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ESL Writing Instruction in K-12 Settings: Pedagogical Approaches and Classroom Techniques

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Résumé de l'article

Writing is an important literacy skill that K-12 students must develop for academic success. For young ESL students, developing writing skills entails both learning English and developing writing as a literacy skill. The need for this dual skill development underlines the challenges of teaching K-12 ESL writing, as teachers must strike a balance between teaching writing as a tool for students' English language development and literacy skill. This paper reports on findings related to pedagogical approaches and classroom techniques that are prevalent in K-12 ESL writing instruction. Our research is based on a systematic review of 49 studies published between 2010 and 2019. Using content analysis, three pedagogical approaches were identified: (a) approaches centered on teacher perspectives, (b) approaches centered on student perspectives, and (c) approaches centered on emerging research and theories of ESL writing instruction. As well, the analysis yielded four classroom techniques: (a) adopting SFL-oriented and genre-based activities, (b) utilizing ESL-bilingual student writers' language learning traits, (c) incorporating digital technology, and (d) adapting instructional practices in response to student needs. Critically reflecting on these pedagogical approaches and classroom techniques, the paper discusses the advantages and challenges of implementing them in the classroom. The paper provides a taxonomy of instructional practices that K-12 ESL writing teachers may find useful.

ESL Writing Instruction in K-12 Settings: Pedagogical Approaches and Classroom Techniques

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Abstract

Writing is an important literacy skill that K-12 students must develop for academic success. For young ESL students, developing writing skills entails both learning English and developing writing as a literacy skill. The need for this dual skill development underlines the challenges of teaching K-12 ESL writing, as teachers must strike a balance between teaching writing as a tool for students' English language development and literacy skill. This paper reports on findings related to pedagogical approaches and classroom techniques that are prevalent in K-12 ESL writing instruction. Our research is based on a systematic review of 49 studies published between 2010 and 2019. Using content analysis, three pedagogical approaches were identified: (a) approaches centered on teacher perspectives, (b) approaches centered on student perspectives, and (c) approaches centered on emerging research and theories of ESL writing instruction. As well, the analysis yielded four classroom techniques: (a) adopting SFL-oriented and genre-based activities, (b) utilizing ESL-bilingual student writers' language learning traits, (c) incorporating digital technology, and (d) adapting instructional practices in response to student needs. Critically reflecting on these pedagogical approaches and classroom techniques, the paper discusses the advantages and challenges of implementing them in the classroom. The paper provides a taxonomy of instructional practices that K-12 ESL writing teachers may find useful.

Introduction

Writing is an important literacy skill for K-12 children (e.g., Raynolds et al., 2013). For English as a Second Language (ESL) children, this is even more important as they have to develop both English and writing skills simultaneously (Larsen, 2013, 2016; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013). Research has shown that explicit instruction can help enhance children's writing skills (e.g., de Oliveira & Lan, 2014; Harman, 2013; O'Hallaron, 2014). However, recent findings (Kibler et al., 2016; Larsen, 2013, 2016; Yi, 2013) suggest that teachers generally find themselves unprepared as to what pedagogical approaches and classroom techniques they should adopt in the K-12 ESL writing classroom. Consequently, identifying effective instructional practices should be a priority to enhance the quality of ESL writing teaching and learning.

Teaching ESL writing is not an easy task for a number of reasons. Teachers encounter unique challenges when teaching ESL students because of the students' (and their parents') developing English language proficiency, first language (L1) literacy learning experiences,

and familiarity with the target culture (e.g., Canadian) (Guo et al., 2019; Roessingh & Kover, 2002). For these reasons, empirical studies have consistently shown that ESL students fall behind in high stakes exams (e.g., provincial achievement tests in Alberta, Canada) when compared to their native-English-speaking counterparts (Pavlov, 2015; Roessingh & Douglas, 2012). High school drop-out rates and academic failures of these students are also among the highest (Sweet et al., 2019).

One way to address the status quo is to enhance the quality of ESL writing instruction. However, literature addressing pedagogical approaches and classroom techniques for teaching ESL writing is not widely available. Particularly, it is difficult to find research-informed classroom practices addressing challenges that teachers encounter in the ESL writing classroom. Part of a systematic literature review project (Bhowmik & Kim, 2021), this paper focuses on identifying pedagogical approaches and classroom techniques that are prevalent in K-12 ESL writing instruction.

Methods

The findings reported in this paper are part of a larger systematic literature review project that explored the challenges of and strategies for K-12 ESL writing instruction. For the systematic review, we adapted the methods described by Williams and Lowrance-Faulhaber (2018). First, we set inclusion criteria to determine the scope of the literature search while meeting our research goals. After careful deliberation, we came up with the following inclusion criteria: (a) an empirical study, (b) a peer-reviewed journal article or book chapter published between 2010-19, and (c) findings with implications for writing instruction in K-12 settings, involving students and/or teachers studying and/or teaching in ESL and/or ESL-bilingual settings. After finalizing our inclusion criteria, we searched the following databases to find sources: Education Research Complete, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts, JSTOR, ERIC (EBSCOhost), Academic Search Complete (EBSCO) and Research Starters-Education. We used the following key words and phrases in our literature search: *K-12 multilingual writing, multilingual writing instruction, ELL student writing, bilingual ESL writing*, *ESL writing, K-12 writing, biliteracy in ESL writing, ESL children writing, multilingual writing, ESL writing literacy, ELL writing, writing in ESL*, *ESL literacy development, ELL writing instruction, teaching ESL writing, teaching ELL writing, K-12 ESL writing*, and *ELL writing literacy*. Concurrent with identifying materials through this process, we also searched their references for any additional sources.

In the end, we identified 49 studies (marked with an asterisk* in the references) that met the inclusion criteria. Of them, 43 were qualitative, two were quantitative, and four were both qualitative and quantitative. Researchers used a variety of theoretical frameworks such as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), sociocultural theories, genre pedagogy, biliteracy, multiliteracy, bilingualism, and multilingualism. The main data sources were interviews, observations, writing samples, surveys, and tests. The duration of the studies ranged from four weeks to eight years, while the number of participants were between one and 130 randomly selected students and five teachers. The participants had the following first languages (L1s): Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Hindi, Finnish, Russian, Gokana, Dutch, and English (a few teacher participants' L1 was English).

Since we worked with a fairly large corpus of studies, we noted that researchers used a variety of terms to describe ESL students. Examples include: English language learners, English as a Second Language learners, English learners, and multilingual learners. Before including these studies in our review, we ensured that they took place in an ESL context—a context where English is the dominant language outside the classroom (Coelho, 2016). It is also important to note that in a few studies students were described as biliterate or bilingual (e.g., Bauer et al., 2017; Midgette & Philippakos, 2016) even though they were English language learners in ESL contexts. We included these studies in our review. We used the terms ESL and ELL interchangeably throughout this paper.

Once the 49 sources were finalized, we began the analysis process that involved several steps. First, we read each study and annotated it in a Google document with key information such as objectives of the study, participants, duration, theoretical frameworks, main findings, and implications. Next, we established our coding procedures and completed coding as follows. We looked up the ways pedagogical "approaches" and "techniques"—the main themes of our research—are defined in the L2 literature. Richards and Rodgers (2010) define an L2 teaching approach as "theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching" (p. 20), while a "technique…[as] the level at which classroom procedures are described" (p. 19). Thus, for coding purposes we used the term "approaches" as referring to the underlying beliefs, understanding, knowledge and principles that drive the teaching and learning of ESL writing. Similarly, we used the term "techniques" to refer to the enabling activities and procedures in the ESL writing classroom. After establishing the coding schemes using the definitions of approaches and techniques above, we coded all 49 studies following an inductive content analysis procedure (Drisko & Maschi, 2016; Stan, 2010) to identify the "approaches" and "techniques" in K-12 ESL writing instruction. Rather than pre-determining the themes, we allowed the approaches and techniques to emerge on their own. Once coding was completed, we grouped all approaches and techniques in smaller but self-explanatory sub-categories. To ensure the reliability of coding, we first coded all studies individually before comparing our individual coding for an interrater reliability check (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which was 96%.

Findings

Based on our findings, we grouped the pedagogical approaches into three categories: (a) approaches centered on teacher perspectives, (b) approaches centered on student perspectives, and (c) approaches centered on emerging research and theories of ESL writing instruction. We divided the classroom techniques into four categories: (a) adopting SFL-oriented and genre-based activities, (b) utilizing ESL-bilingual student writers' language learning traits, (c) incorporating digital technology, and (d) adapting instructional practices in response to student needs. In the section below, we discuss them in detail.

Pedagogical approaches

Our analysis suggested that the pedagogical approaches adopted in the ESL writing classroom revolved around three core foci: teachers, students, and the incorporation of emerging research and theories into ESL writing instruction. To illustrate, pre-service

teachers' current knowledge about ESL writing instruction based on their previous coursework and observations of their mentor teachers (e.g., Seloni, 2013; Yi, 2013) influenced the pedagogical approaches these teachers adopted in the classroom. We grouped such approaches under the thematic category "approaches centered on teacher perspectives." Similarly, we found that students' underlying beliefs or understanding, as implicated in the empirical findings reviewed for this research (e.g., Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013), also had a bearing on the pedagogical approaches to ESL writing instruction, whether the teacher was aware of them or not. We reported these approaches under "approaches centered on student perspectives." Finally, we noted that pedagogical approaches were adopted vis-à-vis emerging research and theories in ESL writing instruction (e.g., Gebhard et al., 2010; Hodgson-Drysdale, 2016), which we categorized as "approaches centered on emerging research and theories of ESL writing instruction." We discuss each of these categories with examples below. As well, we have created a taxonomy of the pedagogical approaches retrieved through our research in Table 1.

(a) Approaches centered on teacher perspectives

Our analysis suggests that teachers choose a pedagogical approach based on their experiences of teaching writing and the perceptions they have of their students. Research shows that pre-service teachers' experiences with coursework and observations of mentor teachers (Seloni, 2013; Yi, 2013) and their collection of data about their students as writers (Athanases et al., 2013) can impact their teaching approaches. Seloni (2013) found that pre-service teachers made sense of issues related to L2 writing by reflecting on their observations of senior teachers, ethnographic papers they wrote for coursework, and blog posts. In a separate study, Yi (2013) reported that teacher participants believed writing was a means of assessment of their students' understanding about the materials students had to read, and a limited understanding about writing pedagogy itself. Athanases et al.'s (2013) findings suggest that pre-service teachers learned more about their students as writers by documenting student achievement, finding patterns in student work, and predicting performance to guide instruction (Athanases et al., 2013).

Inside the classroom, teachers' perceptions about student writers may depend on teacher-student relationships or a lack thereof. Ortmeier-Hooper's (2013) findings in a secondary school suggest that a lack of teacher-student relationships and an understanding about the student's sociopolitical histories can make the student feel "invisible" (p. 21) in the classroom and disengaged from learning. On the other hand, Abraham's (2017) findings show that, in a Spanish-English bilingual classroom, teachers' giving up deficit views about student writers and integrating funds of knowledge into writing pedagogy, enabled students' biliteracy development, including English writing. In a study focusing on instructional practices, Gilliland (2015) found that because teachers had to adhere to their State curriculum, their way of teaching did not align with current research on L2 teaching and learning. The teachers believed that students could learn English by reading model texts, and academic writing by practicing with sentence starters. Both teachers in Gilliland's (2015) study had a limited ability to help students choose appropriate vocabulary for writing essays. For example, Mr. Brown could not explain to his students how to use *weak* and *strong* language in persuasive writing by utilizing appropriate

vocabulary (Gilliland, 2015, p. 293). Ms. Chou taught writing as a formula – students had to learn to write and support their thesis statement.

Despite being intentional, teachers may encounter numerous challenges by adopting a pedagogical approach they think may work. Studying teacher (L1 English, monolingual)-student (Spanish-speaking ESL) interactions about writing, Kibler (2011a) reported that Mr. Smith, the teacher, had to use direct questions to engage with Diego, his student. The teacher felt that he wrote most of Diego's essay. In a separate study, Kibler (2011b) reported that teachers' and students' expectations about content area writing in a tenth-grade class mostly diverged. The humanities teacher believed that students should strive for clarity and meaning rather than specific vocabulary. However, students Ana and Diego's understanding about good writing revolved around the use of "good," "difficult," or "big" (p. 218) words.

A few studies have looked specifically into teachers' perceptions about ESL writing instruction. Kibler et al. (2016) found that "teacher expertise, high stakes testing, classroom grading and assessment, placement and tracking and disciplinary disconnects" (p. 350) influenced how teachers taught ESL writing. The researchers noted that these factors mediated the approach teachers adopted for ESL writing instruction. Studying secondary teachers, Larsen (2013) reported that their sense of preparedness impacted their approach to ESL writing instruction. In a separate study involving elementary teachers, Larsen (2016) found that only one in 10 teachers felt prepared to teach writing, and every teacher who felt prepared to teach writing had taken a writing course. Larsen's (2013, 2016) findings were corroborated by Lee (2016), who identified that teacher education programs needed to prepare teachers more effectively so that they understood L2 learners and were prepared to work with ESL writers.

(b) Approaches centered on student perspectives

Research shows that approaches centered on student perspectives play out quite significantly in secondary writing. Ortmeier-Hooper's (2013) findings suggest that adolescent ESL students want their teachers to recognize their sociopolitical histories. This motivates and keeps students engaged in writing activities. Al-Alawi and Kohls' (2012) findings indicate that ESL students needed to learn how to plan, edit, and write often so that making choices (e.g., punctuation, word choice, spelling) came automatically to them. Outside of school, they wrote to maintain social relations or for entertainment. Enright (2013) studied the impact of pedagogical contexts on two ninth grade ELL students: Ofelia and Rosalinda. Ofelia liked strict teachers and needed her teachers to explicitly explain the material. Rosalinda did not like writing essays and found explaining in writing difficult. She felt successful when she was able to demonstrate her learning through making posters, answering short answer questions, and writing summaries. In a separate study, Enright and Gilliland (2011) reported on the impact of accountability on classroom writing practices. Writing practices socialized students to write in certain ways within and across the curriculum. Kibler's (2010) findings suggest that when secondary ELL students were allowed to interact in their L1s when completing their English writing tasks, they developed L2 writing skills. For example, L2 students acted as language brokers when engaging in L2 writing activities. Studying a Korean high school student, Jihee, Yi (2010)

reported on the "*kinds* of writing activities she engaged in" (p. 23) during out-of-school and in-school writing, indicating that Jihee's in-school writing was connected to her out-of-school writing and vice versa.

Studying ESL writing in an elementary context, Gort (2012a) found that code-switching among grade one Spanish-English bilinguals helped students develop Spanish texts, but Spanish did not help develop English texts. In a separate study, Hong (2015) found that ESL students evolved from ''others as authors,'' to ''self as an author,'' to ''self as a reflective writer'' (p. 301) and that the process of becoming writers involved different student voices. By comparing the writing of ELL and native English-speaking grade two students, Mohr (2017) found that although students demonstrated good basic writing skills (e.g., spelling, punctuation, logical sentences), the ELLs did not write as much as the native English-speaking students. Studying a grade four Spanish-English bilingual student, Lizette, Wong (2016) found that Lizette's own ideas about writing did not match her teacher's expectations. Lizette wanted to use writing as a way to learn more about her interests, while at school, the teacher chose the topics and focused on proper structure and grammar. Thus, the challenges Lizette experienced with her writing had to do with a lack of alignment of classroom expectations for writing and her own desire to write in the way that she felt comfortable with. In a separate project, Gort (2012b) reports that six Spanish-English grade one bilingual students engaged in "cognitive and linguistic revision tasks" (p. 97) in all stages of the writing process. The students recognized that they needed to make changes and were interested in making their texts make sense. They also acknowledged that to clarify and expand their ideas, they needed to add that they were writing for an audience. Finally, Yaden and Tsai (2012) report on 11 bilingual students in kindergarten and grade one who were studying both English and Chinese and how they "figured out" the writing systems in both languages. Their findings suggest that while the children's knowledge of Chinese and English scripts was not the same, "there seems to be a general tendency for the variation appearing in the home language to also appear in the second language slightly magnified" (p. 78). For instance, if students made spelling errors in Chinese, they likely made spelling errors in English.

Table 1
Pedagogical approaches in ESL writing in K-12 contexts

Pedagogical approaches	**Examples**	**Level: Elementary (E)/Secondary (S)**	**Impact on ESL writing**	
			Positive	*Negative*
Approaches centered on teacher perspectives	• Making sense of ESL writing through writing opportunities and mentor teachers (Seloni, 2013)	-	√	
	• Collecting student data to inform teaching ESL writing (Athanases et al., 2013)	-	√	

	• Teachers' disinterest in students' sociopolitical histories (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013)	S		√
	• Teachers' rejecting deficit views about student writers (Abraham, 2017)	E	√	
	• The teacher writing most of the essay (Kibler, 2011a)	S		√
	• Teachers' unarticulated expectations about content area writing (Kibler, 2011b)	S		√
	• Teachers' incorrect understanding about L2 development and L2 writing (Gilliland, 2015)	-		√
	• Teachers adopting SFL principles in ESL writing instruction (Hodgson-Drysdale, 2016)	E	√	
	• Teachers' lack of expertise in high stakes tests, assessment and student placement (Kibler et al., 2016)	S		√
	• Teaching ESL writing with a sense of unpreparedness (Larsen, 2013, 2016)	E, S		√
	• Teachers adopting a cognitive strategies approach (Olson et al., 2012)	S	√	
	• Teacher's knowledge and understanding about multicultural education (Lee, 2016)	E	√	
	• Teachers' view of writing as a means of assessment (Yi, 2013)	-		√
Approaches centered on student perspectives	• Students feeling invisible in the classroom (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013)	S		√
	• Students' learning to plan, develop and edit writing (Al-Alawi & Kohls, 2012)	S	√	

	• Students' (in)ability to adapt to contextual factors (Enright, 2013)	S	√	√
	• Student accountability for writing practices (Enright & Gilliland, 2011)	S	√	
	• Students' use of L1 in interactions during ESL writing classes (Kibler, 2010)	S	√	
	• Code-switching during ESL writing classes (Gort, 2012a)	E	√	
	• Students' evolution into different writer selves (Hong, 2015)	E	√	
	• ELL students' inability to write as much as their native English-speaking counterparts (Mohr, 2017)	E		√
	• Making connections between ESL students' in- and out-of-school writing (Yi, 2010)	S	√	
	• Writing to learn more about the interests of bilingual ESL students (Wong, 2016)	E	√	
	• Bilingual ESL children's engagement in cognitive and linguistic revision tasks (Gort, 2012b)	E	√	
	• Bilingual kindergarten and grade one children's knowledge of scripts in both languages may not be the same (Yaden & Tsai, 2012)	E	√	
Approaches centered on emerging research and theories of ESL writing instruction	• Inclusion of PD for SFL-oriented writing instruction (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2010; Hodgson-Drysdale, 2016)	-	√	
	• Providing PD interventions using a collaboration model (Babinski et al., 2018)	-	√	

	• Initiating focused (i.e., ACCELA) master's programs to prepare qualified ESL teachers (Gebhard et al., 2010)	-	√	

Note: - indicates the grade level was not explicitly mentioned in the article.

(c) Approaches centered on emerging research and theories of ESL writing instruction

In this section we report on findings related to pedagogical approaches that focused on incorporating current research and theories into ESL writing instruction. Brisk and Zisselsberger's (2010) study found that, through a PD project, teachers learned about SFL. Participating teachers noted that the PD sessions had a positive impact on improving student writing. In a separate study, Babinski et al. (2018) found that a PD intervention helped teachers learn about instructional strategies such as the collaboration model, whereby ESL and classroom teachers collaborated with each other to ensure that content and teaching strategies were aligned to improve students' writing skills.

Departing from instructional practices, Gebhard et al. (2010) reports on a unique partnership called Access through Critical Content and English Language Acquisition (ACCELA) between the University of Massachusetts and local schools. The partnership allows for a master's degree program for elementary and middle school teachers who teach Language Arts, Reading, ESL or Special Education.

Research has also identified how PD can impact teachers' perspectives about ESL writing instructional practices. Hodgson-Drysdale (2016) studied the experiences of two elementary teachers and how they learned to teach writing informed by SFL and the teaching learning cycle (TLC). In a separate study, Olson et al. (2012) found that when secondary teachers were placed in a *Pathway* program in which they were trained in a cognitive strategies approach, students improved in analytical writing skills and scores on the State exam. Similar results were replicated by a new group of students taught by a *Pathway* teacher.

In sum, the analysis of our corpus suggests that the pedagogical approaches adopted in the K-12 ESL writing classroom are mediated by three factors: teacher perspectives, student perspectives and emerging research and theories of ESL writing instruction. Considering that classroom-based pedagogies are dependent upon the choices made by the teacher, it may not be surprising that teacher perspectives are important in pedagogical approaches adopted in the classroom. What may be considered somewhat surprising though is that student perspectives also play an important role in the efficacy of pedagogical approaches adopted in K-12 ESL writing classroom whether or not the teacher is aware of it. Thus, students' favorable or unfavorable viewpoints of a given pedagogical approach adopted in the ESL writing classroom seem to correlate with the success or failure of it. Finally, it is encouraging to see that emerging research and theories of ESL writing instruction play a role in K-12 classroom contexts. Table 1 provides additional nuances about the pedagogical approaches discussed above.

Classroom techniques

Our analysis yielded four types of classroom techniques that are prevalent in K-12 ESL writing instruction: (a) adopting SFL-oriented and genre-based activities, (b) utilizing ESL-bilingual student writers' language learning traits, (c) incorporating digital technology, and (d) adapting instructional practices in response to student needs. In order to arrive at these thematic categories, we specifically looked at the "classroom procedures" implicated in the findings of the 49 studies reviewed. Once the procedures were identified, they were thematically categorized into four groups as discussed below. We have created a taxonomy of classroom techniques in Table 2.

(a) Adopting SFL-oriented and genre-based activities

SFL-oriented and genre-based activities are used extensively in K-12 ESL writing instruction. SFL is a theory that recognizes the meaning-making potential of language and is built upon the notions of *context of situation* and *context of culture* as two important tenets out of which linguistic choices are made for successful communication (Brisk, 2021; Gebhard, 2019; Halliday, 1985). While the *context of situation* is defined by (a) *field* (topic); (b) *tenor* (the relationship between the writer and audience); and (c) *mode* (the type of text), *context of culture* refers to the shared understandings or assumptions of a discourse community (Halliday, 1985, 1993). For example, members of a given academic discipline (e.g., chemists) are familiar with various textual characteristics that define the field, such as text structures, their organizational patterns, linguistic features, and so on. These textual characteristics form the features of a genre. SFL-oriented and genre-based classroom activities therefore have a close lineage, as both these theoretical orientations relate to the functional and contextual aspects of language use.

Our analysis helped identify how SFL-oriented and genre-based activities are used in the K-12 ESL writing classroom. For example, Accurso et al.'s findings (2016) show that the teacher used an SFL-oriented text analysis approach as she read the participant, Ana Sofia's, scientific writing to understand how the student progressed in writing with her use of academic language. Brisk and Zisselsberger (2010), on the other hand, found that the teacher used a phased approach to writing instruction following SFL pedagogy. In phase one, the teacher collected a writing sample and modeled a story. In phase two, she introduced the structure of Fictional Narratives (FN) with such concepts as character, setting, problem, solution, and lesson of the story, and read a FN to them. In the last phase, the teacher read another FN to demonstrate the purpose and audience in FN and asked students to consider the lessons kindergarteners should learn from the story. Subsequently, the students were asked to write their own FNs with a lesson for kindergarteners. Gebhard et al. (2011) studied the use of an SFL approach in blogging by participant Diany, a second grader, and her social roles as a friend and expert in technology. Diany used blogging to create and show power dynamics in social relationships. Through blogging, she wrote more complex sentences and gained control of her English tenses. In a separate study, Gebhard et al. (2010) showed how a teacher used an SFL approach to analyze multicultural stories and write a narrative for fourth graders. The teacher wrote her own narratives and supported her students as readers of literature and writers of narratives.

Table 2
Classroom techniques in ESL writing instruction in K-12 settings.

Classroom techniques	**Examples**	**Level: Elementary (E)/Middle (M)/ Secondary (S)**	**Impact on ESL writing**	
			Positive	*Negative*
Adopting SFL-oriented and genre-based activities	• SFL-oriented text analysis to understand student progress (Accurso et al., 2016)	E	√	
	• SFL pedagogy for phased writing instruction (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2010)	E	√	
	• SFL techniques for blogging for social purposes (Gebhard et al., 2011)	E	√	
	• SFL techniques to analyze multicultural stories and write a narrative (Gebhard et al., 2010)	E	√	
	• Genre-based activities to teach person in narration (Brisk, 2012)	E	√	
	• Genre-based activities to teach procedural recounts (De Oliveira & Lan, 2014)	E	√	
	• Genre-based pedagogy to analyze ESL students' narrative writing (Harman, 2013)	E	√	
	• Genre-specific support for argumentative essays (O'Hallaron, 2014)	E	√	
	• Genre-based scaffolding for science report writing (Shin, 2016)	E	√	
Utilizing ESL-bilingual student writers' language learning traits	• Accommodating emergent bilingual ESL writers to approach writing bilingually (Bauer et al., 2017)	E	√	
	• Accommodating biliteracy in orthography and writing development (Midgette & Philippakos, 2016)	E	√	
	• Adopting phonics instruction for invented spellings of vowel units by Spanish-English bilingual students (Raynolds et al., 2013)	E	√	
	• Being cognizant about Spanish-English bilingual kindergarteners' difficulties with spelling English stop consonants (Raynolds & Uhry, 2010)	E	-	-

	• Being aware about Spanish-English bilingual students' knowledge transfer cross-linguistically (Soltero-Gonzalez et al., 2012)	E	√	
	• Noticing a mismatch between students' personal desires of writing and classroom writing expectations (Wong, 2016)	E		√
Incorporating digital technology	• Using e-readers called the *Nook* in ELLs' writing (Brown, 2016)	E	√	
	• Using iPads and *Penultimate* (handwriting app) to develop students' narrative writing skills (Chen et al., 2017)	E	√	
	• Using blog-mediated writing (Shin, 2014)	E	√	
Adapting instructional practices in response to student needs	• Creating buddy pairs for discussion and writing (Bauer et al., 2017)	E	√	
	• Using mentor texts, exploring characters in mentor texts, teaching students how to develop characters, showing students how to develop characters using different activities such as drawings, graphic organizers, and one on one conferencing (Brisk et al., 2016)	E	√	
	• Using Writing Workshops (WW) (Gort, 2012a)	E	√	
	• Using "literacy events" (Hong, 2015)	E	√	
	• Using TLC (Hodgson-Drysdale, 2016)	E		
	• Using "hybrid and recursive" process writing (Pandey, 2012)	M/S	√	
	• Using Complex Instruction (CI) to teach persuasive writing (Bunch & Willet, 2013)	E	√	
	• Using literacy-enriched block play (Snow et al., 2016)	E	√	
	• Creating a linguistically diverse classroom for translingual literacy practices (Zapata & Laman, 2016)	E	√	

Genre-based writing pedagogy is informed by SFL principles (e.g., Brisk, 2021; Gebhard, 2019). Research shows that genre-based classroom techniques are widely used in K-12 settings and that they are effective in ESL writing instruction. Our analysis suggests that genre-based activities are common at the elementary level. Brisk's (2012) findings indicate that a genre-based technique was useful in helping grade three students understand the use of grammatical person for a specific genre. For instance, students were successful in using the correct person when they were giving instructions for how to do something—the genre of narration. De Oliveira and Lan's (2014) findings show that a

genre-based approach was used successfully in teaching science writing to a grade four ELL student. First, SFL was used as a tool to analyze the structure of science texts. Next, TLC was used to implement a three-stage, genre-based approach to writing instruction. After implementing genre-based pedagogy, it was found that the student's use of field-specific vocabulary improved. In a different study, Harman (2013) explored a fifth-grade teacher's use of genre-based pedagogy to analyze how ESL students developed language with literary resources. The first focal student, Miguel, played with the language of literary resources in his narrative. The second focal student, Bernardo, pastiched the teacher's narrative. This helped him to see what language could be used in his narrative. At the start of the unit, both students expressed their dislike for writing. By the end, however, both had written narratives and one of them read out his book at a community celebration. O'Hallaron (2014) reported on grade five ELLs' argumentative writing without and with genre-specific support. The findings suggest that the second set of writing was better than the first set. Finally, Shin's (2016) findings suggest that Sara, a grade one student, wrote science reports through the teacher's scaffolding within genre pedagogy. The teacher had students use a graphic organizer that helped students write about organisms. She also co-constructed a text with the students before the students wrote texts independently. In this way, the teacher supported the students' development of metalanguage and academic genres.

(b) Utilizing ESL-bilingual student writers' language learning traits

Our analysis points to the importance of recognizing the unique characteristics of ESL writers and addressing their needs, particularly in ESL-bilingual settings. Findings of Bauer et al. (2017) show that emergent bilingual ESL writers approach writing bilingually. Similar findings were reported by Sparrow et al. (2012), who noted that Spanish-English bilingual children were taught in both languages in "paired literacy instruction" to allow them to develop biliteracy (p. 157). The researchers found that it was difficult to determine a student's strengths and weaknesses without looking at samples of writing in both languages together and that students strategically transferred knowledge between the two languages.

Underscoring the positive effects of biliteracy, Midgette and Philippakos' (2016) findings report on a Russian-English kindergartener's development in English orthography and writing. The findings indicate that early in the school year, participant, Vikka, demonstrated knowledge of the English alphabet and a transfer of knowledge between English and Russian. By April, she produced expository texts, opinion texts, and narratives with events written logically.

Other studies have reported on how biliteracy plays an important role in ESL writing development. Raynolds et al.'s (2013) study investigated if, after being taught about short vowels, Spanish-English kindergarteners make spelling errors influenced by their native language. The findings show no differences in the spelling of short vowels between the groups. However, there were more errors in the spelling of long vowels. The findings also show that phonics instruction affects the invented spelling of vowel units. In a separate study, Raynolds and Uhry (2010) reported on the English spelling of Spanish-English bilingual kindergartners who received English only instruction with native English-

speaking kindergarteners. The findings suggest that the native English-speaking students had greater knowledge of English words than the Spanish-English bilingual students. This indicates that the bilingual students were in the process of learning English. Bilingual kindergarteners had difficulties spelling stop consonants in English such as P, B, T, D, K and G. In another study, Soltero-Gonzalez et al. (2012) found that teachers need to be trained in evaluating the writing of emerging bilingual students. They note that students used bilingual strategies in writing, focusing mainly on word-level strategies. Also, Spanish-English bilingual students who write in both languages simultaneously transfer knowledge of writing and language cross-linguistically.

(c) Incorporating digital technology

Research suggests that the use of digital technology in ESL writing instruction can yield positive results. Brown's (2016) findings show that grade three ELLs' use of e-readers called *Nook* helped develop their writing skills. Social interactions, when using the digital tools, were important in students' writing skills development. Therefore, the researcher recommends combining literacy with technology for a technoliteracies approach to teaching writing. Positive effects of an integration of digital technology in writing was also reported by Chen et al. (2017), who found that middle school ELLs used iPads and *Penultimate*, a handwriting app, to develop their narrative writing skills. The use of *Penultimate* helped improve the organization of students' essays. Findings also suggest that digital writing helped students change from "reluctant writers to active writers" (p. 34). In a separate study, Shin (2014) reported on the positive impacts of blog-mediated writing for social and academic purposes by a grade two ESL student and his English literacy development. The findings suggest that the student used blogging to increase his social and academic standing among his classmates, and to support his classmates in solving problems, which allowed him to increase his metalinguistic awareness.

(d) Adapting instructional practices in response to student needs

Our analysis suggests that teachers adapted instructional practices in direct response to ESL writers' needs, sometimes by resorting to innovative teaching practices. In Bauer et al. (2017), for example, the teacher formed buddy pairs by grouping kindergarten students in pairs based on their demographics, e.g., Latino and African American students formed a pair. Students had multiple opportunities to talk to their buddy about different writing activities. The teacher also used Writers' Workshops (WW) whereby she selected several books by the same author and read them to students. She would then ask students to turn to a classmate and talk about the book, which helped students prepare for writing. Then the buddy pairs would get together and write. The teacher asked students to write in English but encouraged them to write in Spanish as well. Brisk et al.'s (2016) findings underline the effectiveness of explicit writing instruction with such strategies as using mentor texts, exploring characters in mentor texts, showing students how to develop characters using different activities such as drawings, graphic organizers, and one on one conferencing that can help grade four students learn how to write fictional narratives.

Studying a Korean middle school ESL student, Pandey (2012) argues for a reconceptualization of process writing by incorporating "hybrid and recursive rather than

linear and static" (p. 659) activities to teach ESL writing. The author also argues that conducting individualized workshops supports ESL writers. In a separate study that also took place in a middle school, Bunch and Willet (2013) examined the design and implementation of a complex persuasive essay writing task by grade seven ESL students. The findings suggest that creating a textually rich, multimodal, and dialogic classroom context helps students negotiate complex writing tasks effectively.

In an elementary context, Gort (2012a) reported on the teacher's use of WW in teaching writing. The WW started with a meeting with the teacher, followed by students conferencing with their teacher or a classmate about what they did in the previous WW lesson. Then students broke into groups to write or discuss drafts. Students could also brainstorm ideas with classmates for a new story. The teacher meanwhile walked around the room and checked in with students. In the last 10-15 minutes of class, the students would get together to listen to a read-aloud of a text or to discuss the draft of a story. WW was collaborative and interactive, involving a lot of discussion. Students discussed their writing with each other, with the teacher, or engaged in self-talk to help them with their writing. Similar to Gort (2012a), in a study that took place in an elementary classroom, Hong (2015) reported on an innovative approach to writing instruction called "literacy events" (p. 303). For the first literacy event, the teacher proposed that her students were writers and she had them write something each month to show their families their progress in writing. In the second literacy event, the teacher had students share their writing. The students started calling themselves individual writers at this point. Finally, by the third literacy event the students had published books of different genres. The teacher had the students reflect on their writing to change the students' thinking from "we writers" to "thinking writers" (p. 314). The entire process contributed to the children's development as writers. In yet another study in an elementary classroom, Hodgson-Drysdale (2016) describes the use of TLC in which teachers deconstructed mentor texts to help students understand the content. Initially, they deconstructed texts to teach grammar. Both teachers co-constructed texts with their students and spent time preparing them for writing independently.

Snow et al.'s (2016) study focused on examining if kindergarten ESL students' linguistic backgrounds impacted how they responded to block play by being able to practice their developing writing skills. The findings suggest that all three students drew and wrote in their block play. Finally, Zapata and Laman (2016) examined how teachers created linguistically diverse contexts for elementary ESL students that "support translingual pedagogical approaches to writing" (p. 368). The findings suggest that the three teachers created linguistically diverse contexts in their classrooms and the students' metalinguistic awareness developed, as a result. Susan invited family and community members into her classroom and her students spoke their native languages. Sophia intentionally shared her linguistic background with her students. She wove her language beliefs and history into how she taught writing and had students use it as a model. Alexandra shared linguistically diverse picture books with her students, which functioned as models of writing.

In sum, our analysis suggests that SFL-oriented and genre-based activities constitute the most prevalent classroom techniques in K-12 ESL writing instruction. Alongside these

techniques, however, it is also important to recognize ESL students' unique characteristics as writers and to address their specific needs. It appears that incorporating various digital technologies and devices into ESL writing instruction augurs well for both ESL writing instruction and student learning. Finally, while the need to adapt classroom instruction to specific contexts and student needs may be neither new nor unique, our analysis suggests that teachers' willingness and recognition to adapt their instructional techniques played an important role in delivering effective ESL writing lessons. Table 2 provides additional nuances to the classroom techniques identified through our analysis.

Discussion

The 49 studies that we reviewed provide insights into the pedagogical approaches and teaching techniques that are prevalent in K-12 ESL writing instruction. In this paper, we have attempted to capture why or how these approaches and techniques are adopted to provide practicing teachers, teacher educators, administrators, and researchers critical insights into ESL writing instruction in K-12 contexts as a whole.

It appears that teacher education programs play a big role in the way teachers approach ESL writing instruction. To illustrate, based on their academic preparation, teachers either feel prepared, marginally prepared, or not prepared at all to teach ESL writing (Larsen, 2013, 2016; Lee, 2016). Similarly, the activities and materials they use for teaching writing, and the assessment and feedback practices they employ, are also a reflection of their background preparation through teacher education programs. Our research suggests that teachers generally do not feel prepared to teach writing, as they lack specific skills to address ESL students' unique needs as writers. This lack of preparation coupled with a lack of skills for teaching ESL writing, in turn, mediates teachers' overall approaches to teaching ESL writing (Gilliland, 2015; Larsen, 2013, 2016; Lee, 2016; Yi, 2013). Implications are that strong teacher education programs with dedicated writing courses can help teachers acquire the skills needed for ESL writing instruction.

It also appears that in spite of individual differences amongst themselves, how ESL students approach writing can be mediated by the classroom context and by implication, the teacher. For example, teachers' disinterest in students, especially adolescent students, can be off-putting for students (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013), which may have an impact on their writing development. Similarly, the type of assignments that students are asked to write, the kind of writing opportunities they are provided, the expectations teachers have of students about writing, and the dynamics of peer interactions during writing activities seem to impact student writing at the secondary level (Kibler, 2011b). So, secondary teachers need to recognize L2 students' identities, their complex sociocultural histories, the kind of writing assignments and expectations of student writing as part of their overall pedagogical approach. At the elementary level, students' approaches to ESL writing are mediated by their L1s. In particular, in bilingual contexts, students seem to transfer writing skills across languages, and they are capable of deploying both cognitive and linguistic skills when writing (Gort, 2012b). What seems to be important is for teachers to recognize students' preferences and trajectories of writing development (Hong, 2015; Mohr, 2017; Wong, 2016) and adapt instruction accordingly.

Findings underline the importance of instructional approaches that focus on incorporating emerging research and theories into writing instruction and that they have positive impacts on ESL student writing. A number of studies (Babinski et al., 2018; Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2010; Hodgson-Drysdale, 2016) have found that PD sessions for training teachers in the latest L2 writing instructional strategies had positive results on both teachers' skills development and student writing. Thus, PD sessions seem to somewhat compensate for a lack of academic training through teacher education programs.

As far as classroom techniques are concerned, SFL- and genre-oriented writing activities work well in ESL classrooms. Teachers use different aspects of SFL- and genre-oriented and related activities such as TLC. Empirical evidence suggests that SFL- and genre-based writing activities and TLC complement each other. For example, teachers can use TLC to implement genre-based writing activities by deconstructing mentor texts (e.g., science reports) and eliciting the genre structures through joint construction followed by independent construction of texts. The notion of genre helps teachers underline the functional aspects of language use and audience awareness. The process provides students with concrete writing goals to aim for.

Research shows that SFL- and genre-oriented activities can be used for goal-setting in text construction and raising audience awareness, analyzing student writing and tracking how they progress, teaching content area writing (de Oilveira & Lan, 2014; Shin, 2016) and writing in specific genres such as fictional narratives or argumentative essays (O'Hallaron, 2014). Empirical evidence suggests that these classroom techniques work well at the elementary level. When teachers implement these techniques, they help engender students' writing literacy development (Gebhard et al., 2011; Harman, 2013).

Among other classroom techniques, ESL writing instruction in bilingual contexts can be tricky unless teachers are knowledgeable about bilingual ESL student characteristics as writers. These students' writing development, for example, occurs bilingually, as they transfer knowledge about writing bidirectionally between their L1 and L2 (Bauer et al., 2017; Sparrow et al., 2012). As well, research shows that students' L1s may have unique influences on their English writing (Midgette & Philippakos, 2016; Raynolds & Uhry, 2010).

Incorporating technology and innovative teaching practices may yield positive results in ESL writing instruction at the elementary level. For instance, incorporating blog-mediated writing, *Penultimate*, *Nooks,* and iPads can create a positive impact on student writing. Consequently, teachers may want to consider these tools as part of creating opportunities for quality writing experiences for ESL students. In addition, innovative teaching practices can yield positive results in ESL writing instruction at the elementary level. Forming buddy pairs for writing activities and discussion, using mentor texts and graphic organizers, TLC, WW and literacy events, and play-based literacy learning are a few examples of innovative teaching practices. A common thread running through these practices is engaging children in writing activities and promoting both their English language and writing development simultaneously.

The taxonomy tables of pedagogical approaches and teaching techniques can provide useful insights into ESL writing teaching practices in K-12 contexts. For example, a pedagogical approach that relates to "teachers' disinterest in students' sociopolitical

history" (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013), specifically in a secondary context, can serve to remind teachers that such an approach can potentially be damaging to student motivation and writing. This information can be used by teacher educators and school administrators to orientate teachers to the importance of teacher-(adolescent) student relationships in effective ESL writing instruction. Similarly, the importance of "students' learning to plan, develop and edit writing" (Al-Alawi & Kohls, 2012) can inform teachers to focus on these specific aspects of writing instruction. This particular research evidence can serve teacher trainers in planning their PD sessions. Table 2 provides example techniques for teaching ESL writing. For example, empirical evidence suggests that "genre-based activities to teach procedural recounts" (De Oliveira & Lan, 2014) has been successfully used at the elementary level and is a viable teaching technique in similar contexts. In contrast, a teaching technique that causes "a mismatch between students' personal desires of writing and classroom writing expectations" (Wong, 2016) was found to create a negative impact on ESL student writing and therefore should be avoided. Table 2 provides a range of other teaching techniques that teachers can choose from as they see fit in their own teaching contexts. They may refer to the original studies if they need more information to implement them.

The teaching techniques in Table 2 suggest that almost all teaching techniques that our review yielded are related to elementary contexts. One implication of this could be that teaching techniques at the secondary level are an understudied area that needs to be researched for further insights. Another possible implication is that secondary teachers may not encounter as many challenges teaching ESL writing that warrant empirical investigations. This is probable, assuming that by the time students are in the secondary classroom, they must have received a fair amount of literacy education. Either way, our review suggests that there is little empirical evidence about the techniques used in secondary ESL writing instruction.

In sum, the pedagogical approaches and teaching techniques discussed in this paper provide teachers with an empirically grounded orientation to K-12 ESL writing instruction. Considering the high stakes involved in literacy instruction for children's future academic success and the high rates of academic failures and dropouts among ESL children, the discussion in this paper can provide teachers with ideas to overcome the challenges they encounter in teaching ESL writing and provide students with high quality writing instruction. The efficacy of classroom teaching depends on constant trial and error and this paper can equip ESL teachers with ideas to undertake them in the ESL writing classroom.

Conclusion

Current research on ESL writing reviewed in this paper provides an enhanced understanding about various instructional practices prevalent in K-12 classrooms. Both pre- and in-service teachers can utilize the review to prepare themselves for classroom teaching, while teacher educators and school administrators can use it for creating concrete action plans to train and prepare teachers for quality writing literacy learning for ESL children. This is imperative to ensure the future academic success of ESL students whose number is on the rise in English-dominant countries. While more research in this area is set to increase in the coming years, the current review provides an overview of prevalent

pedagogical approaches and teaching techniques. Thus, the taxonomy of approaches and techniques in this paper can be used as practical tools and guiding principles for both classroom teaching practices in K-12 contexts and teacher education programs.

Aside from practical applications, the findings offer implications for a few areas of future research. One such area is offering ESL writing courses through teacher education programs and subsequently studying teacher perspectives about the efficacy of their ESL writing instructional practices. As well, students taught by trained teachers can provide useful insights into the challenges in teaching ESL writing and what needs to be done to prepare teachers further. The partnership between schools and research universities to offer customized graduate programming for in-service ESL teachers is an area that holds much promise. This can be expanded by studying challenges and working on rectifying them so that opportunities for teacher-students such as funding, course release time, and more can be in place for their professional development.

Finally, a few caveats of this review project need to be noted. One of them relates to the fact that all studies took place in North America and were published in English. The review does not include other English-dominant contexts such as the UK, Australia, and New Zealand as well as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable. Representative studies in these contexts need to be examined in future projects to gain a more comprehensive understanding about ESL writing instruction in K-12 contexts. That said, the current review makes it clear that teacher education programs need to include ESL writing courses to prepare future K-12 teachers and ensure quality literacy education for all students.

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