
CONFERENCE ARTICLE

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING WRITING SKILLS TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Teaching writing to English language learners (ELLs) requires more than assigning topics and correcting errors. Writing is a socially situated, cognitively demanding activity in which learners must generate ideas, organize meaning for a reader, and select linguistic resources that fit a purpose and genre. This thesis synthesizes research-based approaches to ELL writing instruction and proposes an integrated classroom framework that combines genre awareness, process-oriented composing, strategic self-regulation, and feedback cycles. A structured narrative review of major scholarship and classroom studies indicates that learners improve most when instruction is explicit, scaffolded, and sustained across drafting and revision, rather than limited to product evaluation. Findings highlight the value of mentor texts and genre pedagogy, guided planning and revision routines, strategy instruction (including self-regulated strategy development), and feedback designs that promote uptake through peer review training and focused written corrective feedback. The paper concludes that effective ELL writing instruction is achieved when teachers align tasks with authentic communicative goals, make expectations visible, and cultivate learners' autonomy through manageable strategies and iterative practice.

KEYWORDS

Second language writing, ELL, genre pedagogy, process writing, feedback, peer review, SRSD, self-regulated learning.

INTRODUCTION

Writing ability is often the skill that most strongly determines ELLs' success in academic contexts because it is tied to assessment, disciplinary learning, and participation in institutional communication. Yet ELL writers must negotiate multiple constraints at once: limited lexical and grammatical control, unfamiliar rhetorical expectations, and reduced access to background knowledge encoded in school genres. Consequently, effective instruction cannot rely on exposure and practice alone; it must explicitly develop how texts work, how ideas are shaped for readers, and how writers manage composing decisions over time. Ken Hyland argues that L2 writing instruction is strongest when it connects process strategies with purpose and context, enabling learners to draft and revise while also understanding the genres they are expected to produce.

At the classroom level, this means writing instruction must be designed as a learning sequence rather than a one-time performance. Large syntheses of writing research emphasize that students' progress accelerates when teachers combine modeling, guided practice, and feedback with opportunities to revise meaningfully across drafts.

A structured narrative review was conducted to identify foundational theories and classroom-tested strategies for teaching writing to ELLs. Sources were located through targeted searches of widely used research venues and publisher repositories, prioritizing peer-reviewed scholarship and major evidence syntheses. The review emphasized works that connect pedagogy to observable writing outcomes (text quality, revision quality, strategy use, or learner autonomy), while also including influential conceptual contributions that shape instructional design in second language writing.

The reviewed literature converges on one central result: ELL writing improves most when instruction merges "what to write" (genre expectations and discourse patterns) with "how to write" (process routines and strategies), and when feedback is organized to generate revision, not simply evaluation. Genre pedagogy supports development by grounding instruction in the text types learners must produce in real academic or professional contexts. Hyland's work shows that genre-based instruction helps teachers sequence learning, model target texts, and scaffold writers toward control of structure and language features that fulfill a social purpose.

A second consistent finding is that feedback becomes more powerful when learners are taught how to use it. Peer review is often treated as a time-saving classroom technique, but research indicates it can function as a learning mechanism when students are trained and when the task design encourages attention to global meaning and organization. Min's classroom study demonstrates that trained peer review can increase the amount and quality of peer-triggered revisions, suggesting that peer feedback is not automatically effective but can become effective when teachers build response literacy.

Relatedly, Lundstrom and Baker's study highlights that giving feedback can strengthen the reviewer's own writing, implying that peer response should be designed not only to help the writer receiving comments, but also to develop analytic reading and revision awareness in the student providing comments.

A third result concerns error treatment and written corrective feedback (WCF). Truscott's argument against grammar correction challenges teachers to avoid default, comprehensive marking that may not lead to durable gains, while later scholarship emphasizes that feedback can be beneficial when it

is selective, principled, and tied to revision and noticing. Ferris' synthesis positions teacher response as most effective when it balances meaning-level guidance with manageable language goals, and Bitchener and Ferris further frame WCF as an instructional tool whose effectiveness depends on focus, timing, and learner engagement rather than sheer quantity of corrections.

Taken together, the findings support a coherent instructional model for ELL writing built on four mutually reinforcing components. First, genre visibility is essential: learners progress faster when they can see how a target text is organized, what linguistic resources signal its moves, and how those choices relate to audience and purpose. This does not mean teaching rigid templates; rather, it means using mentor texts to reveal options and constraints so learners can make informed choices during drafting and revision.

Second, process support must be designed as a sequence of actions that writers can repeat across tasks. ELL writers often draft "once" because they lack a practical method for revising; therefore, instruction should demonstrate how planning, drafting, and revising serve different goals and how each stage can be guided by specific questions about meaning, organization, and clarity. When process is taught without attention to genre, students may produce fluent text that misses academic expectations; when genre is taught without process, students may imitate forms without developing flexibility. The synthesis points toward a process-genre integration in which learners first understand the communicative goal and structure, then use strategies to plan and draft, and finally revise with criteria that reflect the genre's purpose.

Third, feedback should be treated as instruction. The reviewed evidence suggests that peer response and teacher response are most effective when learners have a clear focus for reviewing and revising, along with training that models what useful feedback looks like and how writers decide what to adopt. Peer review works best as a guided literacy practice, where students learn to notice issues of meaning and organization, justify suggestions, and translate comments into revision decisions. This not only improves drafts but also develops transferable awareness that supports independent writing growth.

Fourth, self-regulation is the bridge between classroom guidance and independent performance. Strategy instruction that includes planning routines, drafting goals, and revision checks can reduce cognitive overload and help ELL writers allocate attention to both content and language. SRSD-type staging aligns well with ELL needs because it combines explicit modeling, supported practice, and gradual release, while SRL-focused instruction adds motivational regulation and self-efficacy as necessary conditions for sustained writing development.

The key implication is that "more writing" is not enough; improvement depends on guided writing experiences in which learners repeatedly practice genre-aligned composing and learn to manage feedback and strategy use. A limitation of this thesis is that it synthesizes across contexts (ESL and EFL, secondary and tertiary), so classroom implementation should be adapted to learners' proficiency, instructional time, and local assessment demands.

Effective strategies for teaching writing to English language learners are those that integrate genre awareness, process routines, structured feedback, and self-regulation. Teachers can increase writing quality and learner autonomy when they make expectations explicit through mentor texts, teach repeatable planning-and-revision strategies, and design feedback systems that train learners to give, interpret, and apply comments productively. The most sustainable improvements occur when instruction shifts from correcting products to building writers who can plan, monitor, and revise with purpose across tasks and contexts.

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