

# TESL Reporter

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## **The Effect of Strategy-Based Instruction on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Achievement**

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### **Abstract**

Strategy-based instruction (SBI) has been proven to be effective in improving language learning skills including writing. The present study investigated the effect of SBI on Iranian EFL learners' argumentative and narrative writing achievement. To this end, 72 intermediate-level EFL learners were selected and divided into 4 groups with equal numbers -two experimental and two comparison groups. The experimental groups underwent the strategic instruction of RAFT, STOP, DARE, and STAR strategies in order to enhance their argumentative or narrative writing quality through the three main stages of process writing: pre-writing, while writing, and post-writing. Meanwhile, the comparison groups were exposed to the traditional instruction. Additionally, a sub-sample of the experimental groups were interviewed about their abilities in the orchestration of their strategy use. One week after the intervention, a post-test was administered. Quantitative results of the one-way ANCOVA along with the qualitative interpretations of the interviews indicated that the experimental groups significantly outperformed the comparison groups; however, there was no significant difference in the performance of the experimental argumentative and narrative groups.

**Keywords:** Strategy, Strategy-based instruction, Modes of writing, Argumentative writing, Narrative writing

### **Introduction**

Due to pursuing academic purposes in EFL contexts and satisfying the social, communicational, and linguistic needs, writing especially FL writing is deemed as one of the most important and demanding skills to be learned and improved by EFL learners. According to Gillespie, Graham, and McKeown (2013), writing is defined as “a goal-directed and self-sustained cognitive activity requiring the

skillful management of (a) the writing environment, (b) the constraints imposed by the writing topic; (c) the intentions of the writer(s); and (d) the processes, knowledge, and skills involved in composing” (p.4). Writing is one of the active and productive skills that EFL learners face numerous challenges with while doing, hence; the call for a focus on writing in various pedagogical practices is mandatory. Writing is a complex process that requires numerous cognitive and metacognitive activities such as brainstorming, planning, outlining, organizing, drafting and revising. Omaggio Hadley (1993) claimed that writing is a composing process which requires the ability to whether tell or retell information or events in the form of descriptions or narrations or to transform information into new texts, as in exposition or argumentation. Hence, it is viewed as a continuum of activities that range from more formal and mechanical aspects at one end to the more complex act of composing at the other end. EFL learners face some writing problems, most important of which is that many of them lack adequate knowledge about writing processes and mastery of the fundamental skills vital to produce fluent pieces of writing (Budig, 2006; Quibble & Griffin, 2007; Schoeff, 2007). Furthermore, these problems re rooted in their lack of knowledge about strategic writing techniques, for example; students find it really demanding to write in academic contexts since they suffer from inadequate knowledge about how to generate ideas for writing. Sturm and Rankin-Erickson (2002) stated that composing is an advanced academic task within educational settings and part of the students’ problems in writing are related to difficulties in applying various cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which relate to the lack of a rigorous and systematic methodology in teaching these strategies. Therefore, in order to tackle these issues, the current study attempted to incorporate strategy-based instruction (SBI) as a systematic approach to the teaching of writing modes with the ultimate goal of enhancing writing achievement.

## **Literature Review**

### **Strategy-Based Instruction**

Strategy-based instruction (SBI) is one of the learner-centered approaches to learning that aims to equip learners with effective skills and strategies which will consequently help them to maximize their learning opportunities. Through SBI,



teachers and learners work in collaboration to integrate strategies to the regular language curriculum (Rubin, Chamot, Harris & Anderson, 2007) so that learners can reap the benefits (Chamot, 2005). According to Gu and Nguyen (2013), these learner-focused approaches of strategy training focus on multiple aspects of improving students' metacognition and self-regulation skills, directing learners' attention towards task analysis, and involving comprehensive training packages with the aim of reinforcing both metacognitive management of learning and task analysis. SBI includes "a combination of direct instruction and modeling, as well as guided and independent practice" (Zumbrunn, 2010, p.15). According to Rubin et al. (2007, p.142), the symbolic features of an SBI model revolves around these four respective steps: (1) awareness raising, (2) presentation and modelling, (3) providing multiple practice opportunities, and (4) evaluating the effectiveness of strategies and transferring them to the new tasks.

Writing strategy instruction is a pedagogical approach that intends to familiarize the learners with strategies for all phases of the writing process while breaking down the writing tasks into manageable pieces and making subprocesses and skills much more explicit (Mousapour Negari, 2011). The main purpose of strategic writing instruction is to emphasize learning through pursuing some mental procedures to produce writing and keep the track of the production procedure (Calhoun & Hale, 2003). Strategic writers are distinguishable from non-strategic writers in such a way that they are capable of manipulating some efficient writing strategies in various writing situations. These writers strive to put the theories behind these writing strategies into practice and bring about more organized and richer-in-content pieces of writing (Abdel-Hack, 2002). Arjmand (2012) claimed that if language learners have an array of learning strategies at their disposal, their achievement in language proficiency will be much more facilitated. Therefore, it is necessary for language learners to learn writing strategies that will ultimately provide them with some sufficient support. Numerous studies have verified the success of SBI program on writing achievement of the second or foreign language learners, such as the following:

Chien (2008) explored writing strategy use in Chinese EFL student writers in relation to their achievement in L2 (English) writing. This research took a cognitive approach to the process of writing in a second language as a skilled perfor-

mance in production. A total of 40 Chinese EFL writers in Taiwan partook in this study. The strategies used by high and low achievers in writing revealed through the concurrent think-aloud protocols and immediate retrospective interviews with the students were investigated, analyzed and compared. Results showed that in comparison with low-achieving students, high-achieving students focused more on clearly formulating their position statement in planning, generating texts, and revising and editing such as making meaning changes and fixing grammatical and spelling errors during reviewing. Mousapour Negari (2011) did a study in which she investigated the effect of a single pre-writing strategy, concept mapping, on 60 Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing performance. The study adopted a pre-posttest experimental control group design. The results of the ANCOVA analysis revealed that experimental group outperformed control group on the posttest to a significant level. Mirlohi, Ketabi & Roustaei (2012) attempted to investigate the effect of teaching some concepts of writing knowledge such as developing a topic sentence, writing a central idea, maintaining a body and conclusion on writing achievement of 33 Iranian EFL learners at the upper intermediate level of English proficiency. The results of posttest revealed that the experimental group benefited the advantage of intervention to a noticeable level. Mohseni Asl (2014), examined the effect of teaching pre-writing strategies-brainstorming, concept-mapping, and free writing, on 57 intermediate EFL learners' writing performance. The study had a pre-test, post-test experimental-control group design. The results of three separate Paired Sample t-test revealed that two experimental groups outperformed the control group on the post-test. Bai (2015) did a longitudinal interventional study, examining the effect of four groups of writing strategies (planning, text-generation, feedback handling and revising) on 442 Singapore primary school students' writing competence. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design, quantitative and qualitative analysis of ANCOVA revealed that the experimental group's writing performance was better than the control group and also experimental group was more successful in strategy orchestration and use.

Mohammad Kassem (2017) investigated the effect of a blended strategy based on concept mapping and text structure on EFL learners' writing performance. An intact group (N = 42) of seventh level English majors at Thadiq Sciences and Humanities College, Shaqra University, KSA participated in the study in the first

semester of the academic year 2016-2017. They were assigned to an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of 21 students. A writing pretest was administered to the two groups and scored by two raters using the Weir's TEEP attribute writing scale (1990). An independent samples t-test performed on the pretest mean scores of the two groups showed that they were homogenous prior to the experiment. Concept mapping and text formatting (the proposed blended strategy) were integrated in the Advanced Writing course (Eng 413) for experimental group students. The control group received conventional instruction that did not include the proposed strategy. Independent and paired samples t-tests revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in all the subscales of Weir's TEEP attribute writing scale, hence supporting the positive effect of concept mapping and text formatting on EFL learners' writing performance.

### **Modes of Writing**

A plethora of research has been done on the concept of "genre" and the role it plays in writing. Genre studies have put the recognizable patterns and norms of organization and structure of written texts into the center of attention. As Stifler (2002) asserts, modes of writing or rhetorical modes are "patterns of an organization aimed at achieving a particular effect in the reader" (p.1). Generally, modes of writing have been classified into four types; descriptive, narrative, expository and argumentative (Connor, 1996; Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

### **Argumentative Writing**

Argumentative writing is a genre of writing in which writers strive to take a specific stance and struggle to convince the readers to embrace the same stance or perform a particular action (Fannig, Nippold, & Ward-Lonegran, 2005). Chinn (2006) asserted that written argumentation can bring about an increase in intrinsic motivation and strengthen problem-solving skills in academic settings. From academic perspective, argumentative writing can help learners in acquiring knowledge (Driver, Newton, & Osborne, 2000; Gil, Iiya, Neuman & Schwarz, 2003; Zohar & Nemet, 2002), extending scientific thinking skills (Shanahan, 2004), and deepening understanding of history and social sciences (De La Paz, 2005). Researchers have proven that argumentative writing is one of the most demanding writing models to be learned and developed (Andrews-Weckerly, Ferretti & Lew-

is, 2009; Neff-van & Dafouz-Milne, 2008). Learners need to master this genre in order to orchestrate their own ideas in academic contexts with relying on various patterns and approaches.

### **Narrative Writing**

Narratives are twisted recounts. The nature of narrative writing is to entertain or inform the readers through attracting and holding their attention on a specific story or event. Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.337) define narrative writing as this: “narrative writing reports an event or tells the story of something that happened”. Narratives attempt to teach, inform, represent the writer’s personal experiences, and also expand the readers’ horizons of imagination (Derewianka, 1990). Narratives expose the readers to fictional and non-fictional contexts. Writers use a lot of language features to control these experiences: they lead the readers through the flow of the event and direct them to infer and get the gist of the story. Narrative writers should draw the event so masterfully that the readers can capture most of the scene in mind. Altogether, narrative writing can reinforce the writers’ creative thinking through picturing the personal events in a comprehensive chronological order.

Writing plays a significant role in academic and educational settings; it helps the learners to accomplish their assignments, promote their performance and functioning, and expand their knowledge (Graham & Perin, 2007). Hence, the ability to convey meaning in different written text types is of paramount importance in furthering academic and professional success (Dastjerdi & Hayati Samian, 2011). Although the explicit instruction of writing strategies is not usually practiced in foreign language classrooms, the empirical evidence proves it to be fruitful for language learners. It’s worth mentioning that the review of the empirical studies reveal the fact that most of the interventional studies focus merely on one or at most two writing strategies with considering either one or two stages of writing process like pre-writing or planning; e.g. Fidalgo, Garcia, & Torrance (2008); Mousapour Negari (2011); Limpo & Alves (2013), etc. In EFL pedagogical settings, writing strategies are assumed to be instrumental in helping the learners improve their writing skills. To further delve into this issue and fill the present gaps, the current study intended to examine the impact of the explicit instruction

of four clusters of writing strategies on the writing achievement of EFL learners with focusing on the three main stages of process writing-pre-writing, while-writing, post-writing- through probing the following research questions:

- Q1: Does strategic instruction have any effect on the argumentative writing of EFL learners?
- Q2: Does strategic instruction have any effect on the narrative writing of EFL learners?
- Q3: Which genre of writing (argumentative or narrative) is more sensitive to strategic instruction?
- Q4: Are EFL learners capable of articulating and/or orchestrating their strategy use in their writing process?

## **Methodology**

### **Design**

For the quantitative purpose, this study adopted a quasi-experimental non-randomized comparison group(s), pretest-posttest design. The rationale for choosing such a design was that since in scholastic or institutional contexts, schedules cannot be disrupted nor can classes be reorganized to accommodate a research study, the researcher used preexisting intact classes with nonrandomized members to conduct the study (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2018). Furthermore, in order to add a qualitative dimension to the study, a sub-sample of the experimental groups were randomly selected and individually interviewed both prior to and after the intervention about (a) perceptions on writing skill in general, (b) problematic areas in writing. (c) attitudes towards the target intervention, and (d) reports on the use of strategies in order to capture the quality of the strategy use vis-à-vis the articulation of strategy use.

### **Participants**

A total number of 72 intermediate-level EFL learners, 30 male and 42 female, were selected from the “Language Center of Tehran University” in Tehran, Iran. This academic institute works in affiliation with Tehran University and accounts for educating both undergraduate and postgraduate university students with different university majors and fields of study. The target learners of this study had

been exposed to general English courses for about two years and were currently studying the *Four Corners 4* English book series. Intermediate-level students suited the purpose of the study since the participants were selected to learn and practice “paragraph writing” through applying the writing strategies that aimed to reinforce generating and organizing ideas and enhancing fluency in writing. The learners in pre-existing intact classes were assigned into 4 groups of 18, namely two experimental groups and two comparison groups. Their age ranged from 18 to 30. All of the participants were native Persian speakers and had no prior exposure to strategic writing instruction and partook in the study voluntarily.

### **Instrumentation**

This section is dedicated to elaborating on the instruments used in this study.

#### **Pre-test**

The researcher used pre-testing as a means of gathering baseline data on the participants’ initial argumentative and narrative writing ability in all the groups. The first writing topics in the list of argumentative and narrative topics functioned as the pre-testing topics (Appendix A). The topics were printed on an A4 paper following this instruction: “Write a narrative/ an argumentative paragraph (150 words) about the following topic”:

**Some people like to do only what they already do well. Other people prefer to try new things and take risks. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice**

**Technology is supposed to solve our problems, but sometimes it just complicates them. Write about a time when technology made your life more difficult**

#### **Post-test**

As the nature of an experimental study demands, a posttest was administered in order to gauge the impact of the intervention on the participants’ writing achievement. To this end, the last topics on the list of both argumentative and narrative topics functioned as post-testing topics. Participants in the experimental

and comparison argumentative and narrative groups were asked to write a 150-word paragraph about the intended topics:

**People learn in different ways. Some people learn by doing things; other people learn by reading about things; others learn by listening to people talk about things. Which of these methods of learning is best for you? Use specific examples to support your choice**

**With so many awesome things to learn and do in the world, nobody should ever be bored. Write about a time when you turned a boring day into an exciting one**

### **Stimulated Recall Interviews**

In order to maintain the qualitative dimension of the study, the researcher incorporated stimulated recall interviews (SRI) developed by Mackey and Gass (2000). SRIs investigated the participants' perceptions and understanding of writing skill in general, difficulties in writing, and writing strategies both prior to and after the intervention. The researcher selected four members of the experimental groups of the study randomly and interviewed this sub-sample the study individually. Refer to Appendix B to see one sample of interview. The interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed to be coded and interpreted.

### **Writing Scoring Rubric**

The Test of Written English of TOEFL (TWE) scoring rubric was applied for the purpose of scoring the pre-test and post-test writing papers by two separate scorers. Both of the scorers held an MA degree in TEFL and had more than five years of experience in teaching general English and writing skill in EFL institutes. This rubric provides holistic scoring in which the writings are assessed according to six points (representing six levels of writing proficiency) on a criterion-referenced scale, analyzing the rhetorical, syntactic, and communicative characteristics at each of the six points to provide information about the examinees' strengths and weaknesses in generating and organizing ideas on the paper, supporting those ideas with evidence or examples, and using the conventions of standard written English (Appendix C).

## Procedure

Four clusters of writing strategies represented in mnemonics (RAFT, STOP, DARE, and STAR), each of which including four elements of strategic writing, were chosen and applied in the intervention. These strategies were compatible with the three phases of process writing; namely pre-writing, while writing, and post-writing.

### RAFT strategy

The purpose of RAFT is to make learners orient themselves to the writing task. RAFT encourages students to project their own voices, select formats for presenting their ideas, and respond to writing prompts that call for their consideration of writing from various perspectives as follows (Havens, Santa, & Valdes, 2004):

- **R** stands for determining the Role of the writer; who are you as a writer? A journalist? A narrator? An arguer? An editor? Etc.
- **A** stands for specifying the Audience; who is the receiver or decoder of the written text? Yourself? A Teacher? Parents? A Senator? Etc.
- **F** stands for determining the Format of writing; Is it a Narration? A Description? An Exposition? An Argumentation? etc.
- **T** stands for selecting the Tense; which tense (present, past, future, etc.) is compatible with the given topic and the selected format.

During the pre-writing stage, the teacher tried to strike the learners' interest in thinking about their goals of writing. They were encouraged to ascribe themselves a brand new identity as a writer and choose among a pool of roles (narrator, arguer, reporter, journalist, etc.). Additionally, they became cognizant of not taking the role of their audience for granted, that is who they were writing to and in what setting. Some fundamental information about the structure of narrative and argumentative writings were delivered to the learners in order to initiate the primary steps of drafting.

### STOP and DARE strategies

These two strategies were developed by De La Paz and Graham (1997a, 1997b) in response to students' lack of attention to or familiarity with the importance of planning before composing. These strategies reinforced the sense of



reflection in students' minds; they learned to be reflective by generating ideas to develop their own writing.

### **STOP**

- **S** stands for **S**uspending judgment and **S**triving to free-write about the topic without any kind of restriction.
- **T** stands for **T**aking a stance, in which students themselves decided and chose which ideas they wanted to concentrate on.
- **O** stands for **O**rganizing ideas according to their importance in constructing the paragraph. Students were taught to number the generated ideas according to their importance.
- **P** stands for **P**lanning more. Students were reminded to keep the track of their writing processes and plan more for its further enhancement.

### **DARE**

- **D** stands for **D**eveloping a topic sentence. In this step, students focused on the first sentence to be clear and meaningful
- **A** stands for **A**dding supporting ideas, in which students wrote ideas closely related to the main idea.
- **R** stands for **R**ejecting writing too many details. In this stage, students were asked not to focus on the specific details.
- **E** stands for **E**laborating on each main idea. Students were taught not to leave any main idea without sufficient support and provide an explanation or personal experience.

These two clusters of strategies, were integral to the while-writing phase of process writing. For exercising STOP strategy, the researchers reinforced the learners' self-confidence in writing and encouraged them to have several drafts of writing and use scratch papers on which they could jot down their ideas as freely as they could, prioritize them, delete the unwanted ones and reshape the pertinent ones. As the for DARE strategy, the learners were taught to rewrite their jumbled pieces of writing and put them in the one-paragraph framework, comprising thesis statement (main idea), supporting it through examples, personal experience, expert claims, etc. and closing it one concluding sentence.

### STAR strategy

This strategy is developed by Gallagher (2006). STAR provides a framework for revising the written text in five interconnected steps:

- **S** refers to **S**ubstitution. In this step, students were taught to substitute overused words, unclear verbs, and weak adjectives in order to avoid repetition or ambiguity.
- **T** refers to **T**aking things out. In this stage; students deleted unimportant and irrelevant information in their composed paragraphs 'to deter redundancy.
- **A** refers to **A**dding new information and description to preserve the required meaning. In this step, students were reminded to reread their sentences and adjust them in terms of adding new words or phrases to maintain the intended effect.
- **R** refers to **R**earranging the sequence to produce the desired effect. If needed, the learners were recommended to relocate the sentences to maintain the acceptable coherency.

For post-writing phase, STAR strategy was employed. Learners were taught to act as ones who could self-monitor their own final draft and make some mechanical amendments like substituting poor and repeated vocabulary with rich and wide-ranging ones, checking for minute grammatical mistakes (adding or omitting articles, suffixes, s plural, etc.), and in case necessary, rearrange the sentences to provide full coherence in their writing.

Before commencing the treatment sessions, a separate one-hour session was devoted to raising the participants' awareness of the framework and the writing procedures of argumentative and narrative writing in all the four groups. Two separate handouts labeled as "how to write a narrative paragraph" and "how to write an argumentative paragraph" (appendix D) were distributed among all the groups of study. Pertinent instruction along with the required information were provided by the researcher. Subsequently, the experimental groups started undergoing strategic intervention which took six session and each session lasted for an hour. In every session, one cluster of strategies along with its corresponding phase of process writing, was introduced, instructed, and practiced. During this program, the researcher planned to introduce and teach four clusters of writing strategies (RAFT, STOP, DARE, and STAR) according to Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary,

and Robbins' (1999) model called Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), in which these steps were followed:

1. **Preparation:** Students' current writing strategies were identified for familiar tasks in order to activate their tacit knowledge on the use of strategies.
2. **Presentation:** In this step, the researcher modeled, named, and explained the new strategy.
3. **Practice:** Students practiced the new strategy; in subsequent strategy practice, the teacher faded reminders to encourage independent strategy use.
4. **Self-evaluation:** Students evaluated their own strategy use immediately after practice.
5. **Expansion:** Students were trained and encouraged to transfer the strategies to the new writing tasks with different topics, combine them into clusters and develop a repertoire of preferred strategies.
6. **Assessment:** The researcher assessed the participants' use of writing strategies and their impact on the participants' writing performance.

Students in both of the experimental groups were trained to write a narrative/ an argumentative paragraph on four different topics after learning each strategy and they were reminded to transfer every learned strategy to the new writing task. The aim was to reinforce the cyclic usage of strategies for better learning and greater automaticity. Besides, sufficient feedback was provided on the process of strategy use and the overall quality of writing with more emphasis on the rich content and the orderly process of writing, in such a way that in every draft of writing, the researcher encouraged the use of the target strategy and rewarded those who had successfully applied the strategy with a positive feedback. One week after the intervention, the posttest session was held. In order to enhance the qualitative dimension of the study, the researcher intended to embed stimulated recall interviews into the process. For this qualitative component, a sub-sample of the experimental groups (4 members) were selected randomly and were interviewed individually both prior to and after the intervention. The interviews covered four main aspects of writing related to the study including (a) perceptions about the writing skill, (b) problematic areas while writing, (c) attitudes towards the intervention, and (d) reports on the use of strategies in order to capture the quality of

their strategy use vis-à-vis their articulation of strategy use. The questions based on these four aspects of writing were derived from reviewing the pertinent literature. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed later to be interpreted in the light of the findings of the study. The Comparison groups went through the same procedure with the same duration of time and the number of sessions except for two major differences: after being pretested, the participants in the comparison groups were exposed to the traditional (non-strategic) treatment, during which the researcher emphasized on maintaining the main structure of a good paragraph containing a beginning, sufficient body, and an ending. In addition, feedback on writing papers was product-oriented with a focus on formal aspects of writing such as syntax and mechanics. Likewise, the comparison group participants underwent a post-test session one week after the intervention. For both experimental and comparison groups, the researcher was in charge of instruction.

**Table 1.** Design: Non-Randomized Experimental, Comparison Groups, Pre-test-Posttest

Group	Pre-Test	Independent Variable	Post-Test
E1	Y1	X1	Y2
C1	Y1	X2	Y2
E2	Y1	X1	Y2
C2	Y1	X2	Y2

Results and Discussion

Quantitative results

The quantitative data were analyzed by incorporating a one-way ANCOVA and the qualitative data were gathered through interpreting stimulated recall interviews (SRIs). Pre-test and post-test writing papers were scored by two separate raters and the inter-rater reliability was probed by calculating Pearson correlations. Based on the results, there were statistically significant agreements between the two raters on;

- Pretest of writing ( $r(70) = .617$  representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ) and

- Posttest of writing ( $r(70) = .819$  representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ).

In order to probe the quantitative research questions, descriptive data are represented below:

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Writing by Groups with Pretest

Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comparison Narrative	4.129a	.140	3.849	4.410
Comparison Argumentative	3.944a	.140	3.663	4.224
Experimental Narrative	4.944a	.140	4.663	5.224
Experimental Argumentative	4.927a	.141	4.646	5.209

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pre-test = 3.15.

Note. The means were adjusted for the effect of the pre-test.

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the groups on the post-test of writing after controlling for the effect of the pre-test.

The results showed that experimental narrative group ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SE = .140$ ) had the highest mean on the posttest of writing. This was followed by the experimental argumentative ( $M = 4.92$ ,  $SE = .141$ ), comparison narrative ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SE = .140$ ) and comparison argumentative ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SE = .140$ ).

The main results of the one-way ANCOVA ( $f(3, 64) = 13.93$ ,  $p = .000$ , Partial  $\eta^2 = .384$  representing a large effect size) indicated that there were significant differences between the four groups' means on the post-test of writing after controlling for the effect of the pre-test. The significant F-value of 13.93 should be followed by the post-hoc comparison tests (Table 2) in order to compare the groups two by two.

**Table 3.** Pairwise Comparisons; Posttest of Writing by Groups with Pretest

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comparison Narrative	Comparison Argumentative	.186	.199	.353	-.211	.582
Experimental Narrative	Comparison Narrative	.814*	.199	.000	.418	1.211
	Comparison Argumentative	1.000*	.198	.000	.604	1.396
	Experimental Argumentative	.016	.199	.935	-.381	.414
Experimental Argumentative	Comparison Narrative	.798*	.199	.000	.401	1.195
	Comparison Argumentative	1.984*	.199	.000	.586	1.381

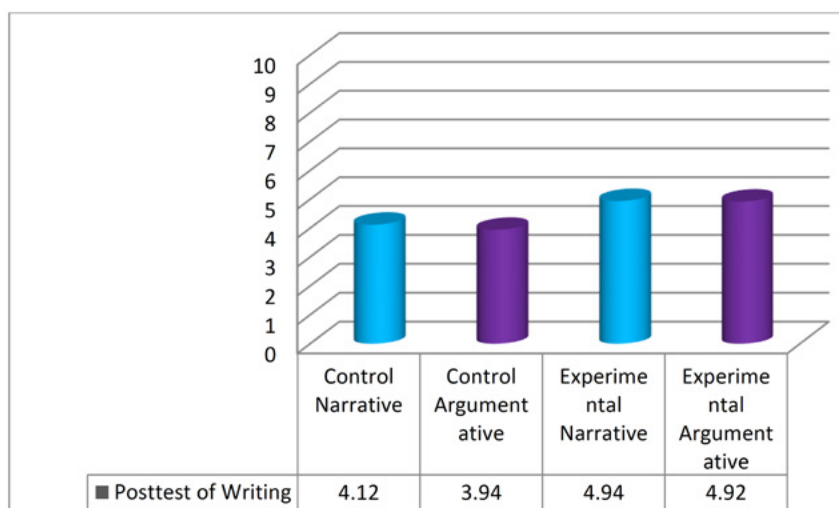
\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Based on the results displayed in Table 3 it can be concluded that;

The experimental argumentative group (M = 4.92) significantly outperformed the comparison argumentative group (M = 3.94) on the posttest of writing (Mean Difference = .984, p = .000). Thus the first research question was answered as “strategy-based instruction has a positive effect on the argumentative writing of EFL learners”.

The experimental narrative group (M = 4.94) significantly outperformed the comparison narrative group (M = 4.12) on the posttest of writing (Mean Difference = .814, p = .000). Thus the second research question was answered as “strategy-based instruction has a positive effect on the narrative writing of EFL learners”.

There was not any significant difference between experimental narrative (M = 4.94) and experimental argumentative (M = 4.92) groups’ means on the posttest of writing (Mean Difference = .016, p = .935). Thus the third research question was answered as “none of the pre-determined genres of writing is more sensitive to strategy-based instruction”.



**Figure 1.** Means on posttest of writing by groups with pretest

### Qualitative Results

The interviews were held to grasp a more in-depth understanding of the participants' views towards the writing skill and the strategic instruction. A sub-sample of the experimental groups were interviewed about four interrelated aspects of writing including (a) Their perceptions of writing in English, (b) The problematic areas that they faced with while writing, (c) Their attitudes towards writing after the intervention, and (d) Their capability in orchestrating and/or articulating their strategy use during the writing process. For instance, regarding the perceptions and difficulties in writing, one said: ...*"Not very easy, and not too difficult. I mean sometimes writing is challenging for me",...* "Um... the problem is that it is sometimes difficult for me to start my writing. I mean I have some ideas in my mind but I do not know how to start writing and put my ideas on the paper". Considering the attitudes toward the intervention and articulation of strategy use, one claimed: ... *"this program gave me a sense of satisfaction in organizing my writing",...* "RAFT strategy helped me to get prepared before writing and consider my role and STOP strategy helped me to use freewriting technique to generate more ideas and organize them. I tried to write whatever idea came to my mind even if it was not well-structured", ... Based on the obtained responses

about perceptions on writing and difficulties while writing, it was interpreted that most EFL learners view writing as a challenging skill and generally do not have welcoming attitudes towards it, at the same time they suffer from incompetence in some areas of writing including difficulty with initiating writing, inability to generate sufficient ideas, lack of organization in writing, frustration with finding proper words and using the correct grammar, etc. After the intervention, in order to gauge the efficiency of the strategic instruction and evaluate the participants' awareness of the use of strategies, the same interviewees were interviewed again. Based on the received answers on this qualitative part of the study, the researcher concluded that in comparison to the pre-intervention interview, in a post-intervention interview, the interviewees were much more confident while writing and were better aware of the writing processes they were going through (pre-writing, while-writing, post-writing). Additionally, they held positive attitudes towards the intervention and could orchestrate their strategy use more effectively. Hence, the fourth research question was answered as "EFL learners are capable of articulating and/ or orchestrating their strategy use to varying degrees". The results of this fraction of study are in line with studies done by Sengupta (2000), Hu (2005), Min (2006), and Bai (2015).

## Discussion

The findings of this study further corroborate the fact that strategy-based instruction plays a significantly positive role in improving EFL learners' writing achievement while applying different modes of writing. These findings are in line with the study done by Meghyasi and Hashamdar (2015) on the effect of explicit instruction of concept mapping strategies on Iranian EFL learners' descriptive and persuasive writing achievement, Mahnam and Nejad Ansari (2012) on the effect of explicit instruction of three pre-writing strategies namely concept mapping, reading relevant texts and negotiation on the argumentative writing of the advanced-level Iranian EFL learners and Wong and Hew (2010) who investigated the effect of teaching two strategies namely blogging and scaffolding on the narrative writing of primary students in Singapore. The results of the analysis the latter study indicated that learners had a significant improvement on the post-test. Nonetheless, in contrary to this study, this study lacked a control group, so re-



search validation was not confirmed. Clearly stated, there was no strong evidence to conclude whether the positive effect of SBI was the result of the intervention or some other extraneous factors. It is worth mentioning that the findings of the current study were an additional support to Chen's claim (2007) that explicit instruction is of paramount importance in engaging the learners more and more in the dynamic internal changes in the learning process since the learners become more sensitive towards the learning process and are willing to delve into other stages of writing process by the end of the intervention and countered the claim that allotting some class time to strategic instruction may be of a trivial use (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007).

There are numerous reasons that can be attributed to the outperformance of the experimental groups after the strategic intervention in this study.

First, the better performance of the experimental groups may be related to the success of the strategic instruction program that had adopted Chamot et al.'s CALLA model. Since CALLA manifested strategy instruction as task-specific in nature and was designed in a cyclic fashion to suit the learners' writing needs by employing both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, this study as well employed this cyclic fashion to equip the learners with the target strategies in a step-wise fashion. CALLA verifies the underlying theories of Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) proposed by Vygotsky (1978). All of the groups, experimental and comparison, had the potential to gain better results on the posttest and it did happen, but the experimental groups were the exclusive beneficiaries of the strategic instruction through awareness raising and scaffolding and therefore gained a higher achievement. The strategies were introduced and taught explicitly and the participants in the experimental groups mediated their writings in all the three phases of the writing process. This type of teaching assumed a teacher-student interaction and negotiation paradigm with a salient focus on the active role of the learner as a strategy user that is a requisite factor in being a self-regulated learner (Vygotsky, 1978). During this process, in the beginning, the researcher assumed most of the responsibility by leading the learners into the path of learning with the ultimate intention of releasing most of the responsibility to the learners.

Second, the effectiveness of the interventional program may lie in the bodies of studies indicating that explicit strategy instruction, which makes learners aware of the value and purpose of learning strategies and equips them with adequate opportunities for practice and self-evaluation, can result in enhanced strategy use and higher gains in writing achievement respectively (Cohen, Li, & Weaver, 1998; Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2003; Gavriilidou & Papanis, 2009). Integration of explicit strategy instruction into EFL contexts is consistent with O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) assumption that contextualized learning is more efficacious since learners become aware of how language can be applied in different situations.

Third, a plausible interpretation to the success of the intervention is that by adopting the strategy-based instruction model, the researcher strived to create a safe and learner-centered language learning environment wherein the participants' mistakes or errors in writing were considered as a sign of progress in their learning process. The researcher established rapport with the participants, based on mutual respect and encouraged them to further expand their writing skills.

Finally, the findings of this study add up to further confirmation of Bloom's assertion (2008), who believes that if second or foreign language learners are equipped with the appropriate writing strategies, they can optimize their own understanding, assessment, and as a result enhance their independent learning in general and writing skills in particular.

## **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, this research study was an additional contribution to confirm the fact that if EFL learners are offered with a plethora of practical writing strategies during their process of writing in an EFL language learning context, they will be prone to enhance their opportunities for producing written texts that are well-organized, more planned and higher in quality. The results of this study have some worth-mentioning implications for ELT practitioners as follows:

Coursebook developers are recommended to embed writing strategies into the existing writing lessons. In that case, teachers may increase students' confidence in writing by introducing multiple writing strategies since one of the crucial considerations in impeding or overcoming writing barriers is to help EFL writers

master the cognitive and metacognitive aspects of composing. Syllabus designers are advised to provide a full cycle of strategic writing instruction suitable for the local context. Besides, teacher trainers should take the priority in familiarizing the prospective teachers with the concept of strategic instruction during the teacher training courses. EFL instructors are advised to put an end to teaching writing with a mere focus on the writing product rather than the writing process. Instead, an integrated approach should be embedded in the curriculum since competence of writing process is believed to play a more significant role than the writers' linguistic competence (Krapels, 1990). Finally, EFL learners are recommended to discard their old and unproductive writing habits and as the result of immersing themselves in strategic writing programs, develop a repertoire of their preferred strategies and expand them to the new writing tasks in order to enhance their writing quality.

Some suggestions for future research are recommended in this area of practice:

First, this research project was conducted for adult learners. Replications of this study can be done to include participants with a variety of language learners, especially young learners. Since Graham, McKeown, Kiuahara, and Harris (2012) assert that writing strategies are of paramount importance in young learners' learning to write, hence demanding the need for implementing evidence-based writing instruction into the classrooms. In that case, EFL learners can be trained to be effective writers from young.

Second, the nature of experimental and quasi-experimental studies demand post-testing to establish the effect of the intended instruction. However; incorporating a delayed test can further strengthen the efficiency of the intervention and let the researcher measure if the obtained interventional effects can sustain beyond the intervention period. Therefore, administering a delayed test followed by a posttest is recommended in future studies.

Third, this study considered the intermediate proficiency level of proficiency. However, other proficiency levels such as advanced can be mediated in such studies as well. Therefore, proficiency level as another determining variable can be incorporated and its effect can be scrutinized in the future research studies.

Last but not least, for the sake of novelty and bringing about further insights into various aspects of strategy-based instruction, future researchers are recommended to try online strategy instruction and design online courses to gauge the SBI impact on the learners' performance.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Argumentative topics

##### *Pre-test topic*

1. **Some people like to do only what they already do well. Other people prefer to try new things and take risks. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.**

##### *Session topics*

2. Some people think that they can learn better by themselves than with a teacher. Others think that it is always better to have a teacher. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons to support your answer.
3. Some people believe that university students should be required to attend classes. Others believe that going to classes should be optional for students. Which point of view do you agree with? Use specific reasons and details to explain your answer.
4. Some people prefer to live in a small town. Others prefer to live in a big city. Which place would you prefer to live in? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.
5. Some people spend their entire lives in one place. Others move a number of times throughout their lives, looking for a better job, house, community, or even climate. Which do you prefer: staying in one place or moving in search of another place? Use reasons and specific examples to support your opinion.
6. Some people prefer to spend their free time outdoors. Other people prefer to spend their leisure time indoors. Would you prefer to be outside or would you prefer to be inside for your leisure activities? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your choice.
7. Some people believe that students should be given one long vacation each year. Others believe that students should have several short vacations throughout the year. Which viewpoint do you agree with? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.

##### *Post-test topic*

8. **People learn in different ways. Some people learn by doing things; other people learn by reading about things; others learn by listening to people**

**talk about things. Which of these methods of learning is best for you? Use specific examples to support your choice.**

### **Narrative Topics**

#### ***Pre-test topic***

1. Technology is supposed to solve our problems, but sometimes it just complicates them. **Write about a time when technology made your life more difficult.**
2. Boys and girls are treated differently at times. It's not fair, but it happens. **Write about a time when you were treated differently because of your gender.** It can be in a way that benefited you or worked against you.
3. Everybody has a special talent. **Write about the time when you discovered one of your talents.**
4. The world can be a cold place, but a little bit of kindness can make it a lot warmer. **Write about a time when you made the world a better place for someone by being kind.**
5. Practice makes perfect. **Write about a time when you got better at doing something by practicing.**
6. So much in life is about the choices that you make. **Write about a time when you had to choose between two things that were important to you.**
7. It is good to play it safe, but sometimes you have to take chances. **Write about a time when you took a risk.** Did it work out for you?

#### ***Post-test topic***

7. With so many awesome things to learn and do in the world, nobody should ever be bored. **Write about a time when you turned a boring day into an exciting one.**

## **Appendix B**

### **Stimulated Recall Interview Questions**

#### **Pre-intervention questions**

- Q1: Do you find writing in English as an easy or difficult task in general?
- Q2: What is/ are the problems that you face while writing?
- Q3: Q: Do you know any ways to solve this problem?

- Q4: Most of the English students think that writing is a difficult skill, do you agree or disagree with this?
- Q5: why do you think that writing is demanding?
- Q6: Do you know how to deal with this problem?
- Q7: Do you consider yourself as a proficient writer or a struggling writer?
- Q8: Can you explain more about your deficiencies in writing?
- Q9: In your opinion, how can you solve this problem?
- Q10: What do you think about the writing skill? Is it easy for you to develop a good piece of writing?
- Q11: Why don't you tend to write more?
- Q12: Do you follow some strategies to tackle this issue?

### **Post-intervention questions**

- Q: How did the writing process go on? How did you feel during the writing writing?
- Q: Did you get any help from any strategies that you learned to use?
- Q: Which strategy was the most useful one for you?
- Q: What did you do to improve your writing?
- Q: Which strategies did you find the most convenient to use?
- Q: Why that strategy? What do you know about its use?
- Q: Did you use DARE strategy in your writing?
- Q: How did this strategy help you?
- Q: Did you use any strategy to solve your problem with finding good words while writing?
- Q: Which strategy did you refer to a lot in your writing?
- Q: What was your preferred strategy in the writing process and why?
- Q: Did you use any other strategies to help you with the grammar problem?
- Q: Among these four strategies, which one was easiest to use for you?

## **Appendix C**

### **Test of Written English (TWE) Scoring Rubric Scores**

- 6. Demonstrates clear competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it may have occasional errors.**

A paper in this category

- Effectively addresses the writing task
- Is well-organized and well-developed
- Uses clearly appropriate details to support a thesis or illustrate ideas
- Displays consistent facility in the use of language
- Demonstrates syntactic variety and appropriate word choice

**5. Demonstrates competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it will probably have occasional errors.**

A paper in this category

- May address some parts of the task more effectively than the others
- Is generally well-organized and developed
- Uses details to support an idea
- Displays facility in the use of language
- Demonstrates some syntactic variety and range of vocabulary

**4. Demonstrates minimal competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels.**

A paper in this category

- Addresses the writing topic adequately but may slight parts of the task
- Is adequately organized and developed
- Uses some details to support a thesis or illustrate an idea
- Demonstrates adequate but possibly inconsistent facility with syntax and usage
- May contain some errors that occasionally obscure meaning

**3. Demonstrates some developing competence in writing, but it remains flawed on either the rhetorical or syntactic level, or both.**

A paper in this category may reveal one or more of the following weaknesses:

- Inadequate organization or development
- Inappropriate or insufficient details to support or illustrate generalizations
- A noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms
- An accumulation of errors in sentence structure and/or usage

## 2. Suggests incompetence in writing.

A paper in this category is seriously flawed by one or more of the following Weaknesses:

- Serious disorganization or underdevelopment
- Little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics
- Serious and frequent errors in sentence structure or usage
- Serious problems with focus

## 1. Demonstrates incompetence in writing

A paper in this category

- may be incoherent
- may be undeveloped
- may contain severe and persistent writing errors

## Appendix D

### How to Write an Argumentative Paragraph?

#### The meaning of some key words in the argumentative writing context

**Argue (v.):** To state, give clear reasons that something is true.

**Arguer (n.):** One who argues in writing to convince the readers.

**Argumentative (adj.):** Prone to argue or take side/position/stance.

#### What Is an Argument in the writing context?

An argument is an opinion supported by facts. Writers refer to opinions as claims and facts as evidence. The claim clearly states a stance on a topic or issue. Evidence to prove this claim can include reasons, personal experience, statistics, confirmed facts, and expert research.

#### In an argumentative paragraph,

- We decide if we are for or against the idea, so we begin by taking a stance (a **position** or way of looking at the topic).
- The purpose is to persuade or convince the audience of the soundness of your position
- Build **reasoning** by using evidence to **convince**.

## Sample argumentative paragraph

### *Topic*

Some people believe that music classes should be central to the high school English curriculum in urban public schools, others believe that it's unnecessary and should be banned. What's your idea? Support your answer.

**STANCE:** Music classes should be central to the high school English curriculum in urban public schools.

**EVIDENCE:** In a recent media survey of students attending the two urban high schools, music classes were rated as the favourite class choice. Education researcher, Dierdre Paul, promotes music as a valid literary instrument alongside traditional poetry as a means of linking the culture of students to educational content. This will make them more engaged and successful.

**EXPLANATION:** If students in urban high schools love music classes so much, then those who typically would not engage in studying older works, like Shakespeare, might find song lyrics a powerful source of statements about life. If a major reason we ask them to read older literature is to consider the life themes that seem ageless and universal across cultures and social groups, why not consider the same themes in music? There are many songs that present social tensions raise issues about the role of women, love, money, and life and death. These are all themes that we could find in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Within culturally diverse urban schools, using music alongside traditional literature can aid in the analysis of complex academic texts in ways that students find meaningful.

## How to write a narrative paragraph?

**Narrate (v.):** To tell a story or describe an event in order.

**Narrator (n.):** Tperson who tells a story, explains or describes what is happening or has happened.

**Narrative (adj.):** A description of events in a story. It's derived from the verb narrate.

- In a narrative paragraph, we try to tell a story by describing all the events in a chronological order.
- A chronological order means that the story begins at the beginning and ends at the end in order to maintain an interesting content.



- It introduces the 4 Ws: Who, What, Where, When (within the context of the action)
- The aim of narrative writing is to put the readers in the scene and make it happen for them

## Framework

### 1. Opening

#### *A central idea*

- Topic sentence
- What the event is about
- 4 Ws

### 2. Body

Provide a summary of the story/event in a climax order	↗	The beginning of the story
	→	The middle of the story
	↘	The end of the story

### 3. Conclusion

- Restate the topic sentence
- Give a concluding remark
- Make a prediction about the story
- Make a suggestion

Sample narrative paragraph

Topic: everyone has experienced frightening experiences in life like nightmares. Write about one of your nightmares in your life.

#### *My Shopping Norte's Nightmare*

(1) I will never forget the first time I got lost in La Paz City. (2) I was traveling with my parents during summer vacation. (3) We were in a department store, and I was so excited to see such a huge place. (4) Suddenly, I turned around to ask my mom something, but she was gone! (5) I began crying and screaming at the top of my lungs. (6) A salesclerk came up to me and dad came running toward me and ask if I was okay. (7)

She got on the public address (P.A.) system and notified the customers that a little boy with blue jeans and a red cap was lost. **(8)** Two minutes later my mom and dad came running toward me. **(9)** We all cried and hugged each other. **(10)** I will never forget that day as long as I live.

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## Using the SIOP Instruction Model for Narrative Writing: A case study of a teacher's experience of using the model in a high school setting

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### Abstract

Adopting a qualitative case study method, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the breadth of the existing literature to explore *how* a single English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher applies the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP) model during a classroom unit on narrative writing. Analysis of a teacher interview, a classroom observation report, and three students' writing samples determined that the teacher conceptualized the model as a framework she could personalize with her creativity and knowledge of her students. Particularly, the teacher reported the best use of four SIOP components: building background, interaction, strategies, and assessment. Implications for classroom teaching include: the SIOP model is best interpreted as a guiding framework, direct instruction and teacher-student conferencing can work in conjunction with the principles of the SIOP framework, and the importance of teacher versatility in their instructional techniques to address student needs.

**Keywords:** Emergent Bilinguals; Case Study; High School; Narrative Writing; Sheltered Instruction

### Introduction

Narrative writing is a skill that all students need to achieve at all grade levels (Common Core State Standards, 2017; WIDA, 2014), including those students who speak English as a second language (ESL). García (2009a) suggests using the term Emergent Bilinguals (henceforth, EBs) to reflect “the children’s potential in developing their bilingualism; it does not suggest a limitation or a problem in

comparison to those who speak English” (p. 332). Narrative writing is difficult to teach because students are required to view, read, as well as express ideas, thoughts, and feelings both imaginatively and creatively. In the content instruction of English Language Arts, it is necessary to identify the language demands and obstacles of narrative writing for EB students to better support their development in this area.

Sheltered Instruction is an approach that integrates content and language. The goal of this approach is to address EB students’ academic and language learning needs so that they acquire content and language in a more accessible way (Freeman & Freeman, 2014). Developed by a set of language education scholars in the early 2000s (Echevarria & Vogt, 2010; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is one of the popular models that falls under the Sheltered Instruction approach (Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Canges, & Francis, 2011). Several research studies have addressed the effectiveness of implementing the SIOP model to facilitate EB students’ learning in content and language (e.g., Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Canges, & Francis, 2011; Short, Echevarria, & Richards-Tutor, 2011; Short & Himmel, 2013).

Many ESL teachers have adopted the model in their classrooms. The established studies on the SIOP model provide quantitative data demonstrating student improvement on assessment measures in content areas such as science and mathematics. There are at least two lines of inquiry that have been under-examined. One line of inquiry is into the teacher experience using the SIOP model. A second line of inquiry is the application of the SIOP model to content instruction of English Language Arts. To our knowledge, there are few studies that examine how the SIOP model interfaces with narrative writing. To this end, we developed a qualitative case study lens to examine how a single teacher in an ESL context utilized the SIOP model to serve EB students during a high school unit on narrative writing development.

## Literature Review

### The Language Demands of Narrative Writing

Narrative writing is a vital skill for EB students to acquire because it not only builds their motivation in the learning process, but it also sets a foundation for their acquisition of other types of writing (Fredricksen, Wilhelm, & Smith, 2012). Writers are expected to develop and follow the rules of language use when constructing a narrative piece. Such language use includes sentence structures, the use of various tense verbs, adverbs, proper nouns, and personal pronouns (Chin, 2000; Reid & Byrd, 1998). Using present participles is also a common strategy in narrative to make writing more descriptive (Stratford, 2001) but can be a challenge for EB students (Wong & Conley, 2016).

Narrative writing presents another layer of challenge to language learners, requiring them to use appropriate forms, organization, a variety of vocabulary, sentence structures, clear time sequence, and narrative strategies including dialogue and point of view (Olson, Scarcella, & Matuchniak, 2015). As such, the language demands of narrative writing are taxing for EB students. In addition, studies (e.g. Wong, Armento, & Staggard, 2015; Wong & Conley, 2016) indicate that EB students tend to have difficulty distinguishing between a summary and a narrative and that ample instruction on the differences between these genres is necessary. Successful narrative writing requires students to craft a story with a clear opening, climax, and resolution, which elaborates on character, event, or emotional arc. Thus, entering narrative worlds presented in English-language texts may take some adjustment for EB students. As García (2009a) and Valdés (1997) state, there are many factors beyond language acquisition that influence EB students' academic success, such as their affective needs (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Krashen, 1985). Therefore, they may need explicit support to connect a personal story, non-fictional tale, or a fictional yarn that is familiar to them with those that are not.

One technique to help teachers and students meet the language demand of narratives is to have a writing rubric that specifically targets those areas (Gottlieb, 2006; Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). Using the 6-Traits Writing Rubric, consisting of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions, is one way to assess narrative writing (Spandel, 2005). The categories and descriptors

in the rubric help teachers focus on specific areas of instruction and improvement while also serving as an effective tool for student self-assessment (Porath, 2010).

### **Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)**

As a sheltered instruction method, the SIOP model offers teachers a framework to integrate content and language instruction for EB students (Baker, 2011). Specifically, there are eight components of instruction according to the model. The eight components are: 1) lesson preparation, 2) building background knowledge, 3) comprehensible input, 4) strategies, 5) interaction, 6) practice and application, 7) lesson delivery, and 8) review and assessment (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017). The SIOP model allows teachers to plan and teach using a variety of techniques, including the use of EB students' dominant language to make content concepts and the target language accessible to them. SIOP's stance on this issue, along with leaders in the field of bilingual education including García (2009b), holds that student preferred language plays a supporting role in K-12 sheltered immersion environments.

Several studies have addressed the benefits of the model and how implementing it has helped EB students achieve higher scores in content and literacy assessment (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). Other studies have also reported the effectiveness of the SIOP model by comparing the test scores of students who were taught under the SIOP model versus a traditional method (e.g., Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Canges, & Francis, 2011; Short, Echevarria, & Richards-Tutor, 2011; Short & Himmel, 2013). For example, Echevarria et al. (2011) examined the effects of using the model to promote middle school EB students' academic language and content learning in science. Results showed that the students in the SIOP group outperformed those who were in the traditional classrooms in their multiple choice, vocabulary, reading, and writing test scores.

On the other hand, researchers began to question the effectiveness of the SIOP model as well as the validity and the reliability of the results of the studies above. Crawford and Reyes (2015) as well as Krashen (2013) challenge the studies supporting the model (e.g., Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Canges, & Francis, 2011; Short, Echevarria, & Richards-Tutor, 2011; Short & Himmel, 2013) as not convincing in that they were unclear on how many of the participants were EBs

and how many of them were monolingual English speakers. These researchers also critique the model for its absence of additive schooling as well as cultural relevance and responsiveness. Finally, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reports in their summary analysis that no existing studies of the SIOP model meet WWC research design standards. Therefore, the WWC is unable to draw any research based conclusions about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of SIOP to improve outcomes in this area (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013).

Given the unique challenges of narrative writing for EB students and the conflicting research on the effectiveness of the model, we extend our research through a different methodological lens to examine how an ESL teacher implemented the model to support her EB students in a unit on narrative writing. We believe approaching the question through a qualitative lens that focuses on the teacher experience—with supporting evidence in student artifacts—sheds new light on how the SIOP supports instruction in the classroom setting, and thus serves continued sheltered instruction scholarship. As such, the purpose of this study was to adopt a case study design to qualitatively examine how an ESL teacher uses the SIOP model to facilitate EB student facility with narrative writing in the context of a high school ESL classroom. The following research question guided the present study:

RQ: What insights can be drawn about how an ESL teacher utilizes the SIOP model components to support high school EB students' development of narrative writing skills?

## **Methods**

Adopting the exploratory case study method (Yin, 2003) this study attempted to explore how an ESL teacher used the SIOP model to support her high school EB students in the context of an unit on narrative writing and how the model functions from the perspective of the ESL teacher.

### **Research context**

The study took place at a public high school in the northeastern United States. The classroom was an ESL class with a total of seven intermediate level EB students who represented culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The

class focused on developing students’ academic language in the four modalities (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) through literacy content instruction. Each ESL class met for a 90-minute period daily. The study examined a unit on narrative writing in which students explored character point of view. The unit contained a 12-lesson segment in which the teacher of this study included all eight SIOP components in her instruction. The duration of the study lasted approximately two months. Over the 12-lesson learning segment, both application and lesson delivery from the SIOP components focused on the content and language objectives. The content objectives focused on 1) expanding character actions and thoughts with supporting details, 2) providing introduction and conclusion in the story, and 3) expanding character actions and thoughts with adjectives. The language objective focused on the students’ ability to use present participles in their narrative. Table 2 outlines the activities and techniques implemented in each lesson and how the SIOP model components informed classroom activities and teacher instructional techniques.

**Table 2.** Outline of Activities and Techniques Implemented with Each SIOP Component during Each Lesson

Lessons	Activities/Techniques	Components of SIOP
Lesson 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students wrote Essay 1</li></ul>	
Lesson 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presented content objectives</li><li>• Defined a narrative</li><li>• Presented writing samples to students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lesson Preparation; Lesson delivery</li><li>• Background Knowledge</li><li>• Background Knowledge and Comprehensible input</li></ul>
Lesson 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Worksheet: Had students describe five life events at each instance, including dialogue, feelings, imagery, impact or reactions</li><li>• Showed story excerpts</li><li>• Class discussion on cultural aspects in the story</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lesson Preparation; Background Knowledge; Comprehensible input; Practice and Application</li><li>• Background Knowledge</li><li>• Background Knowledge and Interaction</li></ul>
Lesson 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anticipatory questions related to the story and students’ personal thoughts</li><li>• Step by step instruction of the learning task</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Background knowledge and Strategies</li><li>• Comprehensible input</li></ul>
Lesson 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussions with peers and teacher about the character they selected</li><li>• Wrote a narrative of the chosen character</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lesson delivery; Interaction</li><li>• Practice and Application</li></ul>



Lesson 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher showed a quick demonstration on how to perform self-critique</li> <li>• Self-critique using guideline provided</li> <li>• Revised based on self-critique</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensible input</li> <li>• Lesson Preparation; Review and Assessment</li> <li>• Practice and Application</li> </ul>
Lesson 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher showed a quick demonstration on how to perform peer-critique</li> <li>• Peer-critique based on guideline provided</li> <li>• Revised based on peer-critique</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensible input</li> <li>• Lesson Preparation; Review and Assessment</li> <li>• Practice and Application</li> </ul>
Lesson 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduced the grammar feature (language objective)</li> <li>• Explicit instruction on the grammar feature</li> <li>• Provided examples and scenarios on how to use the grammar feature</li> <li>• Used sentence frames based on students' personal experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson Preparation; Lesson delivery</li> <li>• Lesson delivery</li> <li>• Comprehensible input</li> <li>• Practice and Application</li> </ul>
Lesson 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one meetings with teacher, focusing on the grammar feature with scaffolding strategies based on individual needs</li> </ul>	Interaction
Lesson 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one meetings with teacher, focusing on the grammar feature with scaffolding strategies based on individual needs</li> </ul>	Interaction
Lesson 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one meetings with teacher, focusing on the grammar feature with scaffolding strategies based on individual needs</li> </ul>	Interaction
Lesson 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student wrote Essay 2</li> </ul>	

## Participants

Adopting convenience or availability sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), writing samples of three EB students in the same ESL class and the teacher were selected for the study. The teacher, Jen (pseudonym), had been an ESL teacher at the high school level for over six years at the time of the study. She is a native speaker of English and speaks Spanish as her second language. Attaining a Master's degree in teaching with an ESL endorsement, Jen obtained knowledge in different second language acquisition theories and received training about various language teaching approaches and methods, including the SIOP model. The ESL endorsement program also provided her with many strategies for teaching content to EB students. Jen had also taken an intense course of study in writing effective SIOP lesson plans and incorporating strategies that develop learners' academic literacy. Jen explained although she had abundant training in SIOP, she had never

implemented the model solely in her classes prior to the study. Instead, she mainly focused on students’ sentence structures through explicit instruction. Thus, she was interested in discovering if SIOP would benefit her students, and if so, how.

As mentioned above, there were seven students in the class originally, but only three of them were able to participate in the whole process with no absences or missing work. The three EB participants’ writing samples were from Moon (10<sup>th</sup> grade), Sue (9<sup>th</sup> grade), and Mat (9<sup>th</sup> grade). They were from Ecuador, China, and Egypt respectively. Moon had been in the U.S. for seven years with a 4.2 WIDA proficiency level (similar to B2 in the Common European Framework or intermediate high level in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) while Sue and Mat had been in the U.S. for two years with a 3.5 WIDA proficiency level (similar to B1 in the Common European Framework or intermediate mid level in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) at the time of the study. The teacher reported that of the three student participants, Mat had refugee status. All names appearing in this study are pseudonyms. Table 1 shows the descriptions of these three student participants.

**Table 1.** Participants

Participants	Age	Grade	Years in the U.S.	Country of Origin	First Language	WIDA Proficiency Level	Formal Education in Home Country	Note about the Participants
Moon	17	11 <sup>th</sup>	7	Ecuador	Spanish	4.2	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lived with family in the U.S.</li><li>• Enjoyed reading and was creative and motivated to learn</li><li>• Struggled with sentence structures in writing</li></ul>
Mat	14	9 <sup>th</sup>	2	Egypt	Arabic	3.5	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lived with aunt/uncle in the U.S.</li><li>• Motivated to learn, but did not like to make mistakes</li><li>• Refused to talk about family and life in home country even when asked</li><li>• Refugee status</li></ul>
Sue	15	9 <sup>th</sup>	2	China	Mandarin	3.5	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lived with aunt in the U.S.</li><li>• Motivated, hardworking, and creative</li><li>• Did not volunteer to talk about her life in China</li><li>• Struggled with run-on sentences</li></ul>

**Researcher positionality**

Each researcher brings their own positionality to the case study process (McKinley, 2017) so it is important to clarify each one's positionality in regard to the qualitative study. All three study authors have direct experience with the SIOP model in the context of teacher certification, but all wondered how it exactly works in the actual classroom. Of the three authors, two of them were teacher educators who teach graduate level courses in ESL methods including sheltered instruction approaches. Another author was a graduate student obtaining her graduate teaching degree and an endorsement in teaching ESL.

**Data Collection**

To support the validity of the findings, we adopted the triangulation method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015) in the data collection process. The data for this study derive from: a) an one-on-one interview with the teacher, b) teacher reported classroom observations, and c) the three students' writing samples (Essay 1 and Essay 2) that were collected at the beginning and end of the learning segment. Below, we described the three data sources in detail.

*One-on-One Interview*

A semi-structured teacher interview was conducted by the first researcher in English within one month after the end of the SIOP learning segment. Interview questions, developed beforehand, addressed the following topics: 1) SIOP lesson delivery, 2) student writing development, 3) student engagement in SIOP instruction, and 4) teacher experience of adopting the SIOP model in this context. Appendix A contains sample questions from the interview. The interview lasted for approximately 90 minutes and was recorded and transcribed.

*Teacher Reported Classroom Observations*

Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli (2003) describe journals as a valuable source of data collection. Therefore, Jen wrote a reflective journal entry after each of her lessons describing in detail a) her instruction, b) student reactions, and c) student writing performance. Her reflective journaling became teacher-reported classroom observations for the purpose of this study.

### *Students' Writing Samples*

Prior to the study learning segment, the students read an excerpt from the story *Run Away Home* by Patricia McKissack as a class. After that, they were asked to select one of the main characters and write the story in narrative form from any point in time they chose (e.g., before the story occurred, during the storyline, or after the ending). They were also free to change elements of the story. The objective was for them to construct their own version of the story from the perspective of their chosen character. This piece of writing served as Essay 1 for the purpose of this study. Upon completion of the 12-lesson unit, the participants were asked to write a story about the same character based on what they had learned during the unit about narrative writing; this piece of writing served as Essay 2. The two writing samples were graded by the teacher using a 6+1 traits writing rubric: *Genre, Ideas/Content, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions*. Each trait was evaluated on a six-point scale. These two artifacts of student writing, Essay 1 and Essay 2, became data for this study showing student development towards the content and language objectives.

### **Data Analysis**

Through ongoing and recursive analysis methods (Merriam, 1998) we, the researchers independently began the process by studying the data and summarizing the main points of our findings in relation to our research question. As a case study, our interest was in how the three forms of evidence combined together to develop an account of how Jen applied the SIOP model to the narrative writing unit. To support the credibility of the qualitative data analysis as a whole (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), we applied inter-rater examination to our analysis of all data available. Analyst differences were addressed by returning to the data for secondary analysis and discussion. We presented the results of the findings to Jen for verification to ensure validity (Maxwell, 2013).

### **Findings**

The teacher interview provided insights into how Jen applied the SIOP model in the course of her unit on narrative writing. The rubric evaluations illustrated improvement towards the lesson objectives for all three students. Of the three

participants, Moon consistently scored the highest on the 6+1-trait writing rubric on Essay 1 (30 out of 42) and 2 (36 out of 42). Sue, on the other hand, showed the greatest improvement between Essay 1 (16 out of 42) and 2 (33 out of 42). Her Essay 2 was organized with clear order and structure, compared to her Essay 1 which had little organization to it. Her introduction and conclusion in Essay 2 also contained more supporting details over her first essay. The excerpts below show Sue's introduction in Essay 1 as compared to Essay 2.

*Essay 1:* "Every day Sky's family need go to the fields to work very hard they make was not much money, but can allows them to eat three meals for a day."

*Essay 2:* "Daily, Sky's family needed to go the fields to work very hard as they did not make much money; but it allowed them to eat three meals a day. They grew nutritious vegetables, such as tomatoes, cabbage, and carrots. They also grew some paddys. Each day, they just ate 2/3 food, because they didn't have enough, such as rice, or vegetables and a little meat."

In addition, Sue showed progress between Essay 1 and 2 in how vividly she described the personality of characters. For example, when describing the character's family, Sue simply stated in Essay 1 that Sky's family was poor but they were hard working. In comparison, she described in Essay 2 the unconditional love from Sky's parents by providing details to support the idea. She wrote,

*Sky's mom said, Their enemy were find us, so you dad and me think let you go first, We will to pin down their, and delay some time to let you enter the train. Sky just go into the train don't say anything anymore; we love you, Sky, you should remember it..I love you, son.*

Mat showed slight progress in word choice and organization between Essay 1 (14 out of 42) and Essay 2 (16 out of 42). Contrary to Essay 1 in which he repetitively used "so," "sad," and "happy" throughout, Mat expanded his adjectives to words such as "sorrowful", "dejected", and "mournful" in Essay 2. In terms of organization, Mat's Essay 2 was more coherent in that he made good use of transitional phrases, such as "A year from the day Sky came to the corssman" to show changing period. Although he was able to add minimal supporting details in Essay 2, both of Mat's essays were similar in characterization. In other words, his two writing samples were fairly identical and did not contain a great deal of narratives.

Jen agreed the SIOP model provided her a framework of what she needed to focus on in her lessons, yet it gave her a great deal of freedom to use various strategies to help students achieve different sets of required academic standards.

In her words:

*There's just so many [academic standards] sometimes. So, when I have to sit there and have to write it on my content objectives, it kind of like it tells me, okay, this is what we expect you to do and here's some pointers.*

Two of the elements of the model that guided Jen particularly in this learning segment were *Building Background Knowledge* and *Interaction*. She described her students as not having a strong background in dialects, Apache Indians, and colonization which were essential concepts for them to understand the story. As such, the model provided her a framework through which she could make sure the students understood those concepts. She stated,

*Students were witness to authentic photographs of Plains Indians before their arrival to American boarding schools and afterwards. Introducing the culture and the history I think was really pivotal because they didn't have any other knowledge of that. And then explaining how dialect works and playing around with it.*

From the teacher reported classroom observations, Jen noted that she provided three anticipatory questions in lesson 4 for the students to consider for building background knowledge. The questions were: 1) Could anything change who you are at your core? 2) Do you think you could ever forget your native language? 3) Do you believe you could ever forget your family? These questions and the images generated a great deal of discussion: "At one point, students argued amongst themselves about whether or not one could truly forget who one was." Thus, this demonstrates that the component of *Interaction* supported the participants' understanding of new ideas thrust upon them during the *Building Background* phase.

While the model provided an outline for the teacher to plan her lessons, Jen believed that the strategies she used (self- and peer-critique, one-on-one meetings, and explicit instruction) during the lesson segment were more pivotal for the participants' progress. Guided by the component of *Assessment*, Jen explained that after grading the first essay, she realized that the participants' writing was not focused and organized at all. That was why she had to come up with self-critique

and peer-critique as a form of assessment to help the participants realize what they needed to improve. As noted from the observation, during the lesson delivery component, the students were asked to write a narrative of the chosen character, followed by self-critique using the guidelines provided. The self-assessment mainly focused on the students' opinion about their own writing and the sequence of events in the story. Next, the students performed peer-critique through which they shared their writing with a partner and provided feedback on each other's writing based on another set of guidelines given to them. The guidelines emphasized their understanding of their peers' characters, along with the use of supporting details and strategies, such as dialogue and imagery. Using the guidelines, Jen provided an example for the students of how to conduct self- and peer-assessment during the lesson segment. Jen recounted a self-critique exercise:

*When they read...they couldn't follow their own train of thought. It wasn't until they were sitting there, forcefully having to read their own thing, then they say, Wait, wait. That doesn't make any sense. So, I think they're starting to realize with the self-critique.*

Then, the one-on-one meetings allowed her to focus on each student's needs which she found to be very effective. Jen said,

*I saw a lot of improvement with that... and I want to give a little bit more of a voice to that and I think everybody needs it, especially when you are doing English or writing or something more in depth. So, one-on-one is always effective.*

When describing the participants' engagement during the lesson segment, Jen agreed that the three participants were all motivated to succeed, especially Moon and Sue. They had a strong desire to reach for creativity and they provided feedback to each other during peer critique. As the *Strategies* component suggests, Jen further stated that providing the participants the anticipatory questions was to jumpstart their thinking about their own reactions to the threat of identity loss that they could later transpose onto their character. For instance, Moon invoked the anticipatory questions provided by the instructor for Essay 2. By invoking the anticipatory questions provided by the teacher, Moon shows her awareness of the role writing strategies can play in her narrative writing. This connects directly to the SIOP component of *Strategies*. Moon not only wrote about the main character in the story, Sky, remembering his mother right up to the end of his life, but she also had the

character reaffirm his identity with his last breath: *In his mind the memory of his mother calling for him 'come boy', 'come' when in the last minutes of his life; he woke and with his last sigh said, 'I am Sky'.* This is further evidence of her developing ability to portray character point of view in complex ways using English.

Jen's language objective for the learning segment was for the participants to develop their use of present participle forms in their writing. Analysis of student writing samples found that the three students showed some improvement between Essay 1 and 2 in their use of present participles. To begin with Essay 1, only Moon attempted the present participle, while Mat and Sue did not. Moon attempted 5 present participles and used 3 correctly (60% accuracy). By the time the three students reached Essay 2, they were incorporating the grammar feature into their writing. Moon and Sue attempted to use the grammar feature in Essay 2, although they did not always do so accurately. For example, Moon integrated the present participle into her sentences a total of 11 times with 73% accuracy rate. On the other hand, Sue included the present participle a total of 5 times with 100% accuracy. Mat utilized the present participles in his second essay twice with an accuracy rate of 50%. When explaining why his two essays sounded somewhat identical, Jen explained that could be related to his personality of being rigid and how he was brought up. She explained,

*He wanted to do engineering and it's very exact...and he also had very, very strict guardians at home...there's no room for error. He'd give me something that was from the past that we had already said that he knew was correct.*

Guided by the components of *Comprehensible Input, Practice and Application*, as well as *Lesson Delivery*, Jen considered in what ways the students would understand the language feature (i.e. present participles) and its application, as well as how she could deliver the instruction based on student ability and needs. Therefore, she decided to facilitate one-on-one conferences with students that included explicit instruction. In the classroom, Jen gave instruction on present participles using different scenarios and examples. Sentence frames were also offered to the students to complete based on their personal experience. Upon completion of this class activity, Jen conducted a one-on-one meeting with the students, provided scaffolding strategies based on each student's understanding of the targeted feature and their individual learning needs. For example, Jen pointed out some



sentences and asked the students to try to change them using the grammar feature. The students were able to ask questions and express concerns during the meeting.

When explaining what was effective in facilitating the student progress toward the language objective, Jen emphasized it was these two strategies of conferencing and explicit instruction during the learning segment. By conducting a one-on-one conference, she saw significant improvement in the participants' learning. She remarked, "At least they are thinking about it...that shows me they're paying attention." She also believed that explicit instruction was necessary in order to help the participants acquire accurate language use. During the one-on-one meetings, she sat with each student by giving them plenty of examples, working on one sentence at a time, and explicitly told them how they should change their verbs and sentences to present participles. She said explicit instruction was necessary because "it was an introduction, but I think there needs to be a lot of repetition. There probably should have been a lot more repetition on my end." Another reason why the teacher believed one-on-one meetings and explicit instruction were effective was because Moon and Sue still used present participles in their writing after the learning segment. She said, "Sue is stellar because she uses everything and...three lessons past and she'll use it again." In sum, the teacher believed that the model provided her an outline of what to include in the lessons, but her techniques used within the model were what facilitated the participants' acquisition of language.

## Discussion

Although it may not be clear as to whether it was Jen's instructional decisions or the model that facilitated students' writing development in this learning segment, the data show that the model did assist her in deciding how to best help her students. This demonstrates that teachers' instructional decisions and knowledge about second language acquisition remain crucial factors to improve their teaching to meet the needs of their students, specifically EB students.

However, with a model that supports both second language acquisition and academic content needs for EB students, it benefits them greatly in the learning process. Implementing the SIOP model allowed the teacher to focus on important objectives of narrative writing and academic language in her instruction. Through the model, she was also able to use various strategies she deemed necessary to

facilitate the participants' learning of narrative writing. Below, we discuss how the SIOP model components facilitated, through the lens of the teacher, the participants' narrative writing and academic language development.

The component *Lesson Preparation* played an important role. With clear objectives, the teacher focused on helping the participants achieve the objectives through activities, discussions, as well as self- and peer-assessments. In the process, she emphasized the necessity of a multi-faceted approach to the task of understanding character perspective during narrative composition. An analysis of student's writing supports this view. Although Moon and Sue demonstrated a more significant improvement in narrative writing than Mat, all of the participants showed progress towards both the content and language objectives.

The findings showed that *Building Background*, *Interaction*, *Strategies*, *Assessment*, and *Practice* were beneficial to the participants' writing development. The *Interaction* component, employed at both the class level and the individual level, elicited clarification of their ideas and development of their storylines, which promoted equality of participation, as suggested by García (2009b). Because there are many aspects that impact EB students' academic success (García, 2009a; Valdés, 1997), with the SIOP model as a means of guidance, educators are able to hone in and use specific elements of the model to support EB students' learning and affective needs (Krashen, 1985), especially in complex genres such as narrative writing.

Our understanding of Jen's teaching practice carries implications for ESL instructors in similar teaching contexts. First, the findings underscore for practitioners that the SIOP model is best interpreted as a guiding framework and not a formulaic series of prescribed teacher steps. Jen demonstrated in multiple ways that she benefited from the general framework of SIOP but that she worked best as she adapted to what her EB students needed during the course of the narrative writing unit. A second implication that can be drawn from the findings is that direct instruction and teacher-student conferencing can work in conjunction with the over-arching principles of *Interaction* and *Practice/Application* that define the SIOP framework. We see this in Jen's practice of assessing student needs during the unit and adapting instructional tasks in response. A final implication that can

be drawn from our case study is for the importance of teacher versatility in their instructional techniques and their self-confidence to “leave the script” in an effort to address student needs in the classroom, no matter how unexpected.

### Conclusion

This study provides a qualitative account of how an ESL teacher used the individual SIOP model components to support her EB students’ development of narrative writing and language forms, such as present participles and thus makes a unique contribution to what is known in the literature about how sheltered instructional models work. The elements of *Lesson Preparation*, *Building Background Knowledge*, *Comprehensible Input*, and *Interaction* were vital in guiding the teacher to make instructional decisions according to the students’ needs in this context.

Future research can address the limitations of the current study. First, we relied on the teacher’s reflective journals as self-report classroom observations. Also, the three focus students represented very different levels of English language development and various first language backgrounds, which made it difficult to draw conclusions at the group-level. Thus, a similar study that includes systematic classroom observations by an individual external to the classroom and/or a group of students who share in their English proficiency level or language backgrounds can provide further insight into how ESL teachers implement the SIOP model in their classrooms and student engagement. Additional studies are needed to capitalize on the research protocol followed in the current study.

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### **Appendix A. Sample Questions of the Teacher Interview**

1. Can you describe your training in SIOP?
2. What narrative strategies did you focus on? Why did you pick these strategies?
3. What was your lesson planning process like? What did you consider?
4. Within the model, what methods did you utilize? How?
5. What worked and what didn't?
6. How was students engagement under the model?
7. Did they struggle during the process? How so? What made them struggle?
8. How did the model help the students learn narrative writing?
9. Did other factors other than the methods impact their progress?
10. Did you have any challenge using the methods/model? What were the challenges?
11. What was your overall view about the model?



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## **English for Specific Purposes Education in University Contexts: A Research Synthesis**

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### **Abstract**

Many higher education institutions have offered English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses with a particular occupational focus (i.e., English for Academic and Occupational Purposes, EAOP) to help students be successful in their academic disciplines and prepare them for work in their respective fields after graduation. This study presents findings from a research synthesis that examined how research on EAOP education in university settings has been conducted and what issues and challenges are involved in or should be considered regarding the instruction. Using three databases and eight key words, 16 previous empirical studies were finally selected for this synthesis. Based on the results of this synthesis, directions for future research on EAOP education in university contexts and suggestions for ESP practitioners and program developers are discussed.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes, English for Occupational Purposes, ESP in university, research synthesis

### **Introduction**

Based on the increasing awareness that traditional language education and general English courses do not meet the demands of language learners, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has emerged as one of the significant approaches in English language education (Anthony, 1997). Moreover, due to an increasingly internationalized workforce and the enormous use of English in the workplace, ESP has become important in English teaching in institutions of higher learning (Hyland, 2002; Lin, Chang, & Lin, 2014). ESP has broadly been divided into two major subfields, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), based on the contexts in which English education takes place and learners' English learning purposes. However, this distinction has been criticized because it fails to capture the fluid nature and the degree of over-

laps between various subtypes of ESP (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). In addition, there have been concerns regarding gaps between ESP learning in academic settings and its use in the workplaces as well as the relationship between ESP classroom discourses, professional discourses, and professional practices (Bhatia, Anthony, & Noguchi, 2011).

Based on the understanding of these issues, ESP-related researchers and educators have considered how English instruction in college and university contexts in which English is a foreign language can help students be more successful both in their specific disciplines and professional fields (Bacha & Bahous, 2008). As one of the initiatives, higher education institutions embarked on offering EAP courses with a particular occupational focus (Mechraoui, Noor, Ibrahim, Muhammad, & Malek, 2013). These courses are offered to university students in order to prepare them for work in their respective fields after graduation. For example, students in English courses for medical purposes learn highly specialized medical terminology, medical discourses, and technical language used in medical contexts (Antic & Milosavljevic, 2016). By providing students with opportunities to learn not only EAP in academic settings, but EOP for their future career as well, such courses connect students' language learning with their professional lives (Antic & Milosavljevic, 2016). In this sense, these courses are classified, in this paper, as English for Academic and Occupational Purposes (EAOP) since they are the hybrid form of EAP and EOP, rather than being categorized into either EAP or EOP.

There have, however, been issues surrounding EAOP courses, including the degree of specificity and effectiveness of the courses and the learning gaps and transferability between classroom and workplace settings. Considering these issues is important not only for students and educators who engage in English learning for occupational purposes in academic contexts but also for universities offering the courses as well as workplaces that need to hire employees with sufficient linguistic and professional knowledge. Although interest in EAOP education has been increasing in many non-English speaking countries, it has received less attention compared to research on EAP and EOP respectively. Considering the unclear boundary between EAP and EOP and the importance and increasing interest in EOP education in academic settings, the study examined the current status and issues of EAOP education in university contexts. This study, therefore, performed

a systematic review of the literature on the proposed topic in an attempt to answer the following questions: 1) what research on EAOP education for undergraduate and graduate students has been conducted? 2) what issues or challenges are involved in EAOP education in university contexts? and 3) what implications and suggestions for practitioners and researchers are drawn from the study?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Synthesis**

A research synthesis is “the systematic secondary review of accumulated primary research studies” (Norris & Ortega, 2006, p. 4). According to Norris and Ortega (2007), a research synthesis is different from a traditional reviewing approach that does not provide specific set of strategies for conducting a review. Instead, it heavily relies on the content knowledge of the research (Norris & Ortega, 2007). The approach is particularly useful to “generate knowledge that informs future research about problems of interest to applied linguists” and to “uncover gaps, weaknesses, and needs in a given domain in ways that few narrative literature reviews can” (Norris & Ortega, 2007, p. 809). Norris and Ortega (2007) identify three characteristics of a systematic research review: 1) a selection of previous studies is carefully rationalized, 2) a researcher focuses directly on the data reported in each study, and 3) coding books or protocol are used to determine what to look for in each study and across the studies. Following this approach, the study used keywords to identify previous empirical studies on the topic, and the studies were finally selected based on particular inclusion criteria. Then an in-depth review of the studies was performed to analyze them and answer the questions proposed in the study.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In order to retrieve empirical studies, three databases, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect, were searched using the following key terms: English for occupational purposes, English for professional purposes, English for academic purposes, vocational English, occupational English, occupational English in university, vocational English in university, and university ESP. The year of publication and the scope of journals were

not particularly limited because there were not many studies examining the hybrid form of EAP and EOP. However, as this synthesis was conducted in the fall 2017, empirical studies published before then were reviewed and selected for the study. Only peer-reviewed articles dealing with non-native English speaking undergraduate or graduate students attending EAP courses related to particular professional domains were selected. Through this reviewing process, 16 articles were finally included in this synthesis.

The previous empirical studies finally selected for this synthesis were analyzed based on the following criteria: (1) professional categories, (2) focus of study, and (3) research context. A coding sheet was created, and the researcher coded each paper into the sheet according to the criteria. The studies were compared within and across domains in order to identify common issues, challenges, and discrepancies among the studies.

## Findings and Discussion

Findings are organized according to the research questions. Considering the wide range of issues covered by this synthesis, each of the findings sections is followed by discussion of the results, rather than dividing the two parts, findings and discussion, into separate sections.

### Research on EAOP Education in University Contexts

**Professional category.** In terms of classification of the studies by particular disciplines, they were categorized into six different professional areas: engineering (Category 1), business (Category 2), medicine (Category 3), hospitality (Category 4), economics and logistics (Category 5), and public relations (Category 6). Table 1 shows the professional categories and the number of studies falling under each of the categories.

**Table 1.** Professional Categories of Study Included in the Research Synthesis

Categories	Professional categories	Number of studies
C1	Engineering	5
C2	Business	4
C3	Medicine	2
C4	Hospitality	2
C5	Economics and Logistics	2
C6	Public relations	1

As shown above, many of the empirical studies of EAOP education in university contexts fell under Category 1 and 2 by focusing on students involved in the fields of engineering (Haghighi, 2012; Hatam & Shafiei, 2012; Kaewpet, 2009; Rajprasit, Pratoomrat & Wang, 2015; Wood, 2009) or business (Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Jackson, 2005; Liton, 2015; Zhang, 2013). Research dealing with EAOP courses in medicine, hospitality, and economics and logistics has two empirical studies respectively: Antic and Milosavljevic (2016) and Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) in Category 3, Wang and Sun (2014) and Lin et al. (2014) in Category 4, and Taillefer (2007) and Ulucay and Demirel (2011) in Category 5. Regarding Category 6, only one study was identified, which was conducted by Pattanapichet and Chinokul (2011).

In sum, it seems apparent that research on EAOP education in university contexts has been more actively conducted in the fields of engineering and business. On the contrary, it has been revealed that other ESP-related fields such as medicine, economics, aviation, tourism industry, or interpretation have received little attention despite the growing interest and importance of EAOP education in university settings.

**Focus of study.** Focuses of the previous empirical studies in each professional category were classified into the following groups: (1) needs analysis, (2) course evaluation, (3) curriculum or course design, and (4) perception of students' English. As shown in Table 2, (1) needs analysis was the most frequently examined topic across the professional domains. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) stressed that the corner stone of ESP is needs analysis because it leads to a very focused course for learners involved in a particular professional domain. Reflecting the impor-

tance of needs analysis in ESP education, among the 16 studies, half (Antic & Milosavljevic, 2016; Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Jackson, 2005; Kaewpet, 2009; Liton, 2015; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; Taillefer, 2007; Ulucay & Demirel, 2011) focused on identifying English learning needs for students in the respective fields.

The second most frequently investigated topic was (4) perception of students’ English. Four studies (Pattanapichet & Chinokul; 2011; Rajprasit et al., 2015; Wang & Sun, 2014; Zhang, 2013) examined stakeholders’ (e.g., learners, instructors, or professionals) perceptions of students’ current English ability or the level of English proficiency that students are required to have. Interestingly, evaluation of EAOP courses and curriculum or course design have been relatively neglected in research on EAOP education for university and graduate students. In particular, only one study on EAOP course evaluation has been identified despite its importance in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the courses.

**Table 2.** Focus of Previous Studies per Professional Category

Focus	Engineering	Business	Medicine	Hospitality	Economics Logistics	Public Relations
(1) Needs analysis	1	3	2		2	
(2) Course evaluation	1					
(3) Curriculum or course design	2			1		
(4) Perception of students’ English	1	1		1		1

Although each of the 16 studies was classified into one particular focus group in this synthesis, the boundaries between the four groups were not clear because some studies included characteristics of more than two research focuses. For example, although the three studies in Category 2 (Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Jackson, 2005; Liton, 2015) and one in Category 5 (Ulucay & Demirel, 2011) were classified into (1) needs analysis, the analysis was conducted based on research participants’ perceptions of students’ current or required English proficiency, which falls under (4) perception of students’ English. The focus group of the studies in this synthesis was determined based on the researcher(s)’ description of the research aim.

To summarize, it has been uncovered, through this synthesis, that previous studies on EAOP education in university settings focused mainly on analyzing

and identifying what learners need to learn through the courses. However, subsequent studies describing how results gained from needs analysis are used to design or evaluate EAOP courses have not been identified. In other words, this result indicates the need to consider how results from needs analysis can be used in or contribute to actual ESP education fields.

**Research context.** This syntheszis also examined the contexts in which the previous studies were conducted. As shown in Table 3 below, the majority of the studies, 12 out of 16 (Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Haghighi, 2012; Hatam & Shafiei, 2012; Jackson, 2005; Kaewpet, 2009; Lin et al., 2014; Liton, 2015; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; Pattanapichet & Chinokul, 2011; Rajprasit et al., 2015; Wang & Sun, 2014; Zhang, 2013) were conducted in Asian countries, including countries in the Middle East. This result may reflect not only the increasing interest in EAOP education in those countries, but the high demands for EAOP courses due to the limited environment where students learn English in foreign language learning contexts as well.

**Table 3.** Research Context per Professional Category

Focus	Engineering	Business	Medicine	Hospitality	Economics Logistics	Public Relations
(1) Southeast Asia	2	1*				1
(2) Northeast Asia		2		2		
(2) Middle East	2	2*	1			
(3) Europe			1		2	
(5) The U.S.	1					

Note. The numbers with an asterisk include the same paper dealing with the two research contexts

Although the previous studies on EAOP education have been mostly carried out in Asian and Middle Eastern countries, they were also heavily limited to specific countries such as Thailand, China, and Iran. This result reflects the fact that research on EAOP in university contexts has not been actively conducted in many non-native English-speaking countries including a variety of Asian and Middle Eastern countries. In case of research dealing with the American context, only

one study in the engineering field was identified. It was interesting to see that little attention has been paid to EAOP education in English speaking countries including the U.S. despite of the fact that those countries have a large population of non-native English speakers including immigrants and refugees. Regarding the research contexts of professional categories, the studies related to the fields of medicine, hospitality, economics, and public relations have been carried out in limited areas; for example, the two studies related to hospitality focused on EAOP education in the Taiwanese context, and the studies dealing with economics and logistics were conducted in the European context. This result shows that a very small number of studies focusing on such disciplines are even limited to dealing with specific contexts.

In summary, this synthesis uncovered that the majority of studies on EAOP education for undergraduate or graduate students have been carried out in Asian countries including countries in the Middle East, and moreover the studies also focused on a small number of particular countries.

## Issues or Challenges Regarding EAOP Education

This synthesis identified some issues and challenges involved in EAOP education. As EAOP education is a part of ESP, general issues and challenges that have existed in ESP-related education as a whole were also found in EAOP education for undergraduate and graduate students. In this section, how debatable issues regarding ESP are addressed in the previous empirical studies are discussed. Other EAOP-related issues or challenges emerged from the studies are also identified.

**Generality versus specificity.** The discussion of specificity, which is about whether ESP should focus on specific skills, language forms, and texts needed by particular learners (Hyland, 2002) or it should take a wide-angle approach to language and skills related to various subjects (Williams, 1978), has been controversial in the field of ESP for many years. Considering the importance of this issue in ESP education, this synthesis examined how the previous studies addressed it.

Among the 16 studies, only two studies (Antic & Milosavljevic, 2016; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008) emphasized that EAOP courses needed to improve students' more general English proficiency, rather than focusing on a particular



discipline area. Although Antic and Milosavljevic (2016) recognized the importance of developing medical students' oral skills closely related to their profession, they put more emphasis on the students' general English communicative skills to help them initiate a conversation or present ideas. Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) also stressed that students have a more urgent need to enhance their general English proficiency. They pointed out that the level of the students' general English proficiency is low even though they take a general English course before they participate in a subject-specific English course.

Unlike Antic and Milosavljevic (2016) and Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008), nine studies (Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Jackson, 2005; Kaewpet, 2009; Liton, 2015; Pattanapichet & Chinokul, 2011; Rajprasit et al., 2015; Taillefer, 2007; Wang & Sun, 2014; Zhang, 2013) explicitly supported the argument that EAOP courses should be organized to be useful for a particular discipline or a professional field. For example, Wang and Sun (2014) concluded that EAOP courses for hospitality students should focus on preparing the students to access their specific workplace. Unlike Hutchison and Waters (1987), who advocated the view that taking a narrow approach contributes to demotivating the learners, the researchers argued that the integration of language learning and particular content knowledge increases learners' motivation. In this way, the majority of the studies supported the value of specificity of ESP and the need for adopting a narrow-angle approach to EAOP courses.

However, this synthesis of the empirical studies uncovered that although the majority of the empirical studies supported the specificity of EAOP instruction, the issue is still controversial due to the following reasons; first, stakeholders who participated in a study (e.g., instructors, professionals, or learners) have a variety of different perspectives regarding the idea of specificity. In the case of Ulucay and Demirel's (2011) study, although the students and professionals engaged in the field of logistics agreed that the curriculum should focus on subject-specific content, nearly half of the English instructors disagreed with the view. Second, the researchers who support specificity of ESP also have conflicting views on when EAOP courses should be provided to students. For example, Jackson (2005) described that first-year students need general business communication courses, and courses focusing on the particular discipline should be offered to second- and

third-year students. Contrary to this, Pattanapichet and Chinokul (2011) argued that ESP courses dealing with a particular profession's needs should be provided at the beginning of students' university study. Third, levels of students' English proficiency is also closely related to the issue of specificity. While Rajprasit et al. (2015) stressed that ESP courses are appropriate for the students who have already possessed a certain level of English proficiency (generally the intermediate level), Pattanapichet and Chinokul (2011) argued that discipline-specific ESP courses should be provided to all students as soon as they start their study in university.

Another interesting point revealed in this synthesis was that the two studies advocating the general approach to English teaching dealt with students engaged in the field of medicine. Although it may be difficult to generalize that particular disciplines or professions hold particular views on the specificity of ESP, it would be meaningful to further examine whether specific characteristics of each professional area may impact its adoption of a general or a particular approach to EAOP courses in university settings.

***Collaboration between language and subject instructors.*** Another important issue regarding EAOP instruction in university settings is in regard to the integration or cooperation between the different roles of two instructors for language teaching and the subject content. In order to help students enhance not only their linguistic skills and proficiency but their discipline-specific content knowledge as well, it should be considered how the two different areas can be effectively integrated and taught in an EAOP course. Regarding this issue, however, Hyland (2002) criticizes that ESP courses tend to take a general approach because ESL experts or language teachers do not retain sufficient expertise and confidence to teach discipline-specific knowledge, and subject instructors also generally lack the expertise in teaching literacy skills. The issue of the two instructors' different roles and potential for collaboration has also been found in the previous studies.

Among 16 empirical studies, nine (Antic & Milosavljevic, 2016; Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Hatam & Shafiei, 2012; Jackson, 2005; Lin et al., 2014; Liton, 2015; Pattanapichet & Chinokul, 2011; Taillefer, 2007; Wang & Sun, 2014) argued the need for a close cooperative effort between language teachers and subject instructors. In particular, Antic and Milosavljevic (2016) and Bacha and Bahous

(2008) used the term ‘interdisciplinary cooperation’ to emphasize the importance of the instructors’ collaboration in order to meet students’ needs and yield the best possible educational outcomes.

On the other hand, seven other studies did not address the issue. Among the studies, Haghighi (2012) focused on EAOP course design based on needs-based syllabi and tasks, and Wood (2009) examined the effectiveness of the EAOP course. However, the studies did not discuss how to integrate the two fields of English language and discipline-specific content even though it is important to reflect the learners’ needs for both academic and professional situations when designing and implementing ESP courses. In case of Ulucay and Demirel’s (2011) study, the researchers explored the perspectives of three different groups, English instructors, professionals, and students, in order to design a curriculum model for students in logistics department. However, the study focused on how English language learning needs are different among the groups, not addressing how their different needs or perspectives should be dealt with or integrated into the EAOP curriculum model. In addition, Rajprasit et al. (2015) argued that their research results may provide ESP stakeholders with ideas of how to design tailor-made ESP courses that perfectly fit the student’s engineering field. Nevertheless, they included only English instructors and undergraduate students as research participants and did not consider what and how subject-related knowledge should be included in the courses.

In sum, the nine studies brought the issue on combining English language learning and content knowledge and emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts between the two instructors in EAOP courses. However, examining how the previous studies dealt with this issue revealed some weaknesses. First, although EAOP courses aim to help students enhance both their English ability and discipline- and profession-specific knowledge, many of the studies did not focus on how the two aspects can be effectively integrated into the courses. Second, although more than half of the studies addressed the need for a close cooperation between the two instructors for more effective EAOP instruction, they also did not provide suggestions or ideas as to how and to what extent they should collaborate in the course of designing and carrying out the EAOP courses or curriculum.

**Gaps identified in EAOP education.** This synthesis identified gaps involved in the previous studies and examined how the studies dealt with the discrepancies. The first gap was different perceptions of English language needs among EAOP stakeholders. Ulucay and Demirel's (2011) study clearly showed that there are significant gaps in three different groups' perceptions of English needs, English instructors, professionals, and students, in the field of logistics. Regarding teaching techniques for EAOP instruction, for example, despite professionals and instructors' agreement on the effectiveness of the communicative teaching approach, students were not willing to participate in the activities. In addition, in terms of content of the tests, professionals claimed that spoken interaction should be evaluated whereas English instructors considered reading skills as more important than other skills. Taillefer (2007) also addressed the different perspectives between current students and graduates on the language course. Although graduates strongly recommended integrating language into the economics course, current students had lower desire for integration. Moreover, while economics graduates felt that it is necessary to have high levels of all four skills, the students considered reading, writing, and listening skills as professionally less important.

The next, and perhaps most significant, gap was the differences between English language that students learned in EAOP classes and that used in the real workplace. Wang and Sun (2014) found that the hotel employees have a higher level of English proficiency than that of fourth-year students in hotel-related departments, and the employees were more confident in English skills compared to the students. The study also showed that the skills taught in EAOP courses and those required in the hospitality industry are different. Regarding the results, the researchers concluded that these gaps resulted from the lack of industry discourses taught in university courses. Liton (2015) also identified that the existing EAOP course does not deal with situational lessons that are related to the students' future workplace and concluded that the courses should be redesigned to cope with learners' language use in the future workplace.

The third is stakeholders' different perceptions of students' English language proficiency. Three studies (Antic & Milosavljevic, 2016; Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Jackson, 2005) showed that students generally consider that the level of their English proficiency is higher than the level perceived by professionals or employ-

ees. In Bacha and Bahous' (2008) study, instructors teaching business courses perceived that the students have a considerably lower level of English language abilities than the level that the students think. In addition, while the faculty argued that the students' English language is not satisfactory, the students considered their skills as more than satisfactory. Antic and Milosavljevic (2016) also argued that there are more medical students who consider their English proficiency as advanced compared to the number of the doctors. In this way, the studies showed that there are significant gaps in how EAOP stakeholders, students versus instructors or professionals in particular, consider the students' English proficiency.

The three categories of discrepancies identified in this synthesis provides an overall challenge for EAOP-related stakeholders including practitioners and curriculum designers: it is about how the widely varied views can be resolved and reflected effectively in an EAOP course. Rather than concluding the studies with a general suggestion that EAOP courses should be designed based on language learning needs, more serious, but realistic, consideration should be made to answer the question.

***Four skills versus a particular skill(s).*** Another conflicting issue included in the empirical studies is regarding whether EAOP courses should cover all four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) or focus on a particular skill(s) that is considered the most important or the most frequently used in a particular field. Three studies (Antic & Milosavljevic, 2016; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; Taillefer, 2007) argued that EAOP courses or curricula need to develop students' four skills. On the other hand, there are studies claiming that a particular skill(s) should be given more attention (Pattanapichet & Chinokul, 2011; Ulucay & Demirel, 2011; Wang & Sun, 2014). In case of Ulucay and Demirel (2011) and Wang and Sun (2014), in particular, although they generally acknowledged the importance of dealing with four skills, they emphasized that there are particular skills that are considered more important in the specific disciplines and professions, and EAOP courses should focus mainly on improving the skills.

Regarding this issue, Dudley-Evans and John (1998) state that although some scholars (e.g., Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) criticize that focusing on one particular skill is limiting, and other skills also should be considered to enhance per-

formance in the target language, monoskill ESP courses have been successful in many countries. However, it seems that the issue of ‘all four skills vs a particular skill(s)’ may not be a matter of selecting between the two. Instead, through reviewing and synthesizing the empirical studies, it has been identified that the studies dealing with the same discipline do not necessarily emphasize the importance of or the need for the same language skills. In the cases of Bacha and Bahous (2008) and Liton (2015) who discussed ESP for business students, for example, Liton (2015) argued that strong attention should be paid to listening, speaking, and writing skills, whereas Bacha and Bahous (2008) focused particularly on writing. In addition, the previous studies implied that a variety of variables, such as language learning context, characteristics and language proficiency of students, workplace situations, and researchers’ interest in particular (or general) skills, are involved in the decision of which skills EAOP courses should focus on.

### **Directions for EAOP education and future research**

Based on the above results, this research synthesis suggests some directions for instruction and future research for EAOP education in university contexts. First, considering that the majority of the previous studies were conducted in a few specific Asian countries and were limited to particular research focuses and professional fields, more studies dealing with various topics should be carried out in a wide variety of EAOP educational contexts. Second, regarding a wide variety of perceptions of students’ language needs among EAOP stakeholders, it is necessary to coordinate various opinions through constant negotiations between them and improve EAOP courses and curricula based on the consensual or adjusted ideas. In addition to this, further research should be conducted regularly in order to examine the effectiveness and weaknesses of the courses designed based on the negotiations made among the stakeholders. Third, in terms of the issues of specificity of ESP and integration of four language skills, even the studies dealing with the same academic discipline showed different language learning needs for students involved in different learning contexts. These results may imply that EAOP courses and curricula should be developed appropriate to the specific learners by considering a variety of variables such as particular language learning settings, students’ characteristics and English language proficiency, particular workplace environments, and English skills required in the workplace. Further researchers

also need to focus on investigating what other variables are involved in EAOP education. Fourth, although it is important to develop EAOP courses based on the various factors, it seems necessary to communicate and exchange information on the courses among stakeholders engaged in the same discipline. As described in Antic and Milosavljevic's (2016) study, students need EAOP instruction because after graduation, they often face situations where they need to participate in international conferences, seminars, or discussions in English with colleagues abroad. The EAOP courses tailored only to a particular group of students in a specific context may prevent the students from successfully engaging in those situations. Therefore, ESP practitioners involved in the same discipline need to constantly exchange information on subject content, English language, courses, materials, and evaluation methods while also developing specific EAOP programs and courses appropriate to their students.

### Conclusion

Based on the understanding that the dichotomy between the two subfields of ESP (EAP and EOP) may widen the gap between the academy and the workplace (Zhang, 2013), the synthesis began with the question of how ESP instruction bridges the two areas and what issues are involved regarding the hybrid form of English instruction. By analyzing 16 empirical studies dealing with the concept of EAOP education, the research synthesis revealed major findings as follows. First, EAOP education in university settings has been more actively examined in the fields of engineering and business. Next, regarding the focus of research, needs analysis was the most frequently investigated topic, followed by perceptions of students' English. In terms of research context, although research on EAOP education has been mostly conducted in Asian countries including Middle Eastern countries, they were also heavily limited to a few specific countries. This synthesis also identified some debatable but important issues included in the studies: 'generality vs. specificity' of the courses, different perceptions on and needs for EAOP instruction among stakeholders, collaboration between instructors of language and subject content, and 'four skills vs. a particular skill(s).'

In addition to these findings, this research synthesis also found some weaknesses that should be considered more in terms of EAOP instruction and research.

First, although the studies generally agreed that two areas of the English language and subject content should be integrated into EAOP courses, the studies raise a question of how and to what extent the two different disciplines should be integrated. The next issue is related to the consideration of learners' needs when designing and implementing EAOP courses. As revealed in some of the studies, current students tend not to recognize their English proficiency or language learning needs appropriately. This result also provides a question of whether and how to include students' perceptions or needs in EAOP courses. Third, regarding EAOP-related stakeholders' different views on English learning needs, how the different and sometimes conflicting perceptions can be reconciled and reflected in EAOP instruction needs further discussion and analysis.

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## Reddit: Leveraging the front page of the internet as an English learning tool

**Review by Austin Pack**, University of Liverpool, Missouri, USA,  
and **Sam Newbold**, University of Nottingham Ningbo Campus,  
Ningbo, China

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“...the question for teachers is not simply ‘what is effective’ but rather ‘what is appropriate for these [students] under these circumstances.’”

Biesta (2007, p. 16)

### Introduction

It may seem bold to say that our students may actually know better than us, their teachers, as to what is appropriate for them to learn, but on occasion this has been our experience teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at an English Medium Instruction (EMI) university. In the EMI context students’ academic content courses are delivered in English. Non-native English speaking students often struggle to comprehend the academic discipline-specific vocabulary. While we as EAP teachers may know very little regarding academic jargon relating to machine learning algorithms or neutrino physics, our students look to us for support. How can we determine what is appropriate for our students when we know so little about their disciplines? In this article we briefly describe how a free on-line resource, Reddit ([www.reddit.com](http://www.reddit.com)), can be utilized as a supplemental tool to empower learners to become agents of their own language learning. We begin by describing what Reddit is and how it could be utilized as a language learning tool. We then highlight some of the potential benefits and drawbacks of leveraging Reddit, as well as offer suggestions on how to best make use of Reddit for the English language classroom. While we understand that many readers may not be teaching EAP in an EMI context, we strongly feel that Reddit is a useful tool that can be easily adapted for use in a diverse array of language learning contexts.

## What is Reddit?

Reddit is the 19<sup>th</sup> most popular website in the world (The Top 500 Sites on the Web, 2019), advertising itself as the ‘front page of the internet’. In essence, Reddit is a global community message board and forum. Within Reddit are subreddits, which are subsections that have a specific focus. All posts on Reddit’s front page originate in one of these subreddits, with the most popular ones being able to rank on the front page. Currently, there are over 1,100,000 subreddits, with focuses ranging from general interest such as politics, entertainment, and sports, to specific interests such as how to prepare for a Ph.D. viva, pictures of cats, and rating people’s beards.

Reddit works by users submitting links to other websites or posts they made themselves. Reddit users have the option to upvote or downvote the link based on if they like the post or not. The post’s prominence on the website is based on this voting system and the amount of time that has passed since it was first posted. Importantly, users can comment on both the posts submitted and each other’s comments within the initial post.

## Potential Benefits of Using Reddit as a Language Learning Tool

From conducting action research in our own language classrooms on using Reddit as a supplemental language learning tool, we found Reddit to be beneficial in three ways: increasing learner autonomy, exposing learners to authentic English, and helping learners to navigate websites in English.

As Reddit contains over 1,100,000 subreddits, English Language Learners can read and contribute to discussions relating to nearly any topic they can think of. Reddit therefore provides students with an opportunity to learn about what they find interesting. The subreddit ‘architecture’, for example, has over 212,000 subscribers, who, in the past 24 hours of writing this sentence, have had been holding discussions on Art Deco, favorite architecture books, architecture related games, architecture internships, and photographs and videos of buildings of different architectural styles. As EAP teachers of students from a diverse array of majors, our teaching tends to focus on writing skills that can be applied to students irrespective of their major, such as writing a cohesive and coherent argument. Reddit supplements our teaching in the classroom by providing opportunities for

students to be exposed to vocabulary and topics that are discipline specific, topics that we as their teachers may know very little about, such as what kinds of architecture internships exist, the Art Deco architecture style, or the best books for learning about Gothic architecture. Reddit serves as a springboard to other resources available on the World Wide Web that both teachers and students are otherwise unaware of. From our own action research we found that many students discovered websites, journals, and associations because of links to those resources that Reddit users posted in the subreddit that the students were reading. We also found that students became more confident and comfortable in navigating websites that are entirely in English.

### **Potential Drawbacks of Using Reddit as a Language Learning Tool**

Reddit, as a condensed version of the internet, is an organic and ever changing website that can be compared to a city with different neighborhoods. Some areas of the city are family friendly and welcoming, while others are less welcoming. Depending what neighborhoods Reddit students visit, they may be exposed to things that could be considered inappropriate for the classroom. This could range from strong language to inappropriate images or content. Therefore, it is suggested that if Reddit is used as an English language learning tool, that the maturity and age of students is first taken into consideration.

### **Suggestions**

Based on action research we have conducted, we suggest that Reddit can be a beneficial digital resource that supplements English language learning outside the classroom by exposing students to vocabulary and websites in English that relate to their specific disciplines or personal interests. We strongly encourage teachers to first familiarize themselves with Reddit's user interface, and provide some basic training as to how to sign up for the website, navigate pages of the website, find subreddits, make posts, make comments, and upvote/downvote other users posts and comments.

We also suggest that teachers have students keep a simple journal where they record what subreddits they visited, what vocabulary they found interesting to learn, and what websites or resources they found that may help them with learn-

ing English that relates to their educational and personal interests. When we used Reddit and language journals with our students we were surprised by the academic, subject-specific vocabulary they recorded, as well as the diverse array of useful websites students discovered.

A final suggestion is that Reddit could be used as a private forum. It is possible for teachers or students to set up their own subreddit and lock it to invited members only. Although the content in this particular subreddit would be entirely limited to what the students or teacher submit.

These are merely a few potential ways of leveraging Reddit as a supplemental resource for learning English. Given the scale and potential of the website, teachers are encouraged to consider the needs and context of their own students, and decide accordingly how to best make use of Reddit.

## Conclusion

While the maturity of students needs to be considered, Reddit is potentially a vast, hitherto seemingly untapped resource for language teachers and students. It is full of engaging material that could potentially serve as authentic input for students and it also increases learner autonomy and helps students to become more capable in navigating English websites, a skill that is becoming essential in today's world. Deciding what is effective and what is appropriate for our students can be challenging, given the different personalities, preferred learning styles, strengths, and weakness of our students. Perhaps Reddit's greatest value then is that it puts students in the driver's seat where they decide what is effective and appropriate, thereby allowing them to decide where they want to go on their English language learning journey.

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