Figure 1.1 depicts that input hypothesis was first being addressed by the e-tutors in providing input to the students on writing literature review. Monitor hypothesis was subsequently being addressed as the three conditions, *time*, *focus on rule*, and *aware of rule*, were satisfied by students with the help from e-tutors. Next, cognitive process theory was addressed as the students experienced prewriting and revision stages. Then, the theory, comprehensible output, is addressed as the students attempt to produce output according to their noticing and comprehension of their mistakes. These four theories are supported by the theory of affordances, which is the base of the four theories, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. To reiterate, the theory of affordances manages to support or explain that the functions of Google Docs enable or “afford” the deployment of the former four theories.

## 1.9 Conceptual framework

Before elucidating conceptual framework, it is pivotal to differentiate it from theoretical framework. Notwithstanding some scholars’ view that both theoretical framework and conceptual framework are the same, both frameworks actually denote two different meanings (Paler-Calmorin and Calmorin, 2007). Theoretical framework is more sophisticated in that it is formed through the researcher’s logical reasoning (Rocco and Hatcher, 2011). In contrast, conceptual framework is disparate in that it

displays “visual depictions of the relationships between constructs and the research question and hypotheses that emanate from such a depiction” (Rocco & Hatcher, 2011: 119). The conceptual framework embodies the underlying concepts that justify the present study. The embedded concepts in the present study are input, writing process, and final writing output. The conceptual framework is as illustrated in Figure 1.2.



**Figure 1.2:** Conceptual framework of the study

In the present study, input was provided prior to and during students’ literature review writing process on Google Docs. As mentioned in the previous section, input was first provided during the researcher’s face-to-face session with the students. After that, the students discussed with their e-tutors prior to proceeding to the writing process. With the input, the students proceeded to the writing process, where they composed literature review via Google Docs in a recursive manner. As the students completed the writing draft, input was again provided in the form of feedback by the e-tutors in responding to students’ writing. As depicted in Figure 1.2, the double-sided arrow between input and writing process indicates that both mechanisms are reversible until the e-tutors approve the writing draft. The approval led to the final mechanism, which is the emergence of final writing product.

In terms of the constituents of input, it is believed that the e-tutors should highlight constituents such as genre, criticality, cohesion, coherence, language, clarity, and organization. Genre knowledge pertinent to literature review writing can be imparted when the students are taught to review previous literature, evaluate the current state of knowledge, and explicate the details of the proposed study (Kwan, 2006). Other genre knowledge such as the inclusion of introduction, paraphrasing use of extracts, accurate usage of referencing conventions, and establishing a research niche by evaluating the state of development in the field of study (Bitchener and Turner, 2011) should be stressed as well. Warn (2006) concurs with Bitchener and Turner (2011) that the students should be taught on how to cite and make reference appropriately. Another facet of input is criticality. According to Bruce (2014), critical viewpoint should be expressed when writing literature review. Critical viewpoint can be conveyed in three manners, namely constant deployment of content-structuring moves, realizing attitude markers through the usage of metadiscourse device, and unequivocal disparity of manifested contentions. Apart from that, appropriate coherence and cohesion should be attained when writing literature review.

Appropriate coherence and cohesion are salient inputs (Bitchener and Turner, 2011). The element of coherence can be injected as the e-tutors suggest the students to endeavour in properly weaving together the content of literature review and ensure that the presentation of the content indicates smooth flow from one section to another. Cohesion is another element that should be emphasized (Bryd, 2011) when providing input to students. Consolidating cohesion by the use of sequence connector or cohesive device signals that the writer is moving from one point to another or from one phase to another instead of dwelling on the same point. Language ought to be emphasized when providing input to the students because this aspect is equally pivotal in literature review writing. To be exact, language embodies grammar usage, word usage and proper sentence structure. Consistent with this, Hasrati (2005) explicates that lecturers emphasize more on language in lieu of content when commenting on students' writing.

Apart from that, input should also cover clarity of writing. Clarity of writing can be attained when the students effectively make use of language in conveying the content or their viewpoint. Congruent with this, Torraco (2005) and Reio Jr (2010) elucidate that significance of writing clarity is parallel to content accuracy. Lastly, input should stress on organization aspect as well. When writing literature review, the organization aspect is key to a top-notch quality of literature review (Blanpain, 2006). To be exact, literature review should be organized or structured according to pertinent themes, research questions, or theories.

From the input provided by the e-tutors, the first research question and the second research question, which concern the e-tutors' pedagogical practices and prominent evaluation criteria, were answered. That is, it is assumed that the input provided by the e-tutors implied their pedagogical practices and prominent evaluation criteria in evaluating students' literature review. Besides, the writing process, that led to the production of writing draft, eventually answers the third research question, which concerns the effects of e-tutoring via Google Docs on students' writing. That is, what the students have gained from the e-tutoring was looked into. Subsequently, the answers of the three research questions guide the establishment of working framework for online writing clinic, which is presented in Chapter 5. With regards to the final writing output, it is expected that the constituents highlighted in input such as genre, criticality, cohesion, coherence, language, clarity, and organization would be exhibited.

### **1.10 Definition of terms**

In this section, a few key terms are elaborated. The key terms are repeatedly being used in the chapters that follow, which is why it is essential to unequivocally define the terms.

### **1.10.1 Writing as a process**

In writing, it is almost impossible to get things right immediately. Writers sometimes need to revise and rewrite for multiple times to achieve the desired way of conveying the meaning and to ensure the intended meaning is clearly and effectively manifested. Notwithstanding the fact that writing is a non-linear process, students do not seem to be aware of this as they quickly get over with a writing task and move on to another assigned task (Perrin, 2003). To be exact, students do not reread their work and check whether their writing is readable. Hence, in the present study, writing as a process viewed writing as a non-linear process which requires feedback from the teacher in producing readable written work.

### **1.10.2 Feedback on writing**

Since writing as a process requires feedback from the teacher, the present subsection highlights the connotation of feedback on writing. Feedback is operationalized as the response given to the students in suggesting the accurate or appropriate alternatives to the mistakes or errors made (Ohta, 2001). The provision of corrective feedback enables the students to reflect on their mistakes or errors and make necessary changes as suggested in order to improve their utterances or written chunks. In the present study, corrective feedback is necessary because it serves as the impetus for students' revision on their work. Without corrective feedback, the students might not be aware of their errors and mistakes and redundantly make the same errors and mistakes.

### 1.10.3 Wiki

Wiki originates from a Hawaiian term, *wikiwiki*, which translates to the term, speedy in English (Wagner, 2004). Currently, it is understood as a technological tool that enables knowledge creation, knowledge management, and knowledge sharing among its users (Baumeister, Reutelshoefer & Puppe, 2011). Cambridge Dictionaries Online justifies that wiki is “a website that allows users to add, delete (= get rid of), and edit (= change) the contents, or the program that makes this possible,” (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/wiki>). Macmillan English Dictionary Online concurs that wiki is “a website which allows its readers to freely add and edit content and to create links between different pieces of content,” (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/wiki>). In other words, wiki is understood as any virtual platform that allows collaborative writing to take place as the users too can make changes to the content by adding, deleting, or editing to the writing.

Companies and universities regard wiki as a useful knowledge management system that enables collaborative knowledge building. The users are allowed to make changes to the content easily with the mandatory presence of an *edit* button. The clone of wiki include *wiki*, the original version of wiki created by Ward Cunningham; *Twiki*, the one tailored for companies’ usage; *Squeak Wiki*, *Swiki* or *CoWeb*, the one mostly employed for educational usage; *Plone*, the one suitable for companies’ usage due to the presence of information storing function; as well as *TikiWiki*, the one which is more user friendly tailored for novice users (Raman, 2006). In the present study, the researcher believes that wiki’s potential is not limited to collaborative writing among students. The presence of *comment* button that realizes asynchronous mode of communication also makes it feasible to conduct one-on-one teaching and learning of writing.

### 1.10.3.1 Google Docs

Google Docs is one of the many wiki platforms that was employed in the present study in conducting the teaching and learning of literature review writing. Google Docs is regarded as one of wiki platforms because it allows the users to work on a collaborative writing where the users can add, delete or edit their writing via Google Docs. That is, Google Docs can be understood as a virtual word processor which allows the users to “create and format text documents and collaborate with other people in real time” ([https://support.google.com/docs/answer/143206?hl=en&ref\\_topic=21008](https://support.google.com/docs/answer/143206?hl=en&ref_topic=21008)). Besides, Google Docs is regarded as a distinguished wiki platform as it allows both synchronous and asynchronous modes of interaction. Moreover, the availability of offline mode makes it possible for the users to amend their documents via Google Docs even though they do not have internet connection. In relation to the present study, the students wrote literature review via Google Docs with the help of e-tutors.

As the e-tutors provides feedback to students’ writing, they made use of *Suggest Edit* function and *Comment* function. *Suggest Edit* function can be practised by selecting *Suggesting* mode. *Suggesting* mode can be selected by clicking the pen symbol beneath the *Share* button, which is located at the top, right corner of Google Docs window. For pertinent screen capture, please refer to Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 in Section 2.6.2.2 Employing wiki or Google Docs in the present study. Actually, the *Suggest Edit* function is similar to the *Track Changes* function available on Microsoft Word; the e-tutors struck through students’ error and provided the accurate structure beside the error. The accurate structure is automatically represented by red-coloured font. On the other hand, the *Comment* function was applied as the e-tutors right-clicked their mouse and selected *Comment*. Subsequently, a *Comment* box appeared and the e-tutors filled in the box by writing their feedback. After they completed writing the feedback, they pressed the *Comment* button. The student can reply to that comment by clicking on the *Comment* box. They can write their response in the empty space provided, and press the *reply* button inside the *Comment* box. For the instructions on the way to use the *Comment* function, please refer to Appendix A2.

### 1.10.3.2 Input

When the students are assigned with a writing task, it is necessary for the teacher to provide some inputs prior to or during the writing process in order to guide them in performing the task. The researcher of the present study contends that input should be comprehensible, and this can be explained by employing input hypothesis advocated by Stephen Krashen. To reiterate, comprehensible input is understood as the input modified to a level where it can be mostly understood by the students (Krashen, 1982; Mitchell, Myles & Marsden, 2013). The input hypothesis also emphasizes that the input provided should be adequate in facilitating students' acquisition process and that it should make use of the students' schemata knowledge. In the present study, inputs were provided before the students perform the literature review writing task as well as on students' writing draft in the form of feedback. To be precise, the inputs provided to the students' writing draft were in the form of surface level and deep level. The input is regarded as e-tutors' comment or feedback that is intended to point out the ways in which the students can improve their literature review writing. These inputs are believed to be able to assist the students in conjuring up a good quality of literature review writing.

### 1.10.3.3 Literature review writing

In pursuing higher education programme in some research universities in Malaysia, it is compulsory for the students to produce a written report on a research that they performed. *Literature review* is one of the sections in the research report where the students need to present justification for their study; contextualize the study in terms of what is known about the subject matter; review relevant literature, and present theoretical and conceptual underpinning of the study (Nirmala, Silvia, & Suni, 2011). There are a few steps that students need to engage themselves in before writing literature review, namely locating the sources, searching for readings, reviewing specific literature, synthesizing the results from previous empirical studies, and arranging the reviewed literature.

#### 1.10.3.4 E-tutor

In providing e-tutoring service to the students, it is believed that the e-tutor, a human being, assists in: advising the students on strategies to start writing, such as ways to build an argument; reading a complete or partial draft of students' paper; giving feedback on the overall arguments, organization, and students' patterns of grammatical errors; as well as suggesting ways to attain desirable coherence, clarity, and persuasiveness (<http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/tutor.htm>). Additionally, the facets of feedback may comprise, among others, a) flow of argument; b) deployment of quotes as well as other means of evidence; c) organization of points and so on. In comparison to face-to-face, e-tutor can synchronously and asynchronously communicate with the students on Google Docs, and this enables both e-tutor and students benefit from the advantages of both modes of communication. Synchronous mode enables spontaneous communication whilst asynchronous mode enables delayed communication (See Section 1.3 Statement of problem). In the present study, the e-tutor refers to the students' subject lecturer that assisted the students writing literature review via Google Docs by providing feedback, which was also done via Google Docs as well.

#### 1.10.3.5 Online writing clinic

As an analogy, patients need to consult a doctor in order to treat their illness. Online writing clinic, as the name suggests, aims at *treating* the students who are in need of help in terms of writing. The establishment of online writing clinic is motivated by the fact that writing is an essential skill that the students need to master in order to *survive* their tertiary education. It is generally known that tertiary level programmes tend to assign students with demanding writing tasks where the students need to engage in critical thinking. With the advent of technology, the process of imparting writing skill is much more convenient as the students are able to write at their own pace and assess their writing and the e-tutor feedback anytime, anywhere.

Similarly, the e-tutor can check students' progress and provide feedback anytime, anywhere.

#### **1.10.3.6 Pedagogic practices**

Pedagogy, the root word of pedagogic, denotes “any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another,” (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999: 3). In the present study, pedagogic practice is operationalized as the approach or the action deployed by the teacher or e-tutor in imparting knowledge to the students. Murphy (1996) augments that it is incumbent on the teacher to be involved in pedagogic practice in catalyzing students' learning. In fostering students' knowledge as they were conjuring up literature review, e-tutors applied pedagogical practices such as frequent use of direct corrective feedback, playing a dominant role, providing metalinguistic feedback, and pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the students.

#### **1.10.3.7 Prominent evaluation criteria**

Evaluation is regarded as an indispensable process in teaching and learning. Therein lies the students' level of knowledge acquired (Bushman, 2001) and the indication of the effectiveness of teaching (Elizabeth & Rao, 2010). The researcher of the present study holds the notion that the e-tutors have some criteria in mind, which can be prominent for the observer, as they performed evaluation on the students' literature review writing. The criteria are deemed salient because they imply the quality of literature review writing. In light of this, the present study managed to identify certain prominent evaluation criteria, namely expansion of pertinent subject matter, inclusion of citation/s, cohesion and coherence, language usage, and organization (See Section 4.3 Findings and discussion on e-tutors' prominent evaluation criteria in tutoring students writing literature review via Google Docs).

### **1.10.3.8 Effects of e-tutoring**

In conducting the study, the effects of e-tutoring are among the factors that motivates the researcher to probe into the use of Google Docs as the medium for e-tutoring. In examining the effects of e-tutoring via Google Docs, it is the affordances of Google Docs in supporting e-tutoring that the researcher managed to identify. The affordances of Google Docs can be understood as the capability of Google Docs in empowering the e-tutors in e-tutoring the students as well as empowering the students to learn by manipulating the functions offered by Google Docs (Gibson, 1977). That is, the effects of e-tutoring via Google Docs are palpable as the researcher observed the affordances of Google Docs.

## **1.11 Summary**

The use of Google Docs as a platform for the students to write literature review with the help of e-tutors has been introduced in the present chapter. The contents therein capture the previous studies pertinent to the use of wiki in teaching writing, unresolved issues, expected outcome of the study, rationale in conducting the study, succinct description on the focus of the study (such as the participants' details, duration of study, and the nature of data collected), concise description of underpinning theories and pertinent concepts, and definition of terms of the study. In the subsequent section, details on writing approaches, writing at tertiary level, using corrective feedback, online writing clinic, previous studies pertinent to the use of wiki in teaching writing as well as the underpinning theories are explicated.

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