This proposal is for a Teaching as Research (TAR) Project to be carried out in Spring 2018 in my English 104: Academic Discourse for Multilingual Speakers course. The study will examine changes in student writing practice as indicated by the analysis of textual features (quantitative), student reflection on their attitudes toward writing and writing practice (qualitative), and follow up interviews (qualitative).

ENGL 104 stands at a critical intersection of the college curriculum. It draws mainly second-semester first-year students who have self-identified as needing support with academic writing and academic language more broadly. They are generally international students who identify as second-language (L2) speakers of English. ENGL 104 combines a more traditional approach to academic writing, in which students write in a variety of genres common to the liberal arts curriculum, with a student-as-researcher approach that encourages students to explore and explain the discourse standards and norms of their own academic community. Students are then able to examine their own practices in light of their findings and discuss them through the process of writing a research report on their own inquiry. Each iteration of the course takes a different focus based on the interests of the participating students; past courses have examined word choice in academic settings, citation practices, and approaches to the writing process.

A TAR approach is particularly suited to this research focus, given the interactions between the ENGL 104 coursework, the students’ broader academic experience, and the majority of students’ status as advanced proficiency English learners. When a student engages in an academic writing assignment, there are myriad strategic, affective, and linguistic factors at play.

The current literature presents a mixed picture of the potential gains in L2 writing development while in an English academic environment. Much of the research is done at larger universities, where many of the students are in professional or technical disciplines that do not require extensive writing. Many studies (e.g., Knoch, Rouhshad, & Storch, 2014; Knoch, Rouhshad, Oon, & Storch, 2015) take a quantitative approach that emphasizes large numbers of participants and uniform writing samples—these choices are methodologically valid, but tend towards short, timed writing samples that do not reflect students’ actual writing process for larger assignments. Other research investigates students’ attitudes towards writing, but not the pedagogic approaches that may affect them (e.g., Morton, Storch, and Thompson 2015).

Mount Holyoke students engage in writing in a variety of disciplines and genres, and the curriculum places value on the development of written skills. Situating the research project within a course provides opportunities to sample student writing many times throughout the semester in longer and shorter texts, formal and informal registers, and initial and revised drafts. The proposed project will also provide the opportunity for strong triangulation of data; as reflection is an essential part of my pedagogy, there will be ample qualitative data on students’ perceptions of their writing and their attitudes towards their broader academic practice. These qualitative data can combine with textual analysis data to provide a full picture of a semester of writing development.

I do not predict to see significant improvement in broad measures of text quality, but do hope to see development in attitudes toward writing and in writing practices. Indications of this type of
development may point to textual features that are undergoing more subtle changes. The results of this study will contribute to the broader field of Multilingual Writing Studies and will contribute to the development of future iterations of this course. Results may also suggest curricular and faculty development approaches to be implemented in my role as ESOL Coordinator at the college.

(598 words)

**Working Bibliography:**

*Primary Research*


*Pedagogy*

