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Embedding Learning for Future and Imagined Communities in Portfolio Assessment

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Embedding learning for future and imagined communities in portfolio assessment

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Abstract

In tertiary contexts where adults study writing for future academic purposes, teaching and learning via portfolio provides them with multiple opportunities to create and recreate texts characteristic of their future and imagined discourse communities. This paper discusses the value of portfolios as vehicles for rehearsing membership of what Benedict Anderson (1983) called "imagined communities", a concept applied by such scholars as Yasuko Kanno and Bonny Norton (2003). Portfolios can achieve this process of apprenticeship to a specialist discourse through reproducing texts similar to the authentic artefacts of those discourse communities (Flowerdew, 2000; Hyland, 2003, 2004). We consider the value of multi-drafting, where learners reflect on the learning of a text type characteristic of the students' future imagined community. We explore Hamp-Lyons and Condon's belief (2000) that portfolios "critically engage students and teachers in continual discussion, analysis and evaluation of their processes and progress as writers, as reflected in multiple written products" (p.15). Introduced by a discussion of how theoretical perspectives on learning and assessing writing engage with portfolio production, the study presented here outlines a situated pedagogical approach, where students report on their improvement across three portfolio drafts and assess their learning reflectively. A multicultural group of 41 learners enrolled in the degree-level course Academic Writing [AW] at a tertiary institution in New Zealand took part in a study reflecting on this approach to building awareness of one's own writing. Focus group interviews with a researcher at the final stage of the programme provided qualitative data, which was transcribed and analysed using textual analysis methods (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Students identified a range of advantages of teaching and learning AW by portfolio. One of the identified benefits was that the selected text types within the programme were perceived as useful to the students' immediate futures. This careful choice of target genre was reflected in the overall value of the programme for these learners.

Key words: TESOL; academic writing; discourse communities; portfolio assessment

Introduction: A Communities-focussed Approach to Teaching Academic Writing

How can first year, tertiary-level EAL academic writing programmes for adult learners use both portfolio assessment and emerging understandings about the importance of discourse community and imagined communities to target participant needs? To answer this question assumes that such Academic Writing [AW] programmes need to base the production aspect of its output on texts characteristic of those likely to be encountered in their future educational, workplace or professional destinations. Since portfolios provide

multiple opportunities for rehearsing a variety of text types, creating an "album of literacy performances" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 322), it follows they are a logical focus for this output as well as a valid site for learner preparations for future learning contexts. This paper discusses the value of portfolios as vehicles for rehearsing membership of future imagined communities (Anderson, 1983; Kanno & Norton, 2003) through reproducing texts similar to the authentic artefacts of those discourse communities (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 2000; Flowerdew, 2000; Borg, 2003; Hyland, 2003, 2004). As a focussed pedagogical way of achieving this, we consider the value of multi-drafting, where learners reflect on the learning of a text type from first to final draft as well as focussing on micro and macro aspects. We argue that successful management of the multi-drafting process aids the learners better in their quest to produce successful examples of the kinds of academic texts characterising their future imagined communities.

Since Hamp-Lyons and Condon's assertion (2000) that portfolios "critically engage students and teachers in continual discussion, analysis and evaluation of their processes and progress as writers, as reflected in multiple written products" (p. 15), Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), amongst others, have explored the nature of the critical engagement involved in producing multi-draft portfolios, and the learner benefits from such engagement. Recent studies suggest that portfolios can offer such by-products (Katznelson, Perpignan, & Rubin, 2001) and advantages as maximising formative learning occurring within the key sites of participation (Lam & Lee, 2009). Portfolios can also promote meta-cognition, particularly in the context of learner reflectivity on the development of autonomous use of literacies associated with academic writing (Cotterall & Crabbe, 1999; Hyland, 2000; Granville & Dison, 2005; Lucas, 2008).

More specifically, studies reveal that these literacies include enhanced reflective capacity (Woodward, 1998; Reynolds, 2000; Kathpalia & Heah, 2008) leading to more self-reflective awareness of one's own text and of academic literacies, and responsive learning through peer feedback (Murray, 1992; Rollinson, 2005; Zhao, 2010), listenership during midcourse tutor conferences (Farr, 2003; Williams, 2004; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005) and response to written feedback (Weigle, 2002; Leki, 2006;

Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Hamp-Lyons, 2006). These literacies can also be specific subliteracies such as enhanced understanding of paraphrasing (Keck, 2006), self-editing (Xiang, 2004; Ferris, 2005; Andrew, 2005; Vickers & Ene, 2006) or brainstorming (Rao, 2007). The iterative, recursive nature of multi-drafting provides AW learners with such aspects of academic writing literacy as self-editing and the insight to reorganise academic texts by applying target genre and discourse knowledge. To do this is to teach AW texts as understanding the linguistic and generic discourse community of particular academic genre (Flowerdew, 1993; Swales, 1988; Johns, 1995; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 2000; Clark, 2003; Hyland 2003, 2004; Kim & Kim, 2005).

Context and participants

The study occurred within 'AW', a unit of study on a Bachelor of Arts [BA] English as an Additional Language [EAL] programme in a tertiary institution. A diverse group of 41 students (14 male and 27 female, aged 17 to 39) which included first-year BA (EAL) major students and institute-wide degree-level students, took the course to develop their ability to write and succeed in their major subjects. The unit is at Level 5 on the national framework of assessments, that is, first year tertiary. Entry requirements are an International English Language Testing System [IELTS] Band 5.5 or equivalent. The participants come from a variety of countries including China, Hong-Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, India, Iran, Russia, Mexico, Germany, Somalia, Ethiopia and Kuwait.

The Course 'Academic Writing'

The 14-week course is made up of 6 contact hours per week and follows Brown's (2002) prescription for curricular development. The assessment includes a performance-based component in the form of regular weekly multi-draft formative written tasks presented as a portfolio to be graded summatively at the end of the semester. The portfolio tasks vary in text types: from academic description and evaluation to the argumentative essay, incorporating micro and macro level writing and learning. The structure of the course is such that the portfolio and the regular work on its tasks provide the development of a range of strategies required for the final

timed classroom essay assessment. The portfolio procedure adopted in the study was comprised of collection, reflection and peer and ongoing teacher feedback (Hamp-Lyons and Condon, 2000).

Portfolios in AW

In foregrounding portfolios as instruments of learning, teaching and assessing, we emphasise their role in socialising learners to target discourse communities (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 2000; Borg, 2003). This role is enhanced by mid-course tutor interviews, pair and group work involved in work-shopping learners' early drafts, and by understanding that chosen text types are the kinds of texts found in the learner's destination communities, namely further study in such subjects as English, commerce, nursing and early childhood education.

This course is situated in the students' current experiences as its discourses are embedded in the very institutional practices required by the university community. In each delivery of AW, the lecturer conducts an informal needs analysis task, eliciting from each member of the cohort a statement of why they are enrolled in AW and how they hope to use it in their futures. The AW course aims to prepare students to join the multiple activities of their various future academic communities. It aims to achieve this by focussing on such text types as academic paragraphs characterised by the topic sentence, summaries of texts belonging to particular discourse communities, critiques of texts in the public sphere and ultimately, once the foundations are more complete, expository essays.

Multi-drafting and Reflectivity in AW

We consider how the processes of multi-drafting and reflexivity work within the context of the portfolios. With each first draft, students are required to submit a reflective commentary responding to prompts about (a) the purpose of the task, the requirements in terms of content, text organisation, discourse and language features for each of the text types, and (b) what they have learnt from writing the text, what their difficulties have been and how they would work to improve the areas of difficulties themselves. With the second draft, the students submit another piece of reflective writing, answering the question of whether the teacher's feedback to the first draft and their own assessment of the writing and learning correlated. They identify areas of weaknesses and select those to work on urgently.

The reflective component of learning, teaching and assessing by portfolio points to a formative function (Andrew, 2005; Lam & Lee, 2009). Such formative strategies, together with the pedagogical interventions of teacher conferencing, peer review and collaborative group work, give the course cohesion and balance the high-stakes summative focus. The criteria for assessing the portfolio are performance-based, achievement-focussed, and allow for a measure of progress, response to feedback and self-reflexivity (Woodward, 1998; Lucas, 2008). The AW portfolios comprise all drafts of work described in the curriculum plus reflections.

Methodology

Qualitative, grounded research approaches provide authentic, reflective, evaluative insights of real learner experience. Our data comes from transcriptions of open-ended focus group interviews (of 4 or 5 participants), recorded in weeks 3 (start) and 13 (end) and conducted by a researcher external to the teaching team. Interviewing was repeated over three student intakes, with data collected from 41 students. This method adopts the rationale of open-ended interviewing, which Burns (2000) supports by stating "the only person who understands the social reality in which they live is the person themselves" (p. 425). The phenomenological emphasis on the learner allows researchers access to participants' words. Triangulation data comes from mid-course tutor interviews and student reflections. We also have copies of the portfolios themselves for evidential use in future studies.

Focus Group Interviews

For the focus group interviews, students volunteered themselves into groups of four or five. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted 30 minutes. After the students completed AW, the interviews were transcribed. Students had the chance to check the transcriptions for accuracy. Two researchers, the interviewer-researcher and the teacher-researcher, used open-coding to analyse the transcriptions. All participants gave their permission for

their words to be quoted, and all quotations reported here are attributed to pseudonyms.

Our method aligns with Sandelowski's (1995) in nursing. She describes closely reading the material, identifying key storylines in an attempt to understand everyday practices and underlining key phrases because they make "inchoate sense" (p. 373). The researchers used a holistic, instinctive, multiple-technique method to bring out indigenous themes (Patton, 1990). This method draws on recognized word-based and scrutiny-based techniques of observation (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Other analytic techniques include querying the text to locate specific kinds of topics likely to generate major social and cultural themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Brice, 2005), and Glaser and Strauss' "constant comparison method" (1967, p. 101-116).

In week 3, students were asked about their past experiences of academic writing, their reasons for enrolling in the course, their strengths and weaknesses in writing, and their ideal future imagined communities where they would use their improved academic writing.

In week 13, students were individually given a card asking them to respond freely about how the following aspects of the course had impacted on their understanding of AW:

- Regular writing, feedback and follow-up in an assessed portfolio
- Increased learning about structure and discourse
- Understanding about the features of academic writing
- Building literacies such as editing, proofreading, following up corrections

Groups were then guided to vocalise answers to key questions:

- In the light of your learning on AW, when you have a writing task in any academic subject, how will you approach it now?
- What are the main challenges for you in writing an academic text?
- How will AW be useful to you in your future life?

Reflections on Portfolio Tasks

The student portfolios provide rich data about learners' attempts to produce accurate, authentic, generic text types. Reflections, as Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) write, "describe, explain, or otherwise account for the samples included" (p.4). The learners' regularly wrote reflections of 250 words accompanying their first and second text drafts. These reflective writings contain answers to the question on the purpose of the written task, the learning that has occurred in the course of fulfilling the task, students' self-reports about areas of progress or lack of progress, and projections about what actions they need to take to ensure progress after they finish AW. Analysis of our data using the coding methods mentioned above (Sandelowski, 1995; Ryan & Bernard, 2003) enables us to identify how students see multi-draft portfolios as useful for developing their AW strategies with particular focus on how their understandings of discourse and genre have evolved and the effectiveness of literacy strategies they have adopted.

Conceptual Frameworks

Our investigation is informed by the social constructivist and post-structuralist concept of imagined communities and by a study of theoretical perspectives on the use of portfolios as vehicles for discursive and generic understanding. After introducing the concept of imagined community, this review will summarise key approaches to language acquisition foregrounding the importance of teaching and learning texts characteristic of authentic discourse communities: socio-literacy approaches, genre-based and social constructivist approaches, and post-structural critical perspectives.

Imagined Communities and Discourse Communities

The concept of "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983; Norton, 2000; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Murphey, Chen & Chen, 2005; Norton & Gao, 2008) can be applied to EAL AW since the needs analysis carried out at the start of the course identifies that students have in their minds idealised visions of themselves as members of future academic, local, national or professional communities using particular language in specific ways. Beyond the

classroom our students have imagined communities. For example, Ferenz (2005) has shown that learners' involvement in social networks, often a source of information on the use of language and text types specific to the network, provides them with additional investment in the classroom. Abasi, Akbari and Graves (2006) demonstrate student perception of the importance of imitation as a strategy for creating texts characteristic of postgraduate discourse communities, and imitation that can lead to what teachers might see as plagiarism. As our description of participants indicated, the learner's voice desires to achieve a good job (either in New Zealand or their home community), participate in higher education or go to a better university in a course of their choice. Many imagine themselves speaking, writing and performing better English within more native-speaker-oriented contexts. EAL learners, then, also imagine communities they wish to belong to, but as yet do not. Their imaginings can become explicit when they are asked about the contexts they imagine themselves using writing in their futures. Murphey, Chen and Chen (2005) demonstrated how EAL learners' language learning histories effectively project their investments in their future imagined communities and Norton (2000) demonstrated how learner investments are captured in diaries narrating real-world learning experiences.

Future communities are conceptualised as imagined spaces and individuals idealise community and create a sense of self through these imaginings (Anderson, 1983). Kanno and Norton (2003) believe the analogy of nationhood and community helps those desirous of belonging to feel a sense of community with people not yet met (2003, p. 241). Norton and Gao (2008), summarizing literature on imagined communities in language education, point out that "the people in whom learners have the greatest investment may be the very people who represent or provide access to the imagined community of a given learner" (p. 114). Imagined community, then, describes learners' investment: in our case in writing the texts characteristic of discourse communities of their imagined futures. Learner investments impact on future goals, ambitions, dream communities and desires for belonging and recognition. Murphey, Chen and Chen analysed learner histories and concluded "as learners want to belong to a community and

construct their identities as members of the group, they invest energy and time into learning how to be like those members" (2005, p. 85). This framework allows, then, for desire to *belong* to be connected to desire to *become*.

Key Theoretical Perspectives and Discourse Communities

For EAL learners, socio-literacy approaches present opportunities to write in many genres (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000, p. 37). Because they are embedded in literacy contexts, portfolios are linked to socio-literate communities, their members, and the genres they produce (Hirvela & Pierson 2000; Johns, 1990, 1997, p. 322). Portfolios, affording opportunities for learning via multi-drafting, offer opportunities for participants to attempt texts characteristic of several discourse communities, namely those identified during the needs analysis. Through this process, teachers explain university culture to learners so they can learn its requirements through apprenticeship (Wenger, 1998; Paltridge, 2004).

Writing about literacy in socio-literate communities, Grabe & Kaplan take a genre-oriented approach to literacy development. Socialisation into academic literacy, they maintain, presupposes that writing is not only a "communication technology" (1996, p. 47), but also a social practice (Gee, 1996, 1998). Socio-literacy views have implications for literacy instruction particularly in EAL communities (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Hinkel (2002) acknowledges that to generate acceptable texts, students must master the mechanical, syntactic and discursive aspects of discourse that correspond "to the dominant genres of the academy, a specific field, or both" (p. 57). At the same time, "learning to write is part of becoming socialized to the academic community – finding out what is expected and trying to approximate it" (Silva, 1990, p. 17).

In both socio-literacy and genre-based approaches, through understanding readers and their expectations, writers shape texts to meet these expectations in targeted discourse communities (Hinds, 1987; Hyland, 2000, 2003, 2004; Flowerdew, 1993, 2000; Reppen, 2002). For these reasons, writers, including those working with portfolios, gain control over the language and written genres of target discourse communities (Ferris

& Hedgcock, 2005, p. 9). The genre approach places the focus on the read text with the goal of having learners enter their own (often imagined) academic discourse community (Hyland, 2003; Kim & Kim, 2005).

Social constructivists situate second language (L2) writing in the postmodern world (Atkinson, 2003, 2003a). In this approach, language originates from and is constituted in situated context and in community. The notions of "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983), "discourse community" (Borg, 2003; Flowerdew, 2000) and "community of practice" (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991) have been crucial to foregrounding the affective roles of investment and belongingness in generating writing characteristic of discourse communities. Swales (1988) and Johns (1995, 1997) argued that entry of a learner into such communities depends on collaborations of participants in the process. Newcomers to the community need to be apprenticed into the particular discourse prevailing within it (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Woodward-Kron (2004) relays how the concepts of discourse community and apprenticeship offer rich contextual frameworks for investigating the social practices that shape students' writing, effectively socialising them to the discursive practices of the discipline.

The post-structural critical perspective suggests a focus on engaging students in the types of activities they are likely to carry out in their academic studies (Flowerdew, 2000). At the same time, the critical perspective invites students to question, interrogate, and even transform these activities (Canagarajah, 2002; Casanave, 2004; Lynch & Shaw, 2005). Canagarajah sees some of the latent components of text construction as, "a social act, a mediated construct shaped by the interplay between writer, reader and the community" (2002, p. 1). He also suggests that in order to deconstruct ideological freight existent in teaching and teaching materials, a "difference-as-resource" perspective be used.

Such pedagogy is compatible with teaching AW via portfolio as there is space in the reflective process for students to identify their participation in writing practices that affect their cultures and identities. Framed within a multi-cultural model of literacy acquisition, this perspective values writers' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and encourages them to explore issues such as gender, ethnicity, cultural difference, and ideology and to consider how these are reflected in particular texts, relating them to their own experiences and beliefs.

Findings

Our study identifies a number of themes from the focus group data triangulated with student reflections and mid-course tutor interviews. Here, we describe and discuss three indigenous emergent themes, each of which embodies several sub-themes. The first indigenous theme is that the choice of text genres in the portfolio is valuable for future life. Second, we consider students respond positively to learning from generic types. Third, we consider more broadly the range of learning capital inherent in the draft-focussed portfolio-based writing process.

The Choice of Text Types in the Portfolio was Useful

In the week three interviews, 25 students indicated a desire to gain the AW skills required for future study in vocational subjects, namely early childhood education, nursing, commerce and information technology. Mabel (Iran) pointed out, for instance, that AW skills and conventions can be applied to a business context. Five students saw developing AW as part of a longer English learning journey, resulting in more professional and social interactions. 11 other students said they needed AW skills for vocational reasons, such as being able to practise medicine in New Zealand. Of the 41 interviewees, 20 mentioned grammatical accuracy and sentence structure as core needs, with eight speaking about the structuring of academic texts, five about turning research into writing and the remainder detailing such needs as the ability to write "selecting appropriate words", "using formal vocabulary", "in a web" or "in the western way".

All were focussed on future imagined communities and on the discourses seen as characterising them. Students referred, for example, to restructuring the writing to suit the genre of academic writing and finding the right word for the topic (Iranian female); developing the thinking skills needed to fit in with learning expectations of the genre (Iranian female); understanding the logic of the expected order – topic sentence and conclusion

(Korean female); writing with formality and having the vocabulary to sustain a longer text (Iranian male); thinking in a logical and chronological order while focussing on sentence structure too (Korean female); grammar worry that prevents the student from being able to be conscious of sentence structure (Chinese female) and expectations of the academic writing genre that "brings its own stress, so you can't merely focus on vocabulary" (Japanese male). Miwa (Korean) states, "…for the future I want to learn not only this argumentative essay but also other different genre of writing". Emily (Chinese) is positive:

> How to improve in the future: copy some good phrases while reading, rehearse and practise them, build up the vocab. Read more and be familiar with these pronouns. There is not a shortcut to improve my English in a sudden way, but at least I have got some strategies to make it look better.

In week 13, the learners commented on the usefulness of the macro and micro focus on task related to paragraph development and essay writing, critiquing and evaluating and writing a short researched report. William says, "What I am learning to do here is related to what I want to do. I am getting ready for further study – looking into the future".

Learning from Generic Text Types

Nine students comment that a genre-focussed approach with an emphasis on normative conventions can enhance their awareness of target discourse communities. German Yulia reflects, "Formal reports is what I need in my future, study and work". Genre-focussing can draw attention to lexical, syntactical and discursive levels of writing. They comment that this pedagogy is more creative than that of Korea, where students look for discursively locked ways of writing, formula and models. Focussing on discursive features within the genre approach provides learners with a scaffold that did not exist in their home cultures. Farina remarks that Kuwaiti students "have to write, but they don't have to be very serious about that; students - they copy". Farina's comment is supported by Mabel (Iran) who says "Students just choose a book and copy from the book. They don't have to worry about discourse".

Learning capital of portfolio: Embedded Literacies Help to Socialise Learners into Genres

This section briefly presents some of the other forms of learning capital, largely connected with the acquisition of literacies, which learners regarded as capital that can impact on their future contexts. This section draws on our previous study (Romova & Andrew, 2011).

Editing and Proofreading

Discovering the importance of editing and proofreading emerges as a key subtheme with pertinence to future learning contexts. It becomes, for Esther (Korean), part of "an intrinsic set of skills" useful in any future context. A typical description comes from Miwa (Korean) who focuses on the meta-cognitive aspects of self-editing. Yuka (Japanese) agrees saying, "Halfway through the portfolio I started editing. I've become comfortable with this. I think it's good - the process to follow, and I will use it in my future".

This is connected with students' discovery of the importance of proofreading. Jing (Chinese) explains, "I got a chance of proofreading. Now I might find my mistakes before I hand in my paper. There's always something new to find in your work that you can improve. Now I can use proofreading forever".

Paraphrasing, Summarising, Referencing

Anita (Chinese) reveals "I really feel APA style is a headache. However, if I want to do study in university, it is important that I reference people's work correctly". Akram (Turkish) also sounds sincere:

> I had to do a lot of research for this essay. The topic was so difficult. So it seems I copied some parts. I am concerned I should be more careful in using other people's ideas as my examiners may think that I plagiarise.

Yuichi (Japanese) found out it is easy to summarise when he followed the steps he had learnt in class. He comments that this is "quite useful for this task in the future". Jesmin (Chinese) echoes Yuichi's belief:

I realise now how important reading is going to be in my nursing courses. I need to read the article several times until I get the idea clearly... And something else new to me: in-text referencing... I have to learn writing bibliography accurately because it is very important for academic essay writing.

The Western Way

Learning how to write in 'the western way' is seen as crucial to future learning and professional contexts for 20 interviewees. Emma (Korean) says, "Learning these conventions aids us in getting a formal tone, writing logically and understandably in 'the right way'". By this she means the 'right way' as expected in university discourse communities. Farad (Iranian) feels that starting with the thesis and then writing topic-based sentences is useful for future study. Sue (Korean) adds that understanding that conventions of structure affect the "coherence of an essay and give it the overall quality lecturers need".

There was an element of the kind of resistance Canagarajah (2001, 2002) spoke of though - among male respondents from Iran and Japan. Ryo (Japanese), for instance, says he acquired knowledge of western AW strategies "although those I use are ... from the Japanese way". Yuka (Japanese) argues that AW in English is "straight, linear, focuses on the idea; but in Japan it is not straight, it is more tangential, with the main points at the end". Mazyar (Iranian) was vehement too, saying, "Only if you have the vocabulary first is the structure with the thesis and the structured paragraphs possible".

Developing Cohesion and Coherence

24 learners specifically identify "consciousness of cohesion and coherence" [CC] (Miwa's (Korean) words) as part of their newly found approach to the writing process that they will take with them into their future environments. For Vinna (Chinese), awareness of conventions "helps us to improve CC and its relation to topic sentences and putting ideas around them – seeing the whole piece of writing is important instead of throwing ideas into a structure".

Erma (China) indicates the conventions of CC are fundamental to a good essay as business students focus on structure and apply the AW skills to business. Kyoko (Japanese) sets herself a task; "I need to make sure that pronouns refer to some words which are mentioned already in my writing, and they make the whole paragraph more coherent, and readers understand which word the pronoun refers to". Helen (Chinese) contributes by saying, "If one paragraph contains many ideas, it will have unclear clues for readers to follow. The quality of my writing will depend on this. The topic sentence cannot be too general".

Planning and Organisational Skills as Learning Gains for Future Study

Planning and organisational skills, such as outlining and brainstorming, emerge as learning gains notably among 24 learners from Asian backgrounds, who specifically comment on them. Vinna (Chinese) emphasises the value of prewriting and outlining, "they control my ideas when I write my essay - very central". For Jenny (Chinese), a chance to apply outlining also made an impact:

> I have learnt many things through (AW) class. Above all, outlining is the best thing for me. Now I have learnt how to write an outline, and I feel that if I prepare the outline well and in detail, then the time of writing an essay gets shorter.

For Emma (Korean) timesaving is capital too, but so is adapting the literacy of planning, "The process of AW (pre-writing, outlining) helped me to organise ideas simply and start to write easily." Kirma (Kuwaiti) views the process as assisting textual organisation, "The process – pre-writing, outlining and so on – controls my thinking when I write my essay". For Ella (Chinese), "brainstorming ... is the cornerstone that makes your whole essay link well. AW for IELTS and TOEFL is different from AW for nursing. The idea of logical development of text is different". Helen (Chinese) looks to her future community saying, "A good outline is guarantee of a good draft. I have learnt the writing process in Academic Writing and I will apply it in my studies in education".

Reflexivity

The value of reflection is not only evident in the students' reflective writings on their perceived learning gains; it is also explicitly mentioned as valuable capital for their

futures. Jenny (Chinese) says, "For me the reflection stage was special as it was new… You need to think about why you repeat a mistake" and Jane (German) writes, "Now I might find the mistakes before I hand in my paper". Mabel (Iranian) adds that AW changed her style, due to the reflection and feedback loops leading to refining language and lexis. The students' reflective comments in week 13 interviews and in their portfolios evidenced the four areas of improvement that were the focus of Kathpalia and Heah's (2008) study: linguistic, cognitive, affective (the enjoyment experienced in the production of their written texts) and social. "Because of reflection", wrote Miwa (Korea), "I come to know myself" (sic). Vivian (Chinese), in a lengthy reflection, states:

> I always read the teacher's feedback carefully. It helps me understand my errors clearly. For example, I keep using fragments, so I've done some practice on punctuation and linkers. "Wrong register" is also common teacher's feedback. I struggle to find formal words. How am I going to do further study if I don't overcome this? The teacher suggested reading some formal academic article to resolve my problem. I think transfer error is the reason for my problems because there are no conjunctions between two clauses in my language. So I will do some English reading to improve it.

Discussion

The findings offer instances of Hamp-Lyons and Condon's observation that portfolios "critically engage students and teachers in continual discussion, analysis and evaluation of their processes and progress as writers, as reflected in multiple written products" (2000, p. 15). Vivian's emerging understanding of how to incorporate fragments into sentences and how to use lexis characteristic of the register of the target genre in the quotation immediately above exemplify this. The students report the impact of embedded literacy strategies, all components of the curriculum, such as brainstorming, proofreading and outlining. Deeper understanding of cohesion and coherence enables learners to build autonomy in applying those syntactic concepts to their own developing work.

Taking care with pronoun antecedents led Kyoko to a personal learning gain just as Helen learned to keep the focus of paragraphs succinct for a defined readership. The act of reflection is embodied in many findings, notably in Jenny's observation that through reflectivity, a learner self-diagnoses their own mistakes. The link between proofreading and reflectivity is thus established. A merger of socio-literacy and genre-based approaches proves a successful basis for the teaching of AW for vocationally-focussed adult learners in tertiary contexts in countries such as New Zealand, or, arguably Australia or Canada.

Most of the evidence in the findings points to a broad socio-literacy perspective being valuable to teaching and learning AW. Learners report a gaining of control through multiple drafting. Vinna spoke of prewriting and outlining: as 'controlling' her ideas and Kirma sees them as 'controlling' her thinking. Here we observe students gaining the kind of control over their language that Ferris and Hedgcock (2005, p. 9) identified as a characteristic of portfolio assessment. This can also be seen in students' emerging understandings about themselves as writers such as Vivian's new awareness of her transfer error. There is some evidence of students' emerging awareness of a deeper criticality, with reflectivity uncovering AW to be a shaped and mediated construct as discussed by Canagarajah in 2002. This is evidenced in Ryo's criticism of AW's apparent linearity, Akram's fear of accidentally plagiarising and Mazyar's observation that argumentative essays require a thesis at the outset. Here there are beginnings of an interrogation of the cultural norms embedded in academic writing genres, a fascinating issue beyond the scope of the present essay. Unsurprisingly, most students report that learning to write in the 'appropriate' way for academic writing within the programme was a learning gain, despite widespread recognition that this is a Western way. The embedded literacies, such as in-text referencing and outlining are seen as strategies to prevent negative tendencies that might occur when the students write in their own languages. This, we believe, is largely because the students are squarely focussed on their futures.

The above observations about critical engagement and control are dependent on the lecturer, the programme and the institution understanding the learners' imagined conceptions of themselves in the future. It is important

this is recognized, being a means of motivation for the learner. If the writing is clearly purposeful because it relates to those future perceptions, then students write willingly and increasingly carefully. Participation in AW is connected to future participation in desired future discourse communities, such as those of students' future majors. Learning about enhanced lexical choices, ordering of ideas and coherent sequencing are forms of capital gained because they are viewed as useful to future contexts of endeavour.

The process of unpacking the data in the findings brings us to the reification of the portfolio as a vehicle for embedding situated socio-literacies, critical engagement and reflectivity within learners' process of writing academically. Hamp-Lyons (1990, 1991, 2003), McNamara (1996, 2000, 2001), White (1994), Murray (1994), Hamp-Lyons & Kroll (1997, 2001), Murphy (1999), Hirvela and Pearson (2000), Hyland and Hyland (2006), Weigle (2002) and Lucas (2008) champion the portfolio as a valuable tool for assessing EAL students' learning in AW. We build on this endorsement by emphasizing that a multi-draft portfolio is an effective teaching, learning and assessment tool not only because it provides a formative feedback loop and data about learners' cognitive operations, but also because it enhances learners' understanding of writing as a socially-situated process providing for participation in "language socialisation" (Duff & Hornberger, 2008). It develops learners' understandings of generic text types as flexible goals from likely target discourse communities (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 2000) not as ideologically-bound models. Throughout sections 2, 3 and 4 we discuss the role that portfolio writing can have in socialising learners to their short-term target discourse communities.

Conclusion

This study suggests that instructors and researchers can gain insights into experiences of learning AW via a multi-draft portfolio community-based pedagogy. It contributes to researchers' and instructors' understanding of the usefulness of multi-draft portfolios for teaching and learning AW in undergraduate EAL programmes by instantiating those aspects of learning directly related to the learners' desired future and imagined discourse communities.

To answer our research question on how academic writing programmes can use both portfolio assessment and emerging understandings about the importance of discourse community and imagined communities to target participant needs, our project concludes that first-year degree level adult learners report a number of advantages of learning by portfolio, one of which relates to the benefits of the production of text types characteristic of the students' imagined communities. Learners report increased understanding of discursive and generic features of academic texts necessary for participating in their future discourse communities. They report developments in embedded literacy skills contributing to socialising them into genres. More specifically, they describe increased awareness of the need for editing, proofreading, referencing, paraphrasing, summarising, attending to problems of cohesion and coherence, text organisation and grammatical accuracy. Further, learners report on the role of and their progress in applying the writing process, brainstorming and outlining in particular, and planning and organising a text as a gain for achieving success in their future destinations.

Participants also reveal awareness of their areas of weakness and the value of teacher feedback and their own reflections in the process of portfolio creation leading to their conscious selection of areas of follow-up work. We therefore assert that AW multi-draft portfolios promote meta-cognitive and autonomous skills. Reflection elicited in relation to particular and situated learning tasks (Granville & Dison, 2005) brings into consciousness the possibilities of autonomy identified by Lucas (2008, p. 32) and meta-cognition (Tishman, Perkins & Jay, 1995, p. 67). Hence, we suggest portfolios enhance learners' understanding of academic writing as a socially-situated process involving them in language socialisation. We therefore conclude that multi-draft portfolios within a communities-focused, genre-oriented approach to tertiary AW is an effective teaching, learning and assessment tool.

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