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Exploring Elaborated Noun Phrase Use of Middle School English Language Learners Following Writing Strategy Instruction

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by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my unique family, with roots across Mexico and

Europe. You have inspired my appreciation of diversity and love of languages, especially

Spanish. I would not be the blue-eyed blonde-haired Mexicana that I am without you.

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  This thesis is also dedicated to my committee, Dr. Silliman, Dr. Danzak, and Dr. Bahr. Dr. Silliman, thank you for challenging me in your Language Learning course and identifying my "spark." I would not have pushed myself to take on such an endeavor had it not been for our meeting in your office two years ago. Dr. Danzak, thank you many times over for all of your guidance and support throughout this process. You have helped me develop my skills as a writer and my passion for research. And Dr. Bahr, thank you for your tough-love, no-nonsense approach to teaching, and especially your knowledge of statistics. Thank you all for inspiring me to be a strong and successful woman in this field.

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Abstract

English Language Learners (ELLs) are a growing population within the U.S. school system. In the secondary grades, this diverse group requires instruction to improve not only English language proficiency but also utilization of the academic language register, especially in writing tasks. The present study focused on ELLs in middle school. The aim was to explore the effects of enhanced Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) writing instruction on the use of complex language, particularly elaborated noun phrases (ENPs) when SRSD was combined with linguistic instruction on increased sentence complexity.

As a part of a larger study exploring critical literacy and the persuasive writing instruction of Spanish-English speaking students, this repeated measures design detailed the effects of two six-week instructional periods aimed at teaching19 ELLs methods for organizing, planning, and constructing persuasive texts (the macro-structure level), as well as ways of incorporating academic language forms and functions in their writing (the micro-structure level). Within the critical literacy project that involved topics and themes related to immigration, the 19 students produced three texts in English (pre-, mid-, and post-instruction essays). These texts were analyzed for ENP frequency and complexity. Three case studies were also chosen to highlight the variation in ENP outcomes and to discuss additional aspects of persuasive writing at both the macro- and micro-structure levels.

Statistical analysis of group use of ENPs revealed no significant increase in frequency or complexity across essays as simple pre-noun modifications were produced in amounts greater than all other ENP type across all essays. The three case studies revealed that frequency of ENP use generally corresponded to strength of abilities at either the macro-structure level, such as inclusion of more persuasive elements, or the micro-structure level as indicated by increased text length and variety of vocabulary. One implication of these outcomes indicates the need for more in-depth emphasis on the coordination of both the macro-and micro-structure levels in writing instruction studies with ELLs. Other implications pertain to further analysis of classification approaches for designating ENP complexity, and how enhanced understanding of ENP production signals aspects of the academic language register.

Review of the Literature

When children who are speakers of languages other than English, termed English Language Learners (ELLs), enter the educational system, they must work to master the language of instruction and academic material in tandem. ELLs are an ever-growing population: from 1998-2009 the number of ELLs enrolled in public school increased by 51% (U.S. Department of Education, 2011a) and 21% of school-aged students spoke a language other than English at home in 2010 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b). As this considerable group of students progresses from elementary school through middle and high school, they face challenges beyond developing basic English reading and writing abilities. The difficulty of an academic task is amplified by the challenge of learning content material while acquiring a second language, leaving them to complete "double the work" (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007, p. 1). Because academic content in U.S. schools is presented in English, students without a solid grasp of this language are undoubtedly at a disadvantage. Tasks in middle and high school become more complex and require the application of knowledge and skills that involve analyzing complicated expository texts, and of writing expository compositions in a variety of genres and subject areas. Formal academic language is utilized across most subject areas (Schleppegrell & O'Hallaron, 2011) and students are expected to master the registers specific to each academic subject.

Writing skills that middle and high school students must develop, as outlined in the *Common Core State Standards Initiative: Writing Standards for Grades 6-12*

(National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2010), include asserting and defending claims, demonstrating knowledge about a subject, and conveying experiences, thoughts, and feelings. These abilities are developed by tasks of "writ[ing] arguments to support claims...using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence; writ[ing] informative/explanatory texts...through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content; and [creating] narratives...using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences" (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010, p. 41). Middle school students are exposed to a variety of complex writing tasks requiring the employment of appropriate syntactic and lexical choices to create quality texts. As expected, ELLs appear to struggle in this area.

ELLs in the U.S. Education system face challenges with academic writing due to a variety of reasons, including diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, as well as varying prior educational experiences. They demonstrate consistently lower test scores on the National Assessment of Academic Progress in the area of writing: in 2011, 71% of 8th grade ELLs performed at the below basic level in reading, indicating a "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work" (U.S. Department of Education, 2011c, p. 6). In the same year, only 35% of ELL 8th graders scored at or above the basic level in writing, as compared to 83% of non-ELL 8th graders. Only 1% of 8th grade ELLs scored at the proficient level in writing, as compared to 28% of non-ELLs (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b). This is an indication of the discrepancy in abilities between ELLs and their non-ELL classmates for completing writing tasks involving academic English in middle and high school.

The present study sought to examine the effects of writing strategy instruction on linguistic complexity expressed in persuasive essays composed by ELLs in middle school. Within a critical literacy framework that focused on the study of immigration, and consistent with the new Common Core State Standards for writing in middle school, participants learned systematic strategies for planning and composing persuasive essays, followed by supplemental instruction on techniques for making written language expression more effective, efficient, and complex. Effects were quantified by a measure of elaborated noun phrases (ENPs), a feature of complex academic language. An ENP is described as a head noun with word or phrasal modification preceding or following it (Greenhalgh & Strong, 2001); for example, "the two diligent <u>students</u>, whose work was displayed on every wall" (pre-noun determiner, quantifier, and modifier + <u>head noun</u> + post-noun relative clause phrasal modification including an additional embedded noun phrase, every '<u>wall</u>').

Chapter organization consists of a discussion of the current literature regarding academic language in English and the kinds of expository writing tasks that middle school students complete (particularly the persuasive essay). In the next section, an instructional method for improving persuasive essays, including increasing the use of complex academic language, is analyzed. The theoretical basis and instructional steps of Self-Regulated Strategy Development, particularly the strategies of STOP and DARE, are presented and their impact on persuasive writing abilities of school aged-students in research is discussed, followed by research emphasizing instruction to improve sentence-level linguistic complexity, such as the inclusion of ENPs, Next, the use of ENPs for quantifying language complexity in English and Spanish is reviewed, as well as research

in the area of developmental trends in ENP use in English and Spanish speakers. The final section presents the study purpose and research questions.

Academic Language: The Language of Learning in Middle and High School

The challenges for ELLs are compounded in the middle school years as curriculum and assignments become more complex and as the importance of academic language moves to the forefront of many scholastic tasks. Academic language is the language of instruction and assessment in middle and high school and beyond. It refers to "the disciplinary registers that students encounter in the secondary years, and using academic language calls for advanced proficiency in complex language across subject areas" (Schleppegrell & O'Hallaron, 2011, p. 3). Academic language includes generally more complex lexical and morphosyntactic structures that transcend subject areas; however subject-specific text types and vocabulary are also communicated with academic language (Schleppegrell, 2004). For example, middle school science texts utilize technical vocabulary to discuss processes and phenomena in the areas of biology, physics, and chemistry. At the level of the sentence, dense noun phrases (or ENPs) are used to efficiently bundle information into clauses to define and describe concepts. Such dense sentence structures can be seen in the following example, "Organisms made up of <u>one or more cells</u> that have a <u>nucleus and membrane-bound organelles</u> are called eukaryotes" (Modern Biology, 2006, p. 75, as cited in Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010, p. 589) (ENPs are underlined), in which the complex explanation and description of a eukaryote is condensed into a single sentence. Using similarly complex language, history texts utilize authors' points of view to describe the past through evaluation and judgment, and to interpret historical events (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010).

In order to succeed in middle and high school, students must master academic language and be comfortable using it to read, analyze, and write texts (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Moore, in press). Research has demonstrated that students benefit from explicit and systematic instruction on the forms and function of language specific to subject areas, and methods for utilizing the subject-specific academic language in different content areas (Schleppegrell & O'Hallaron, 2011). However, ELLs are among a group of students that struggle most with tasks involving use of academic language in the classroom (Short & Boyson, 2012; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

The challenge of the expository text. Reading and comprehending academic texts is one challenge; producing them is an entirely different undertaking. As students progress from elementary school to middle and high school, writing tasks transition from accounts of connected events or, narratives, to expository texts. Exposition is defined as discourse designed to convey information and to explain procedures or concepts (Bliss, 2002). Expository texts are "topic oriented; they focus on concepts and issues and express the unfolding of ideas, claims, and arguments in terms of the logical interrelations among them" (Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2007). As part of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010), middle and high school curriculum must include activities that involve the production of expository texts in the form of analyses, explanations, comparisons, and persuasive essays.

To write expository compositions, students must acquire knowledge of and produce academic language structures at both the micro-level (i.e., word and sentence-level features) and macro-level (i.e., discourse or text-level features, including paragraph and text organization) of writing that differ from those used in narratives. For example, at

the micro-level, expository texts utilize technical and abstract vocabulary, high lexical density, clausal subordination and embedding, and lengthy complex phrases (Nippold, Mansfield, Billow & Tomblin, 2008), such as ENPs. At the macro-level, expository texts, whose goal is to inform, explain, and/or persuade, utilize a hierarchical structure in which themes are developed and followed by logical arguments (Scott & Balthazar, 2010). Additionally, the overall language of expository texts is generally less conversational and more formal, accomplished by use of passive voice, adverbial clauses and fewer interrogatives (Scott & Balthazar, 2010). In order to produce effective texts in middle and high school, it is necessary that all students, including ELLs, master these expository structures.

Researchers have analyzed grammatical and structural discrepancies produced by students in written and oral narration and exposition. One study compared the grammatical structures of narrative and expository oral language produced by 444 eighth graders to demonstrate the differences between these genres (Nippold et al., 2008). This study revealed that, when the students created oral expositions they used longer sentences with more clausal subordination than when producing oral narratives.

Similar discrepancies between features of narrative and expository texts were found in both oral and written language (Berman and Verhoeven, 2002). They analyzed how participants, ages 9-30 years, from seven countries constructed texts based on genre (narrative, expository), modality (oral, written), and language (Dutch, English, French, Hebrew, Icelandic, Spanish and Swedish). The researchers remarked that all participant groups made a clear distinction between text types [narrative versus expository], both in content and linguistic choices in their writing. These distinctions included tense and

mood differences, as well as higher proportions of copular and existential constructions, impersonal pronouns, and use of ENPs in expository texts. However, the authors found that distinctive differences in genre converged among the older participant groups (high school and above). This means that the expository texts of the high school students contained illustrative examples with reference to personal experiences, which are conventions more common to narrative texts. Thus, mastery of expository text production may be a later developing ability, "in the sense of a coherent set of core propositions, expressing key ideas elaborated by relevant illustrative and motivational material" (Berman & Verhoeven, 2002, p. 6).

The persuasive writing task. A common task of middle and high school curricula (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010), written persuasion is particularly challenging for many students because it requires the use of tactful lexical and syntactic strategies aimed at changing the opinion of the reader. Regardless of the difficulty they pose for many students, persuasive writing tasks are a part of middle and high school curriculum in many schools (Kiuhara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009), as well as many state and college admission standardized tests (ACT, 2008; Hillocks, 2006). Without explicit instruction in writing persuasive essays, middle and high school students may omit key features of a persuasive essay, thereby decreasing the strength of the argument and overall quality of the text. Instruction may include lessons in techniques for planning and organizing prior to writing, learning how to structure an argument, and understanding what persuasive elements to include in the essay.

Data support that even the most skilled writers find the process of writing a persuasive essay challenging, as evidenced by the consistently low scores that many

students obtain on national assessments that include a persuasive writing task (De La Paz, 2001; Harris & Graham, 2007; Kiuhara, O'Neill, Hawken and Graham, 2012; U.S. Department of Education 2011b). Also, rather than planning and organizing prior to composing a persuasive essay, students may simply use a "knowledge telling" approach to writing (Harris & Graham, 2007, p. 3), which involves a list-like inclusion of any and all information perceived as pertinent to a topic, rather than strategic formulation of a written argument. For example, Danzak (2011) found that that bilingual middle school ELLs applied the knowledge telling strategy to narrative and expository autobiographical texts composed in both English and Spanish. Essays created by this approach fail to achieve the desired outcome of persuading the reader to agree with the writer's opinion because no argument is actually presented.

As a final example of the challenges students experience in writing persuasive texts, Kiuhara and colleagues (2012) analyzed persuasive essays written by six high school students classified as poor writers. The participants composed texts at pre- and post-instruction that were scored for overall quality, length, and the inclusion of seven essential persuasive elements prior to and after instruction in persuasive essay writing. Essential elements were based on those proposed by Graham (1990) and included provision of context/background information, statement of the problem and the writer's position, reasons to support the writer's position, possible refutations of the writer's position, concluding statements, and elaboration on one or more previous elements. Students in this study provided as few as one essential element in their pre-instruction writing samples. However, following intervention, texts were longer and higher overall quality scores were obtained. Students also included six or seven essential persuasive

elements. This study suggested that, without explicit instruction in the strategies for creating quality persuasive essays, students struggle to produce effective texts.

Although ELLs have been identified as a group that struggles with academic language and literacy, especially at the middle and high school levels, few studies have addressed the persuasive writing skills of ELLs specifically. Rather, they studied the literacy issues of ELLs in general (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007), common classroom instruction practices for ELLs (Hakuta, 2011; Rance-Roney, 2009), the importance of academic language for ELLs (Schleppegrell & O'Hallaron, 2011), and features of and differences in their writing abilities when compared to native English-speakers (Danzak, 2011; Hernández, 2001). More importantly, few, if any, studies have focused on instructional methods to improve the persuasive writing skills of ELLs.

A recent pilot teaching resource provides educators with methods specifically for teaching ELLs about persuasive writing, and how to compose these texts themselves. The resource explores the teaching of persuasive text construction by studying famous works of oral persuasion, mostly in the form of speeches. This resource was developed by WestEd authors in collaboration with UL's English Language Arts (ELA) committee and followed the UL's Guidelines for ELA Instructional Materials Development (Bunch, 2012). Such materials are developed by the UL ELA working group "to enrich academic content and language development for English Learners by making explicit the language and literacy required to meet Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards" (Bunch, 2012, p.1). The curriculum involved student participation in a language and literacy unit in school called "Persuasion Across Time and Space: Analyzing and Producing Complex Texts" (Walqui, Koelsch, & Schmida, 2012).

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Throughout various lessons the students learned different contexts for persuasion, such as advertisements and historical documents, and famous speeches. Students also studied the rhetorical devices and sentence structure that facilitate the persuasive arguments of each speech. The project culminated with the students writing their own persuasive speeches. See the unit website for more information: http://ell.stanford.edu/teaching_resources/ela.

The interface of text construction skills and mastery of academic language.
The task of composing a high-quality persuasive essay is fully realized as students attack the interdependent duties of planning and structuring the persuasive essay (by including elements of the argument and presenting them in a tactful, convincing manner) while utilizing lexically and syntactically complex academic language. It is the combination of the structural and lexical/syntactic aspects of writing that ensures a superior persuasive essay. Although students may receive explicit instruction in both areas, research is lacking in how these aspects combine as students utilize strategies to create quality texts, especially among ELLs.

Persuasive Writing Strategy Instruction

As previously mentioned, students benefit from explicit instruction in methods for constructing and composing persuasive texts. Additionally, students may also improve their expository texts by learning methods for incorporating grammatical and lexical structures specific to exposition. Enhanced Self-Regulated Strategy Development instruction teaches students methods for formulating and organizing persuasive essays while encouraging the use of academic language particular to expository writing.

Self-regulated Strategy Development (SRSD). Self-regulated Strategy Development (SRSD; Harris and Graham, 1996) is a framework for writing instruction.

The SRSD model is designed to promote self-regulation throughout the writing process, which involves goal setting, self-instruction, and self-monitoring (De La Paz, 2001). When applied to persuasive writing tasks, SRSD emphasizes: 1) planning prior to composing by generating ideas to support each side of an issue before deciding what position to take, 2) organizing ideas, and 3) monitoring throughout the production phase of writing. These planning steps are crucial for students who tend to use the previously mentioned "knowledge telling" approach to writing, which inhibits the formulation of a strong argument (Harris & Graham, 2007).

The SRSD model for writing instruction follows six stages of instruction (De La Paz, 2001): 1) *discuss it,* 2) *develop background knowledge*, 3) *model it*, 4) *memorize it*, 5) *support it,* and 6) *independent performance* (p. 235). The teacher follows these steps by discussing the strategy steps, helping students develop necessary background knowledge for strong writing, modeling the strategy, guiding students to memorize the steps for strategy implementation, and providing decreasing support and scaffolding until independent implementation is reached.

Two strategies following the SRSD model that students can apply specifically to persuasive writing tasks are STOP and DARE. These strategies guide students through the planning and organizing steps prior to writing, and remind them of the important elements to include in their persuasive essays. STOP, a planning strategy, stands for *Suspend judgment, Take a side, Organize ideas*, and *Plan more as you write*. DARE, a organizational strategy, stands for *Develop a topic sentence*, *Add supporting ideas*, *Reject arguments for the other side*, and *End with a conclusion* (De La Paz, 2001). These short phrases serve as a basic roadmap for how to plan and create a strong persuasive text.

Research has shown that when utilized, students show great success in improving persuasive writing skills (Harris et al., 2012; Wong, Hoskyn, Jai, Ellis & Watson, 2008; Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005; Kiuhara et al., 2012).

Efficacy of SRSD. The efficacy of the SRSD model for writing instruction is well documented in research which provides promising steps towards finding evidence-based instruction for struggling writers from elementary school to high school. It is important to highlight, however, that, to this point, all of the studies in this area were conducted with monolingual, English speaking students, not ELLs. These studies demonstrate that with appropriate SRSD instruction, students' persuasive essays improved in some facet.

One study examined the use of SRSD in a randomized controlled study of students in the third grade (Harris et al., 2012). After instruction using the SRSD model, the students' essays included more persuasive elements and scored higher on a general quality scale. Wong et al. (2008) evaluated the implementation of an SRSD writing program that focused on the organization and quality of opinion essays by sixth graders. When compared to a no-treatment group, the students receiving SRSD intervention improved significantly in the areas of essay organization and writing clarity. An additional study measured the effects of SRSD intervention on length and quality of essays written by students with learning disabilities in 10th grade (Chalk et al., 2005). Their essays showed an increase in both length and quality over the course of instruction. Finally, Kiuhara et al. (2012) also evaluated the persuasive writing of high school students based on the inclusion of seven essential persuasive elements prior to and after SRSD instruction. All students in the study included at least six of the seven essential elements in post-instruction essays.

In order to ensure large-scale efficacy of this instructional method, several meta-analyses of SRSD research studies sought to evaluate the existing evidence for using SRSD models for writing instruction with students in elementary through high school. The first meta-analysis reviewed study outcomes for the use of SRSD with students at risk for learning disabilities in kindergarten through grade 12 (Baker, Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Apichatabutra & Doabler, 2009). More than ten of the 21 studies reviewed met the proposed criteria for high-quality research and indicated that SRSD instruction represented evidence-based practice for improving student writing outcomes. Next, Graham and colleagues reviewed outcomes of writing instruction techniques with elementary school students (Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara & Harris, 2012). They found that studies in which students received strategy instruction involving learning to plan and draft texts prior to composing yielded positive outcomes as evidenced by a large effect sizes for this cohort of research. The participants' writing significantly improved when they received this type of instruction as compared to the other methods reviewed. Finally, Graham and Perin (2007) completed an analysis of a variety of writing strategy instructional methods and outcomes on adolescents' writing. Their analysis indicated that strategy instruction, particularly SRSD, produced significantly better texts than other instructional methods. These meta-analyses lead to the conclusion that students might expect to see positive outcomes when the SRSD method is utilized, and that the majority of students would benefit from this teaching approach. However, it must be noted that none of the participants from the studies reviewed by Baker et al. (2009) were ELLs.

The enhanced SRSD model. SRSD focuses on providing students with techniques for planning, organizing, and structuring whole texts. However, research

would suggest that supplementary teaching could enhance SRSD instruction and improve writing skills by teaching students how to improve academic language use in writing at the word and sentence level. As SRSD does not explicitly teach this aspect of writing, students also must learn to utilize grammatical structures that package information into sentences, such as the inclusion of ENPs. Students need instruction to increase lexical and syntactic density (Scott & Balthazar, 2010) in order to expand their use of structures typical of complex academic language. Research has also shown positive outcomes for students who receive explicit instruction in academic language functions and structures as an element of a curriculum integrated with classroom content (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Fang, et al., in press; Schleppegrell & O'Hallaron, 2011; Scott & Balthazar, 2010). By learning these functions and structures for use in their own writing, an assumption was that ELLs would be better equipped to produce persuasive texts of higher quality and complexity necessary to succeed in middle and high school.

Another aspect of quality writing is the use of formal language registers typical of academic texts. Students must learn to utilize academic language in order to produce superior compositions in the middle school years and beyond. One aspect of academic language is syntactic complexity, including the use of elaborated noun phrases.

Elaborated Noun Phrases (ENPs)

There are various ways to measure language complexity that involve the examination of lexical, grammatical, and textual features. Some of these measures include overall text length (Chalk et al., 2005), number of words per clause and number of clauses per T-unit (Beers & Nagy, 2011), mean length of T-unit, and the use of nominal, relative, and adverbial clauses (Nippold et al., 2008), and, of interest here, the

number and type of elaborated noun phrases in the text (Eisenberg et al., 2008; Ravid &
Berman, 2010).

An ENP is described by Benson (2009) as a noun phrase with two or more
modifiers preceding the head noun (head noun: dog–the big brown dog; head noun:
friend–a genuinely good friend), or with qualifiers, such as prepositional phrases,
appositives, and/or relative clauses following the noun (the dog, a hairy flea-covered
mongrel; the friend who is like a sister). This means that a head noun may be modified
and expanded, either pre-noun by articles, modifiers, quantifiers, and adjectives and/or
post-noun with phrases, relative clauses, and further embedded clauses, in order to
package information into more efficient, yet more complex, language. Because the
function of expository texts is to inform and explain, ENPs play a key role in providing
the language structures necessary to achieve this outcome in a more precise and effective
manner. Thus, increased use of ENPs may demonstrate students' understanding of
particular language structures that enhance academic texts as well as their ability to
utilize them in expository writing.

Researchers have outlined ENPs as an indicator of increased linguistic
sophistication in writing, such as one study that measured the use of ENPs in the writing
of different age groups from older elementary school children to young adults (Ravid &
Berman, 2010). The detailed measurement scale in this study included not only the
number of modifiers used and the position of modifiers relative to the head noun, but also
lexical measures, such as total length (in words) of the noun phrase, semantic measures,
such as complexity of the head noun, and the quality and number of modifiers used in the
noun phrase. Results indicated a progression in the complexity of ENPs used in writing

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as children advanced through school, from childhood through young adolescence and into adulthood. Results also revealed the use of more complex ENPs in expository texts than in narrative texts.

ENP development in English and Spanish. Eisenberg, and colleagues (2008) described the progression of complexity of ENPs in school-aged children's spoken stories as they matured. Using a four-part scale, they found that the youngest group (age 5 years) utilized simple noun phrases with pre-noun modification (his shoe; some tape), and older participants (ages 8 and 11) utilized more complex noun phrases with multiple pre- and post-noun modifications (the weird yellow object; a dog that had fleas). More complexity signaled an increase in language complexity and the ability to use spoken language to provide information in a more efficient manner. However, researchers have argued that noun-phrase modification is not an infinite process and that language does not increase in complexity indefinitely. For example, Thornton, MacDonald, and Gil (1999) contended that a moderate amount of modification is the norm such that, if a noun has received extensive pre-modification, it is likely to receive less post-modification, and vice versa.

The same researchers (Thornton et al., 1999) discovered that this trend also held true for Spanish speakers in a series of experiments involving Spanish and English speaking university students. Participants in both groups rated already-modified noun phrases as more difficult to modify than un-modified NPs.

Currently, no studies explicitly outline ENP development in the writing of Spanish-speaking students or Spanish-English ELLs, although additional research has outlined developmental trends in the use of other linguistic features in the oral domain of Spanish speakers. For example, Castilla-Earls and Eriks-Brophy (2012) found that the

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oral language of typically-developing Spanish-speaking preschoolers increased in complexity from age 3 to 5 years based on several measures, including number of T-units, mean length of T-unit, and a subordination index, indicating clausal density. Further research has indicated the socio-cultural preference of Spanish speakers for utilizing verbs rather than nouns in language learning tasks and communicative interactions (Peña, Bedore, & Rappazzo, 2003). This may influence the use of noun phrases into childhood and adolescence, as Spanish speakers may utilize verbs more frequently and with greater proficiency during language development and beyond.

Summary

ELLs are a quickly growing population in the U.S. with diverse educational needs. They encounter challenges when entering the educational system initially, and as they proceed into middle and high school when academic language is at the forefront of instruction and assessment in these grades. Students are required to produce expository texts, particularly persuasive essays, with complex language structures throughout middle school. One instructional method used to teach students strategies for composing persuasive essays is Self-regulated Strategy Development SRSD, particularly STOP and DARE. SRSD instruction may be enhanced with additional teaching on how to include lexical and syntactic academic language structures in writing. Academic language can be quantified in a variety of ways, including measurement of the use of elaborated noun-phrases (ENPs). It is not known, however, how students implement the use of ENPs within essays produced using SRSD methods.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

The present study attempted to contribute to current research in the area of ELL academic language use by examining the effects of a specific instructional method for persuasive essay writing on the complexity of ENPs produced in persuasive essays written by middle school ELLs. Students participated in two, six-week instructional periods focused on teaching strategies for effective persuasive writing. The first phase focused on the strategies STOP and DARE, while the second targeted instruction in sentence combining, use of varied vocabulary, and revision strategies, with the goal of increasing students' use of academic language, including ENPs.

To examine the effects of the enhanced SRSD model on the number and type of ENPs used in the ELLs' persuasive essays over time, an ENP measure was adapted from a combination of those used by Eisenberg et al. (2008) and Ravid and Berman (2010). This measure was used to quantify changes in ENP production in persuasive essays written by the ELLs at three points over the course of the study. Additionally, an exploration of ENP use, as well as other textual features, was applied to three case studies to reveal further outcomes of the writing strategy instruction on the ELLs' persuasive writing. Hence, the present study was guided by a two-part research question that addressed the impact of enhanced SRSD instruction in an exploratory manner on: 1) the ENPs produced in the persuasive writing of middle school ELLs over time, as measured by the frequency and type of ENPs, and 2) other textual features of the ELLs' persuasive texts, such as length, variety of vocabulary, clausal density, number of persuasive elements included, and overall text quality.

Method

The present study is part of a larger, mixed methods investigation that explored persuasive writing within a critical literacy framework for ELLs attending an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class at a public middle school on the west coast of Florida (Belvis & Danzak, 2013). Couched within the larger project, the current study examined the impact of writing strategy instruction (enhanced SRSD) on students' use of more complex language in writing, specifically elaborated noun phrases (ENPs).

Research Design

The current study applied a repeated measures design to investigate the impact of enhanced SRSD instruction as noted in 3 writing samples gathered over the course of 12 weeks in a group of 19 middle school students. In this case, a pre-instructional essay that assessed students' persuasive writing abilities before beginning the project served as the baseline. Essays written at the mid-instruction and post-instruction points quantified changes in the students' skills following each of two intervention periods.

Participants

A total of 54 students from the ESOL class of a middle school on the west coast of Florida were invited to participate in the present study. Other students in the class were native speakers of other languages including: Albanian, Turkish, Vietnamese, Haitian-Creole, Portuguese, and Arabic. Although all students in the ESOL class participated in the critical literacy project and received writing strategy instruction, only data from the 19 participants who were Spanish-English speakers were analyzed for this part of the

study. Additionally, these Spanish-English speaking students completed all three writing samples in the study, and composed all texts in English. Of the 19 participants, three were in 6th grade, seven in 7th grade, and nine in 8th grade. Five participants were male and 14 were female.

Following written consent and assent, the participants completed a questionnaire regarding language history, educational experience, and frequency of use of their native language (L1) versus English (L2), as well as their impressions of proficiency when speaking, reading, and writing either language (See Appendix A for the questionnaire). Although all participants were native speakers of Spanish, they were a diverse group in terms of years of schooling received within and outside of the U.S., as well as country of origin. These included: Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Peru, and two participants whose parents were born in El Salvador. Also, seven of the 19 students grew up in bilingual households, but received all formal education in English in the U.S. Two students were born outside of the U.S. and received no formal schooling within the U.S. prior to the year of this study. The remaining students received varying number of years of education within and outside of the U.S. All students considered themselves bilingual in English and Spanish. See Table 1 for participant details.

All of the participants, and their ESOL classmates, had been tested and classified as ELLs, regardless of language and number of years of exposure to L1 and L2. However, they demonstrated differences in perceptions regarding their L1 and L2 use and proficiency. As seen in Figure 1, 11 of 19 participants perceived themselves as speaking

Table 1

Participant Details

Participants	Male	Female	Born in U.S.[a]	Born Outside of U.S.	≤1 Year Schooling in U.S.	2-4 Years Schooling in U.S.	>5 Years Schooling in U.S
6th Grade n = 3	1	2	1	2	0	1	2
7th Grade n = 7	3	4	2	5	1	1	5
8th Grade n = 9	1	8	4	5	1	1	7

[a] Refers to mainland U.S., not including Puerto Rico, which was considered outside of the mainland U.S.

Spanish and English with equal frequency. Around half of the students (9) indicated that they felt they spoke Spanish with better proficiency than English. Conversely, most students (11) indicated that they were more proficient readers and writers in English.

Project Implementation in the ESOL Classroom

The critical literacy project. The present study took place within a larger critical literacy project in an ESOL class regarding immigration. Critical literacy involves the notion that "education can foster social justice by allowing students to recognize how language is affected by and affects social relations" (Behrman, 2006, p. 490). The critical literacy framework for classroom instruction emphasized that students should interact with multiple texts and perspectives, and engage with topics and themes in authentic, meaningful ways. This engagement allowed students to make personal connections and applications with assignments and activities, which has shown to be an effective aspect of successful literacy learning for ELLs (Chun, 2009; Danzak, 2011). The topic of immigration served as the context of the students' critical literacy project. Throughout

Figure 1. Participants' perceptions of language use and proficiency (*N* = 19)
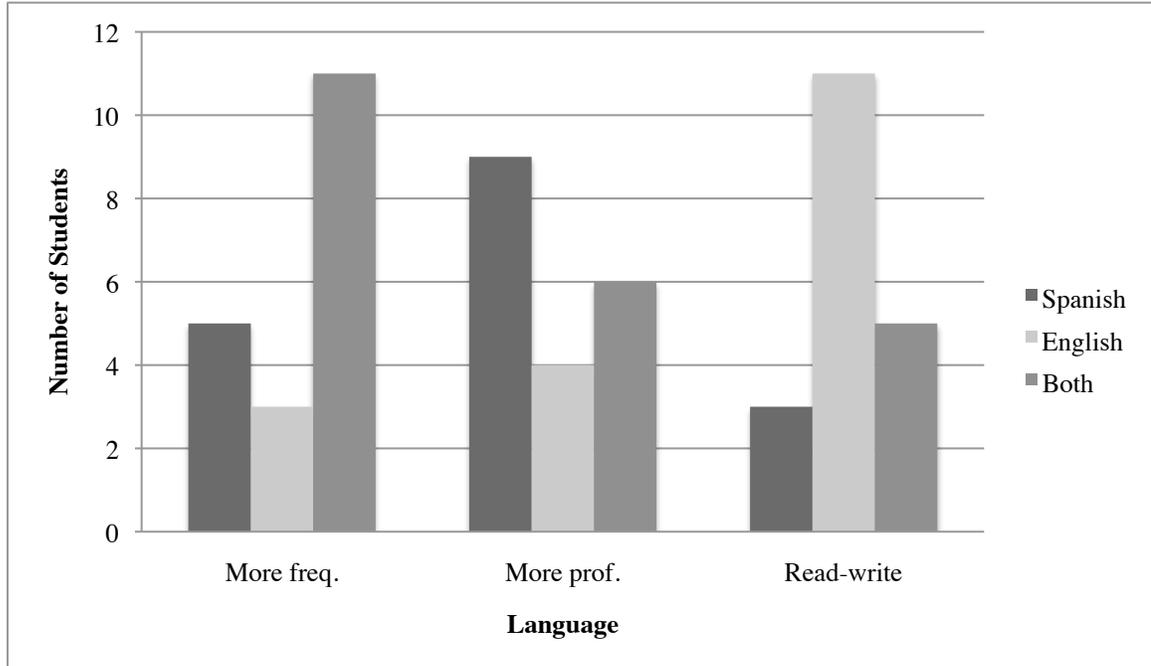
Figure 1. More freq. = language spoken more frequently; More prof. = language spoken with greater proficiency; Read-write = more proficient language for reading and writing

the semester during which the present and larger studies took place, the ESOL students studied, created multimedia projects, and wrote persuasive essays addressing topics related to immigration and the immigrant experience in the U.S. These topics included history, employment, legislation, and socio-cultural issues.

Writing prompts. The ESOL teacher and the primary investigator of the larger project developed prompts for these essays. Essays focused on the immigration theme and prompts were developed to allow participants to demonstrate their persuasive writing skills while actively engaging in the critical literacy component of advocating for social change. Participants studied the theme of the essay prompts through various in-class activities to develop sufficient background knowledge of the topics before writing the persuasive essays. The topics were as follows: 1) Pre-instruction: a fictitious "English-

only" law; 2) Mid-instruction: The Dream Act; and 3) Post-instruction: The Children's Act for Responsible Employment (CARE Act). See Appendix B for writing prompts.

Writing strategy instruction. As a part of the critical literacy project, all students in the ESOL class received instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD, Harris & Graham, 1996). To enhance the SRSD model, students also participated in additional writing and language instruction designed to teach text revision and sentence combining strategies to support the use of academic language in writing. Students were taught transitional words and phrases, similes, metaphors, figurative language and varied vocabulary. The enhanced SRSD instruction took place two to three days per week during two 50-minute ESOL class periods, over two consecutive six-week periods.

The first six-week instructional period focused on SRSD, specifically the STOP and DARE strategies, for persuasive writing (De La Paz, 2001). The SRSD model for writing instruction followed six stages of instruction, which the ESOL teacher implemented, according to Harris, Graham, Mason, and Friedlander (2008). This procedure included the following steps: 1) *discuss it,* in which the teacher presented the new strategies for use during the writing process and the presentation of a mnemonic phrase that guided strategy implementation; 2) *develop background knowledge*, in which the teacher aided the class in developing background knowledge of the basic parts of an essay; 3) *model it*, the teacher demonstrated how to complete the steps presented in the SRSD mnemonic through think-aloud activities; 4) *memorize it*: the students learned and memorized the mnemonic; 5) *support it:* teachers helped students practice using the strategies as a class and in small groups and students received teacher support to construct at least one complete essay; and 6) *independent performance*: teachers

decreased scaffolding (by providing visual reminders of strategy steps, such as mnemonic cue cards and planning sheets) to the students as they worked to gain independent utilization and mastery of the strategy.

Two SRSD strategies specific to persuasive writing were taught within this general SRSD instructional framework: STOP and DARE (De La Paz, 2001; Harris et al., 2008). STOP represents the steps of a technique for general planning of a persuasive essay, which include: **S**uspend judgment; **T**ake a side; **O**rganize ideas; and **P**lan more as you write. For details of how the STOP strategy is implemented, see Table 2.

Following the application of STOP (i.e., development of ideas and content to include in the text), students used DARE to organize the persuasive essay and formulate the argument. DARE is based on four essential elements: **D**evelop your topic sentence; **A**dd supporting ideas; **R**eject arguments for the other side; and **E**nd with a conclusion. The topic sentence and supporting ideas are developed from the list of ideas brainstormed in steps T and O of STOP. One important aspect of a strong persuasive essay is rejection of the opposing argument, step R of DARE, which involves selecting statements in support of the conflicting view and presenting evidence to refute these ideas. When used in combination with each other, STOP and DARE, like many other SRSD strategies, have shown success in improving the writing abilities of students (Baker et al., 2009; Chalk et al., 2005; Harris & Graham, 1996; Harris & Graham, 2007; Harris et al., 2012; Kiuhara et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2008).

Table 2

Details of STOP Strategy (summarized from De La Paz, 2001)

Acronym Letter	Name of Step	Procedures of Step
S	Suspend judgment	Student will halt initial opinions and inclinations to fully consider the issue or essay topic. Considering opposing views, each student brainstorms and writes down an exhaustive list of reasons for and against a topic or issue.
T	Take a side	Student decides which stance s/he will take by evaluating the list of brainstormed ideas and deciding the stance with the strongest support.
O	Organize ideas	Student selects which ideas will be used to support the argument and these ideas are starred on the planning sheet. Student also selects one opposing view, which will be presented and refuted. Student then develops a logical organization of ideas and ideas and numbers the supporting ideas and arguments.
P	Plan more as you write	Student is reminded to continue to plan and organize throughout the writing process by adding, deleting, and making adjustments to information.

Following the first six-week instructional period, a second 6-week session took

place with an emphasis on increasing linguistic complexity at the lexical and syntactic

levels. Within the ESOL class, students were taught methods for sentence combining,

specifically in the area of clause embedding with implicit emphasis on the use of ENPs.

The goal was to demonstrate that when sentences were densely packed with meaning,

language use is more effective and efficient to communicate the desired message, a

feature of academic language (Scott & Balthazar, 2010). The students practiced ways of

creating and editing grammatically complex sentences by manipulating word order and

adding or eliminating words, as well as strategies to revise sentences after an initial draft. However, students were not explicitly taught strategies for generating more complex ENPs. The assumption was that enhanced complexity would emerge from the focus on sentence combining strategies. During the second six-weeks, students also practiced text revision strategies, as well as the use of transition words between ideas and "spicy-language," or the inclusion of varied vocabulary and adjectives, to make writing more interesting and appealing to readers.

Week one of the second instructional period focused on the REVISE strategy (Harris et. al., 2008), an SRSD technique for teaching skills to edit both their own texts and texts of classmates, as a group and individually. By following the steps of the REVISE mnemonic, which included **R**ead, **E**valuate, **V**erbalize, **I**mplement, **S**elf-check, and **E**nd, participants learned the reasons writers revise their texts, techniques for adding missing information or different vocabulary, and methods for deleting redundant or impertinent information. The ESOL teacher discussed the importance of using varied vocabulary and sentence structures to create an interesting essay. Students then used these methods as a class to revise a paragraph from an anonymous classmate's Essay 2, the Dream Act essay. The REVISE strategy was revisited throughout the second instructional period as students continued to work on revising Essay 2 up to the fifth week.

Week two focused on teaching methods for sentence combining. Through group activities and instruction, the students learned methods for creating compound sentences word by word and by combining short phrases using appositives, participle phrases, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases. The ESOL teacher emphasized that

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complex and varying sentences increase fluency of writing and readability. Following the initial instruction, students worked on creating complex sentences in pairs and individually. Sentence combining was revisited in week three and students were encouraged to strengthen sentences in their Essay 2 revisions.

Week three focused on both the REVISE and sentence combining strategies, as well as an introduction to figurative language. Students learned to use similes and metaphors to discuss and describe concepts related to the critical literacy project. For example, the students developed the following similes for the experience of immigration: "Immigration is like a fairy tale for some, but a nightmare for others;" "Immigration is like hard work because you are exhausted all the time." Students were encouraged to use similes and metaphors while revising Essay 2.

During weeks four, five, and six of the second six-week instructional period, students continued to revisit the techniques for improving writing presented in previous weeks (the REVISE strategy, sentence combining, varying vocabulary, use of similes and metaphors) as they continued to edit Essay 2, as well as work on several other assignments within the critical literacy project. During week five, STOP and DARE were reviewed and the students took a quiz regarding use of these strategies. At the end of week six, students composed Essay 3, the post-instruction essay regarding the Care Act.

Data Collection

Data were collected from participants in the form of three persuasive essays, hand-written at the pre-, mid-, and post-instructional periods. The pre-instruction essays were composed in late January, at the start of the second semester of the school year. Students were allotted a 50-minute ESOL class period to plan and compose their essays by hand.

Students were encouraged to use examples and details to persuade readers to agree with their opinion. These instructions were included in the prompt (see Appendix B).

Following completion of the pre-instruction essay, the first six-week period of enhanced SRSD instruction was initiated (STOP and DARE). In March, the participants completed their mid-instruction essay. Due to the emphasis on planning and organizing prior to writing in the SRSD techniques, students were provided a planning sheet to write and organize brainstormed ideas, and they were given an additional 20 minutes during which they were encouraged to use the STOP strategy to plan their text. Following the 20-minute planning period, a class period of 50 minutes was given to compose the essay using the DARE strategy. Again, the essay prompt stated that students should use supporting details and examples to persuade the reader to agree with their argument.

The second six-week instructional period followed the mid-instruction essay, with the focus principally on text revision and vocabulary, as well as increasing sentence-level complexity. STOP and DARE strategies were reviewed frequently. During this time, students were given the opportunity to revise their mid-instruction essays, applying the revision techniques learned in the second six-week instructional period. At the completion of the second six-week period, in May, participants completed the post-instruction essay. Again, students were given a planning sheet and 20 minutes to plan their texts with 50 minutes to compose. Thus, a total of three novel essays were collected from each student for a total of 57 essays.

Data Analysis

Transcription and segmentation of texts. Students' original, handwritten texts were immediately collected after the completion of each writing sample. The handwritten

texts were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word documents. The transcriber met

with the participants to confirm what was written when any illegible content of the texts

was encountered. Each essay was labeled with a random alphanumeric code that was

assigned to every student in order to maintain confidentiality. All spelling, punctuation,

capitalization, and grammatical features of the students' original texts were maintained.

Texts were kept separated into pre-, mid-, and post-instructional essay groups.

ENP measure of linguistic complexity. Following transcription, essays were

segmented into T-units, defined as "the shortest, grammatically allowable sentences"

(Hunt, 1965, p. 165). T-units generally include an independent clause with all dependent

clauses and modifiers (Gutiérrez-Clellen & Hofstetter, 1994). After the texts were

divided into T-units, all ENPs were identified and coded based on an ENP complexity

measure adapted from a combination of the measures used by Eisenberg et al. (2008) and

by Ravid and Berman (2010). ENP complexity codes ranged from a simple

determiner/quantifier with the head noun to a pre-modified head-noun plus a relative

clause with embedding of additional noun phrases. See Table 3 for details and examples

of ENP classifications and codes.

ENP complexity codes were added to the text directly following each ENP instance

(e.g. the little boy[pre2] walked by; my friend that is nice[post2] likes cake). Coded texts

were then entered into the *Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts* software (SALT;

Miller & Chapman, 1998) for the purpose of scoring and analysis.

Table 3

ENP Classifications and Codes

ENP Type (Code)	Description	Examples
Pre1	Simple designating noun phrase: Quantifier/Determiner + head noun	The house. One potato. Many people. My shoes.
Pre2	Simple descriptive noun phrase: (Quantifier/Determiner) Modifier + head noun	The pretty house. One large potato. Many gregarious people. My best shoes.
Pre3	Complex descriptive noun phrase: (Quantifier/Determiner) More than one modifier + head noun	The pretty ornate house. One large, lumpy potato. Many gregarious, intimidating people. My best Sunday shoes.
Post1	Noun phrase + phrasal post-modification	The house without shutters. One potato over there. Many people living nearby. My shoes with scuffs.
Post2	Noun phrase + relative clause post-modification	The house that doesn't have shutters. One potato that smells funny. Many people who don't understand. My shoes that fit very poorly.
Post3	Noun phrase + post-modification with embedding of additional noun phrases	The house with very large shutters. One potato in his brown bag. Many people with long curly hair. My shoes on my narrow feet.
Post4	Noun phrase + relative clause post-modification with embedding of additional noun phrases	The house that has many large shutters. One potato that he keeps in his brown bag. Many people who don't understand her garbled speech. My shoes that fit very poorly on my narrow feet.

Holistic and element scores. Three case studies were selected to highlight additional aspects of study outcomes. These participants were selected based on having three contrasting experiences and outcomes of ENP use. The three writing samples from each case study were also scored with two additional measures: a holistic measure and an elements measure. To assess text quality, a holistic measure was developed based on the State of Florida's *2012 Grade 8 Persuasive Writing Calibration Scoring Guide* (Florida Department of Education, 2011), which assigns a score of 0-6 based on the areas of text focus, organization, support, language, and conventions. Essays from the three samples were reviewed and given a holistic quality score based on these aspects of writing.

Next, to assess text structure, an elements measure based on the components of the DARE strategy (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006) was applied. Texts were given a second 0-6 point score based on the components of DARE that were present and sufficiently developed in the essay (see Appendix C for holistic rubric and elements criteria).

Inter-coder agreement. For all texts, T-unit and ENP codes were applied by one coder and then reviewed by at least one other coder trained in both procedures. Coders included this author, the principal investigator of the overall study, and a certified speech-language pathologist who had experience assisting in ELL writing research. Any disagreements in T-unit segmentation or ENP coding were reviewed and discussed until 100% consensus was reached. Holistic and elements scores were independently assessed by the author of the larger study and the ESOL teacher. All scores were then compared, and disagreements were discussed until 100% consensus was reached.

Results

Writing samples were collected from 19 students who composed pre-, mid-, and post-instruction essays. Following coding of the texts for ENPs, the students' productions of ENPs were analyzed for changes in the number and type of ENP used across the three essays. For simplicity in the reporting of the results, the essays will be called Essay 1 (pre-instruction essay), Essay 2 (mid-instruction essay), and Essay 3 (post-instruction essay). The results were analyzed in two ways: 1) statistical analysis of changes in ENP use for all participants, as well as 2) details of outcomes in ENP use, changes in other textual features, and holistic and elements score changes following the enhanced SRSD instruction for three case studies.

Statistical Analysis of ENP Use

The results of a non-parametric analysis using Friedman's ANOVA revealed that only differences in the type of ENP were significant (χ^2 (5) = 65.498, p < .001). Post-hoc testing using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test with a Bonferroni correction (p = .0055) revealed that three out of nine paired comparisons of interest were significant. Each of these comparisons involved ENPs with pre-noun modification. As illustrated in Figure 2, the use of ENPs with pre-noun modification was significantly greater across all writing samples when compared to the number of ENPs with post-noun modification. No differences in frequency were attributable to essay type (pre-, mid-, or post-instruction essays).

Figure 2. Proportion of total pre- vs. total post-ENPs across essays
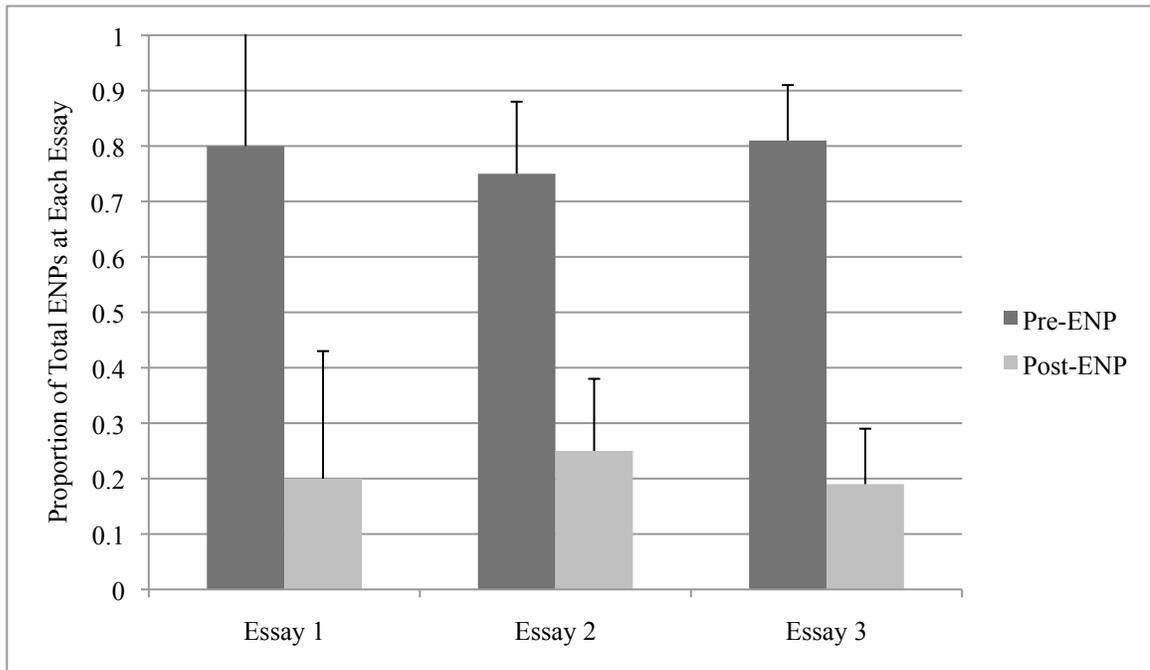
Since pre-ENPs predominated, a second, non-parametric analysis using Friedman's ANOVA was run to analyze differences among types of pre-ENPs across the three essays. This analysis revealed a significant difference across pre-ENP types (χ^2 (8) = 120.341, $p < .001$). Post hoc testing with Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test with a Bonferroni correction ($p = .0055$) indicated that pre1 (simple designating) ENPs were utilized more often than pre2 (simple descriptive) and pre3 (complex descriptive) ENPs, and that pre2 ENPs were utilized more than pre3 ENPs at all essay times. There was no difference in ENP use attributable to essay time (See Figure 3).

Overall, the statistical findings suggest that this group of ELLs produced significantly more pre-ENPs and that simple pre-ENP constructions were used most often. These results would indicate that the current instruction did not significantly influence the production of more complex ENPs. However, this does not mean that the writing strategy instruction was ineffective (see case studies that follow).

Figure 3. Proportion of pre-ENPs produced across essays by pre-ENP type
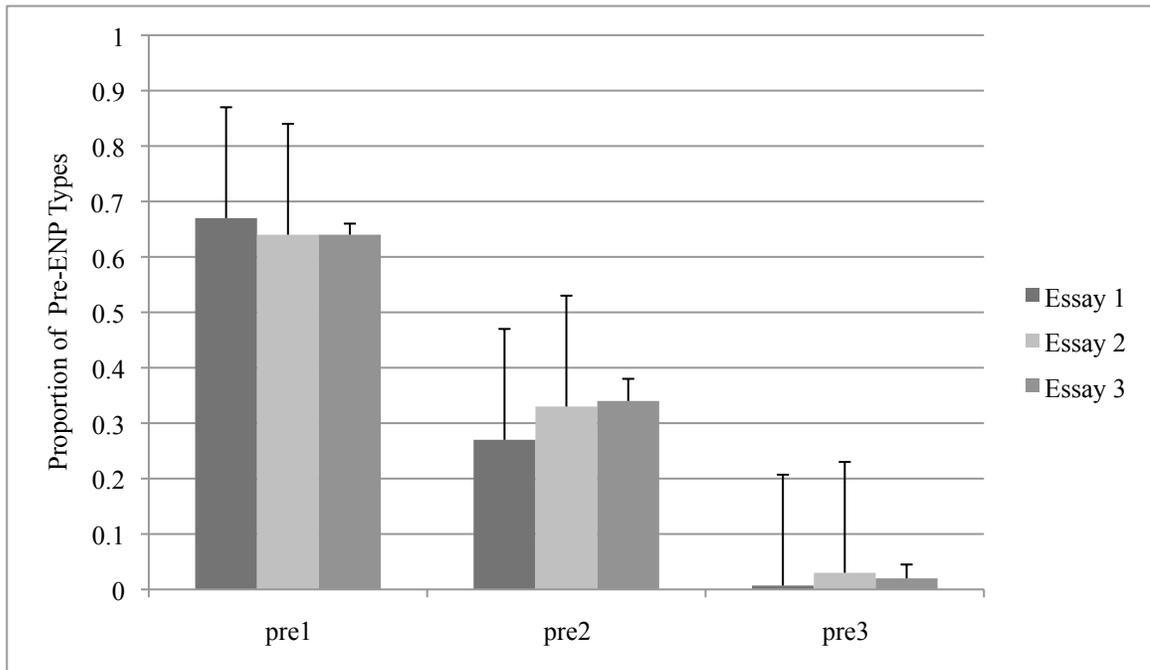
Case Studies

In order to gain more insight into the results, three individual students whose writing outcomes varied greatly from each other were selected as case studies to provide a more in-depth view of trends and features of the students' writing across the three samples. These trends and features included not only ENP use, but also holistic and elements scores, as well as other linguistic and textual features calculated by SALT, including: essay length (measured by total number of words and number of T-units), clausal density (measured by mean length of T-unit), and lexical diversity (measured by number of different words). These case studies illustrate the varied outcomes of the enhanced SRSD instruction.

The case studies, Roberto, Santiago, and Mariana (all pseudonyms), were selected because they demonstrated three different trends in their writing. Roberto represented *the struggling writer,* as he used relatively low numbers of ENPs throughout all writing

samples, and demonstrated minimal changes in the additional features of essay length, total number of T-units, and number of different words. His essays consistently received the minimum score of 1 for quality, and the score for inclusion of persuasive elements ranged from 0 to 2, indicating minimal improvement in this area.

On the other hand, Santiago represented *the steady improver,* and his writing showed an increased use of complex ENP types as the study progressed. Changes in other linguistic/textual features occurred as well, including an increase in overall essay length, total number of T-units, and number of different words, which also evidence Santiago's improvement over time. His holistic and elements scores similarly increased over time, indicating overall quality improvements and an increase in the inclusion and development of persuasive elements in his texts.

Finally, Mariana characterized *the strong writer.* This student used higher numbers of complex ENPs throughout all writing samples. She also wrote relatively long texts with good organization and varied vocabulary. The holistic and elements scores of her essays were generally higher than those received by the other two students. The details of these students' writing are discussed below.

Roberto: The struggling writer. Roberto was in the 7th grade and 12 years old when the study began, and turned 13 during the last month. He was born in the U.S., although, both of his parents were born in Mexico. Roberto has three siblings: two older brothers, one who was born in Mexico and one in the U.S., and a younger sister who was born in the U.S. He received all of his education in the U.S. On the participant questionnaire, Roberto stated that he began learning English when he was 5 years old and living with his family in Florida. He identified as bilingual in English and Spanish and

claimed to use both English and Spanish with equal frequency. Roberto stated that he speaks, reads and writes better in English than in Spanish.

Although all of Roberto's formal schooling was in English and he admitted to reading, writing, and speaking with more proficiency in English, his three writing samples exemplify the work of a struggling ELL writer. Analysis of aspects of Roberto's texts revealed short essays with simple linguistic structures, poor overall quality and minimal use of persuasive elements. See Table 4 for details.

Table 4

Roberto's ENP scores, additional textual features, and holistic/elements scores at Essay 1, Essay 2, and Essay 3

Essay	Total Pre-ENPs	Total Post-ENPs	TNT_a	MLT_b	NDW_c	TNW_d	Hol. Score	Elem. Score
1	2	1	5	12.4	38	62	1	0
2	6	4	10	19.78	68	178	1	1
3	4	2	6	13.67	54	82	1	2

Note: $_a$ TNT = total number of T-units; $_b$ MLT = mean length of T-unit; $_c$ NDW= number of different words; $_d$ TNW = total number of words.

From the first to the third writing sample, Roberto used pre- and post-noun modified ENPs sparingly. His first essay, which was only 62 words long, included three ENPs. Although one was a post2 ENP with a relative clause, "people who speaked [S]panish," the limited number of total ENPs in the first essay was considerably lower than the other participants. Roberto's mid-instruction essay included a somewhat higher

number of ENPs. This was his longest essay at 178 words. Roberto used three simple designating and three simple descriptive ENPs.

In Roberto's final essay, a mere 82 words long, six ENPs total were used, half of which were simple designating (pre1) ENPs. It should be noted that Roberto used no complex descriptive pre-noun modification ENPs (pre3), post-noun modification with embedding of additional noun phrases (post3), or relative clause post-noun modification with embedding of additional noun phrases (post4) in any of his writing samples. See Table 7 for examples of Roberto's ENPs.

Other linguistic and textual features of Roberto's essays remained unchanged and relatively low as compared to other participants across Essays 1, 2, and 3. Although Roberto's texts did have a slightly higher mean length of T-unit (MLT), indicating independent and adjoining dependent clauses with a greater number of words, the number of different words used in each writing sample was 38, 68, and 54 across the pre-, mid-, and post-instruction essays respectively, which was likely influenced by his overall short essay length. See Table 5 for examples of Roberto's ENP use.

In terms of text quality and elements included, Roberto's essays improved little over the course of instruction. His two-paragraph pre-instruction essay received a holistic score of 1 and it included no clearly identifiable persuasive elements, thus receiving an elements score of 0. The essay, on the fictitious English-only law, began with a poorly formulated opening sentence that did not introduce the topic to the reader. Instead, he stated, "I disagree, because people should not just speak English." The short essay then discussed the importance of speaking another language, however vaguely provided

Table 5

Examples of Roberto's ENP use

Essay	Pre1	Pre2	Pre3	Post1	Post2	Post3	Post4
1	your family	a different language	None	None	people who spoke Spanish	None	None
2	their dreams; a speech	a good idea; a great help	None	every year in high school; a paper for them to sign	other people that wanted to get in	None	None
3	many children; the pesticides	None	dangerous sharp tools	any age of kids	None	None	None

evidence in support of his opinion. Thus Roberto did not provide adequate elaboration for his claims, nor did he include any other organizational or persuasive elements in this text.

Roberto's second essay, on the Dream Act, received both holistic and elements scores of 1. Roberto failed to employ the planning and organizing techniques presented in STOP and DARE and again lacked an informative introductory statement. The essay opened with, "Dream Act is a good idea to help people go to college and to make their dreams come true." It may be appropriate, then, to extrapolate that Roberto was attempting to argue in favor of the Dream Act in this essay. However the next line of his essay was: "But for dream act to help you, you have to get good grades every year in high

school." Hence, Roberto's stance is unclear and it is evident that he did not utilize the second step of STOP, *take a side.* This text continued with a description of procedures for students to be accepted by the Dream Act. In sum, Roberto did not present any persuasive tactics or evidence to convince a reader to agree with him, and his opinion, if one existed, was indistinct.

Roberto's final two-paragraph essay on the CARE Act was again incomplete, lacking in organization or persuasive elements. It also received both holistic and elements scores of 1. He did express his opinion in the topic sentence: "I support the Care Act," but he did not elaborate on what the CARE Act was. Supporting statements were then assembled together in ungrammatical and confusing language, such as, "If they get hurt, then the Care Act can help you get better," and, "The Care Act can protect them from pestisides, and dangerous sharp tools. Children usually cut themselfs while they are working." It seems as though Roberto's intent was to communicate that the Care Act would protect children employed on farms. However, Roberto failed to provide reasons to support this opinion. This final essay indicated Roberto's lack of understanding of organization and text structure (and inadequate grasp of STOP/DARE techniques), as well as weak use of academic language and grammar conventions necessary to create a strong persuasive essay.

Santiago: The steady improver. At the time of the study, Santiago was 13 years old and in the 6th grade. He was born in the U.S. and, according to his participant questionnaire, his parents and eldest brother were born in El Salvador. Santiago revealed that he had received all of his schooling in the U.S. and identified himself as bilingual in English and Spanish. According to questions regarding frequency of language use and

proficiency perceptions, Santiago reported using English more frequently and claimed to speak English and Spanish with equal proficiency. He answered that he reads and writes more proficiently in English.

Over the course of the project, Santiago demonstrated steady improvement in nearly all linguistic and textual features of writing analyzed. See Tables 6 for details.

Table 6

Santiago's ENP scores, additional textual features, and holistic/elements scores at Essay 1, Essay 2, and Essay 3

Essay	Total Pre-ENPs	Total Post-ENPs	TNT_a	MLT_b	NDW_c	TNW_d	Hol. Score	Elem. Score
1	9	2	9	10.44	45	94	1	1
2	12	8	20	10.58	93	201	2	2
3	25	6	26	9.08	101	236	3	5

Note: $_a$ TNT = total number of T-units; $_b$ MLT = mean length of T-unit; $_c$ NDW= number of different words; $_d$ TNW = total number of words.

Santiago's use of pre-ENPs almost tripled from Essay 1 to Essay 3, and his use of post-ENPs more than doubled from Essay 1 to Essay 3. In Essay 1, Santiago primarily used a majority of simple designating (pre1) noun phrases. He utilized quantifiers and determiners to create pre1 ENPs, and also incorporated descriptors to produce several pre2 ENPs. Santiago included two post-ENPs in his first essay, including an exemplary post4 ENP. See Table 7 for examples of Santiago's ENP use.

Table 7

Examples of Santiago's ENP use

Essay	Pre1	Pre2	Pre3	Post1	Post2	Post3	Post4
1	my <u>opinion</u>; their <u>culture</u>	people <u>culture</u>	None	None	None	None	<u>people</u> that speak another language
2	this <u>college</u>; other <u>people</u>	a higher <u>education</u>	a very good <u>thing</u>	the <u>opportunity</u> to attend	the <u>people</u> that don't have paper	a <u>chance</u> to get a good education	a <u>girl</u> that has a 65 average
3	her <u>toe</u>; his <u>sister</u>	hazar-dous <u>tool</u>; the illegal <u>age</u>	farm work-er <u>kid</u>	None	<u>children</u> that are 3 and up; this <u>boy</u> that is 10	None	the <u>kids</u> that work on the field

Santiago utilized higher numbers of all but one ENP type in Essay 2 as compared to Essay 1; specifically, he included 12 pre-ENPs and eight post-ENPs. Although he utilized a majority of simple designating (pre1) and several simple descriptive (pre2) ENPs, he incorporated one complex descriptive (pre3) ENP. Santiago used a variety of post-modifications in Essay 2, and incorporated relative clauses and multiple embeddings of nouns within noun phrases. Thus, Santiago's use of more complex elaboration of noun phrases is apparent from Essay 1 to 2.

In Essay 3, Santiago continued to increase his use of a variety of ENPs. Pre-ENPs more than doubled and they were greater in number than in either of the other case studies. He used a greater proportion of simple descriptive (pre2) ENPs, as well as an assortment of adjectives as descriptors that increased language variation and decreased redundancy. In Essay 3, Santiago also included the highest number of the most complex ENP among his three essays: three post4 ENPs.

Santiago's essays also steadily increased in length, as well as total number of T-units and number of different words. From Essay 1 to Essay 3, the measures of NDW and TNT showed the greatest increase among any of the case study participants. There were also improvements in the overall quality and structure of Santiago's essays, as evidenced by the increase in holistic and elements scores across his essays.

In his first composition, Santiago struggled with organization and overall development of the persuasive argument. The prompt for Essay 1 instructed participants to argue in support of, or against, a law requiring all immigrants to learn English within one year of arrival to the U.S. Although Santiago began his text with a short statement of his position on the argument, writing, "My opinion is no," he failed to introduce the reader to the subject of the essay with a well-developed topic sentence. The rest of the incomplete text followed in a jumble of ideas and judgment statements regarding the difficulty of learning English and the relation between language and culture. Santiago did, however, include one of the items necessary for a strong persuasive essay, which was the inclusion of ideas supporting his opinion. Still, Santiago minimally addressed the topic, used little, if any apparent organizational pattern, had poorly developed support for his opinion, and displayed many errors in sentence structure, word choice, and

conventions (spelling, verb form, capitalization, etc). Santiago ended his text abruptly, seemingly mid sentence, with no conclusion or summarization of his ideas in support of his opinion. This short essay would leave a first time reader confused about the essay's focus and intent due to the lack of internal structure.

Essay 2 on the Dream Act revealed some improvements in organization and use of persuasive writing tactics from STOP and DARE, as demonstrated by holistic and elements scores of 2. This essay began with a scenario in which Santiago discussed a student without immigration papers who was unable to go to college. He engaged the reader by describing the emotion from the student's perspective, writing, "It said Sorry you don't have you paper you are not calfied for this college Ah, Ah!" Next, although Santiago did not explicitly state his opinion in a topic sentence, he asserts that the Dream Act will help immigrants without papers go to college and have the chance at a good education. Santiago then provided two reasons for his support of the Dream Act, which is step two of DARE: "People that don't have paper will go to college, and A chang [chance] to get a good education." In the following paragraphs, Santiago attempted to develop evidence to support each reason. For instance, to support the reason "People that don't have paper will go to college," Santiago provided an example of a student earning good grades who wants to go to Harvard, but cannot because she does not have "papers." Again he used an illustrative example to influence the readers' opinion. Santiago's reasoning indicated that he experienced greater success in applying the planning techniques learned in STOP. He also employed organizational strategies learned in DARE to his essay by including four distinct paragraphs, two supporting paragraphs, and a final concluding statement. However, Santiago's second essay lacked a strong

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statement of his opinion, as well as presentation of a counter argument, two key elements of the DARE strategy for persuasive text creation.

Santiago's final essay, on the CARE Act, revealed more significant improvements. His holistic score rose to a 3, and elements score jumped to a 5. This text had the same overall organizational structure as the mid-instruction sample; however, it included three supporting paragraphs rather than two. Santiago again began this text with a scenario, writing, "Ow Ow Ow, Mami! That is how it feel when a farm worker kids get hurt." He then continued by describing how the Care Act could protect farm workers, which made clear his stance on the argument, although again it was not explicitly stated. Santiago then wrote three paragraphs elaborating on his reasons in support of the Care Act, following the DARE formula. For example, his first reason to support the Care Act was that young children should not be working with hazardous farm tools. He provided an example of a young girl losing her toe by a sharp object while working. Next, he described that underage children shouldn't be driving machinery, nor should they be exposed to pesticides. Santiago excelled at providing illustrative examples to persuade the reader. He also employed transition words such as "next," "for example" and "however" to introduce paragraphs and ideas within paragraphs, providing cohesion throughout the entire text. Although he still did not include a rejection to his argument, Santiago's essay ended with a synthesizing conclusion. Although Santiago's abilities were still developing at the time of Essay 3, improvement from Essay 1 to 2, and Essay 2 to 3 was evident on most every area measured.

Mariana: The strong writer. Mariana was in the 8th grade and 14 years old throughout the study. She was born in Peru, as were her mother and father, however, at

the time of the study, she was living with her Peruvian mother and U.S.-born, English-speaking stepfather. Mariana received the majority of her schooling in Peru, grades kindergarten through sixth, and arrived in the U.S. to attend grades 7 and 8. According to the participant questionnaire, Mariana stated that she began learning English around 10 years of age, in Peru. She identified herself as bilingual and admitted to using English and Spanish in equal amounts; however, she stated that she speaks, reads, and writes more proficiently in Spanish.

Although Mariana identified herself as having better written and spoken proficiency in Spanish, she wrote the three samples in English. She created superior essays in terms of most of the assessed features (number and complexity of ENPs used; TNW, NDW and TNT). See Table 8 for the analyzed characteristics of Mariana's texts.

Table 8

Mariana's ENP scores, additional textual features, and holistic/elements scores at Essay 1, Essay 2, and Essay 3

Essay	Total Pre-ENPs	Total Post-ENPs	TNT_a	MLT_b	NDW_c	TNW_d	Hol. Score	Elem. Score
1	15	4	16	9.56	92	153	2	2
2	32	3	31	9.58	140	297	4	4
3	15	6	13	14.77	98	192	3	5

Note: $_a$ TNT = total number of T-units; $_b$ MLT = mean length of T-unit; $_c$ NDW= number of different words; $_d$ TNW = total number of words.

Mariana used high numbers of ENPs in the three essays, although Santiago bypassed Mariana's total ENP use on Essay 3. In her first text, which was relatively long

as compared to the other case studies' Essay 1, Mariana used a majority of simple descriptive (pre2) ENPs. However, she demonstrated more varied and more advanced vocabulary in her pre-ENPs than the other case studies. Mariana also used several post-ENPs in her first essay. See Table 9 for examples of Mariana's ENPs.

Table 9

Examples of Mariana's ENP use

Essay	Pre1	Pre2	Pre3	Post1	Post2	Post3	Post4
1	a law; our country	a national law; her appropriate field	None	all immigrants to the U.S.	None	the right to keep our native language	None
2	our economy; an investment	beneficial idea; financial burden	6-year temporary residency	that opportunity away of becoming someone	None	a better future with a good economy	None
3	their dreams; more time	frequent breaks; our kids' generation	the same age and hour requirements	success in life	None	hazardous work for long work hours	successful people who can change our future

Mariana's second essay was her longest with significant variety in vocabulary. This essay also included the largest number of pre-ENPs and total ENPs. Again, Mariana used predominantly simple descriptive (pre2) ENPs to compose her text and employed colorful adjectives and nouns in order to create a text with rich language. Mariana also

used several post-ENPs; however, Essay 2 contained the fewest number of post-ENPs among the three essays.

The third text composed by Mariana was also strong in terms of additional textual measures and ENP scores. This essay was long with a variety of vocabulary. It also demonstrated the longest mean length of T-unit among her essays, at almost 15 words per T-unit. This indicated resourceful syntactical selection to package information into a single sentence. Mariana also employed the greatest number of complex ENPs in this text (6). Mariana's high marks are reflected in other aspects of her essays, including overall quality, structure, organization, and strength of the persuasive argument.

Regarding overall text quality and structure, Mariana's first essay received the lowest scores of her three texts in terms of the holistic and elements measures (2). However, these scores were equal to or higher than those received by the other case study participants for Essay 1. In her first text, Mariana introduced the theme of the essay with a topic sentence that utilized language from the essay prompt, a tactic explicitly taught *following* Essay 1 composition for creating a strong introduction. Mariana wrote "An 'English only' activist has proposed a national law that all immigrants to the U.S., including children, should learn [English] within one year of arrival." She then stated her opinion that this is a good idea but should not be a law due to the fact the "America is a "free" country." Her argument lost strength, however, when Mariana switched sides to say that "speaking English opens the doors to better jobs," which did not reinforce her opinion that "English only" *should not* be a law. Thus, her first writing sample, composed before the implementation of STOP and DARE instruction, did include several important

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persuasive essay elements and utilized generally good organization, word choice, and conventions.

Mariana's second essay was stronger, receiving holistic and elements scores of 4 each. This essay maintained an apparent organizational structure, used transitions to support the greater organizational plan, developed the argument by using specific examples within each body paragraph, employed precise word choice, and generally adhered to writing conventions. The essay also included a majority of the DARE components. Mariana wrote in support of the Dream Act, arguing that students would be treated as equals no matter their legal status, and that immigrant students granted residency would help pay off the governmental debt. She also included a refutation to the opposing argument, stating, "Many people may say that it could be a finantial burden...but this is not a waist of money, education is an investment." Mariana's opinion was evident, her use of persuasive tactics were apparent, and the resulting essay was a quality text.

The third essay received holistic and elements scores of 3 and 5, respectively. This essay was shorter and Mariana's reasons in support of her opinion were less developed than the second essay, although her opinion was strongly presented. In this final writing sample, Mariana argued that "you should support the CARE Act" so that children who work on farms will have the same rights as children who work in other locations. Mariana provided three strong examples of how children will benefit from this law: they will have more time to attend school, they will get paid equal to that of other employed children, and they will have protection from hazardous conditions in the work place. Although these reasons only had one-two sentence elaborations, the text was

appropriately organized, word choice and grammatical standards were accurately utilized and, as in previous essays, writing conventions were successfully employed. Thus, although Mariana was in an English-language school for a short time before participating in this study, she was able to learn and utilize persuasive writing strategies to produce well-developed essays written in academic English with greater success than some participants who had received all formal schooling in English.

These three case studies highlight several trends observed in the ENP use, development of additional linguistic and textual features, and changes in text quality and structure through the implementation of the enhanced SRSD instruction. These outcomes demonstrate three unique experiences obtained from the same instructional practice, suggesting questions of why and how these differences arose. A discussion of possible reasons for these outcomes and suggestions for improved outcomes for all participants is presented next.

Discussion

The present study investigated the influence of writing strategy instruction on the use of ENPs in the persuasive writing of middle school ELLs, as well as its influence on other textual features and the overall quality of the persuasive essays written by three case studies selected from the greater participant group. Enhanced SRSD instruction was provided over two, six-week periods with ENP use measured across three essays of the 19 students. An in-depth analysis of writing outcomes was also conducted for three case studies. While the patterns of ENP use revealed the predominant use of simple pre-ENPs and did not change significantly over time, outcomes for individual students varied and the effectiveness of the intervention was noted in other linguistic measures. These experiences are highlighted in the case studies.

Patterns of ENP Use

Pre-ENP use. Although ENP use varied from participant to participant across essays, pre-ENP use was significantly greater than post-ENP use throughout all essays. It is notable that, while the second six-week instructional period focused on increasing linguistic complexity to encourage the use of academic language in the texts, the development of ENPs in writing was not specifically emphasized. Thus, the participants' predominance of pre-ENP use could have been due to the fact that writing strategy instruction was not explicitly aimed at teaching ways of creating and utilizing complex ENPs, specifically with post-noun modification. However, the participants demonstrated emerging abilities to increase linguistic complexity in noun phrases as they continued to

utilize simple pre-noun modification, specifically simple designating (pre1) ENPs, in greater numbers across all essays. Research has indicated that explicit instruction in aspects of academic language is needed by many students in order to comprehend and utilize them independently (Schleppegrell & O'Hallaron, 2011). This need may also hold true for the utilization of greater numbers of ENPs generally, or use of complex ENP forms.

Research has indicated a developmental progression of ENP use in children, from lower frequency and less complex forms of ENPs used by younger children to more complex forms used by older children (Beers & Nagy, 2011; Berman & Verhoeven, 2002; Eisenberg et al., 2008; Ravid & Berman, 2010). These findings hold true in the spoken and written realms. Ravid & Berman (2010) revealed that, although there is a steady rise in the use of complex noun phrases from childhood to adulthood, there is a marked increase in late adolescence. It may be that ENP use remains a developing skill within the middle school years; however, it is likely that the mastery of formal academic registers in writing (possibly including the more frequent use of complex post-modified ENP forms) is not fully realized until many years later. Thus, it is possible that, due to the quality of their prior experiences with expository writing, the participants in the current study had not yet reached the developmental point at which greater use of certain types of complex language forms and functions were a part of their linguistic repertoire. However, it is not yet known to what degree middle school students should be utilizing complex ENP forms, and nothing is presently known about typical ENP use in the expository writing of ELLs.

Accounting for the low frequency of complex ENPs. One possible reason for the infrequent use of complex ENPs in this group of ELL students, aside from under-developed knowledge and use of this language form, may have been due to the short time frame during which the present study took place. That is, two-six-week instructional periods may have not been sufficient time for students to achieve integration and mastery to utilize more complex language forms and functions following enhanced text planning and organizing instruction. It is probable that the students may have required more time or more intensive instruction to gain complete understanding of the strategies taught during the first instructional period, and training specifically in the use of ENP forms during the second six-week instructional period.

It also could be that, if the planning and organizing strategies of STOP and DARE were more completely integrated into students' writing skills, then participants might have demonstrated higher ENP use more due to increased cognitive resource availability to integrate academic language into their texts. If enhanced macro-structural abilities were accessible, then greater use of linguistic complexity at the micro-structural level may have been observed. For example, research (Hayes & Berninger, in press) has shown that students who struggle with aspects of writing such as spelling, mechanics, and handwriting produce poorer quality and less coherent texts due to competing resources. Students who utilize many cognitive resources to write at the word/sentence level (e.g. concentrating on encoding at a word-by-word basis) demonstrate difficulty composing texts at the sentence/paragraph level. The converse situation is likely true in that students who struggle with the overall planning and organizing aspects of writing when composing expository texts may also experience similar outcomes in the utilization of

complex language forms and functions at the sentence level. These students may resort to using simple and redundant vocabulary and sentence structures. Perhaps with more time for instruction and guided practice, or perhaps in later school years, students may be able to achieve better coordination of macro- and micro-structural elements of persuasive essay composition. Such coordination could lead to crossover gains between these two facets of text construction, including abilities in planning, organizing and constructing the texts as well as utilizing higher-level academic language within the text. Improved coordination could also result in more complex academic language use, as more cognitive resources for utilizing linguistic complexity at the sentence level are available. This second possibility is discussed further below.

In the middle school years and beyond, students are exposed to texts from a variety of academic areas, such as the social and political sciences and English literature (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010). As students work with these texts on a more frequent basis, they implicitly learn the macro and micro-level features of these pieces of writing. At the macro-structural level, which pertains to the coherent construction of texts, written texts start to demonstrate organizational and structural patterns, such as a narrative sequence of chronological events, description or definition of a process or concept, or presentation of and support for an argument. At the micro-level, which encompasses the word and sentence levels, there are subject-specific lexical and syntactic features, sentence types, and vocabulary that must be utilized (Schleppegrell, 2004). Hence, in examining the impact of enhanced SRSD instruction, there are essentially two facets of academic texts, the macro- and micro-structural levels, that students must learn in order to coordinate and compose their own writing in more fluent ways.

To produce academic texts in the middle school years and beyond, students learn methods for composing texts in each of these academic areas. Indeed, some students require explicit instruction in text organization strategies (such as STOP and DARE) and others in the utilization of academic language. ELLs often require support at both levels. As these students gain an understanding of the knowledge and skills needed to produce texts at the macro-level, such as the overall planning and general structuring of a piece of writing and the cognitive effort needed to construct this aspect of writing decreases, students may then direct their mental focus to utilizing more literate vocabulary, producing denser sentences, and, thus, increasing overall language complexity. Conversely, if students have strong academic language skills, they may only need instruction on methods for organizing and structuring their words, sentences, and paragraphs in the appropriate manner. Essentially, strengths in writing at the macro-level likely facilitate strengths at the micro-level, as is possibly true for the reverse. Weaknesses in either level also appear to inhibit abilities in the other because of the drain on available cognitive resources, including attention (Hayes & Berninger, in press). Thus, one area for future research on strategy instruction for struggling writers is documenting progress at both the macro and micro-levels of writing.

ENPs: A Questionable Measure of Linguistic Complexity

The hypothesis for the present study was that following the enhanced SRSD instruction, students would experience gains in their ability to utilize academic language in their expository texts. The prior research reviewed indicates that ENPs are an aspect of complex language that is used with greater frequency in academic writing tasks, such as persuasive text composition (Eisenberg et al., 2008, Hillocks, 2006, Kiuhara et al., 2012,

Ravid & Berman, 2010). However, in the present study, participants did not demonstrate significant improvement in ENP use in number or complexity, from the first to last essay.

The likelihood exists that improvements in ENP use (expressed either in number of pre-noun versus post-noun modification or complexity) may not be a direct indication of increased use of academic language complexity, as hypothesized in the present study. As some participants demonstrated, concise essays may be deemed high quality, yet still receive low ENP scores because of their short length. Conversely, lengthy essays may have eventually incorporated higher numbers of ENPs simply due to productivity. For example, although Mariana's first essay included 19 ENPs, a relatively high count as compared to other students, her essay received a quality score of 2, her lowest score obtained. Although her essay was lengthy and included many ENPs, it was of relatively low quality and included only two necessary persuasive elements as well.

Students may also utilize other markers of increased language complexity, such as low-frequency vocabulary and dense clausal embedding. For example, Roberto, the struggling writer, received holistic and elements scores of 1 each on Essay 2, and he included few ENPs due to the short text length. However, he did produce several long and dense sentences. In Essay 2 he wrote, "You have to present a speech to get help from the dream act and get into college if your promoted." This sentence includes an independent clause ("you have to present a speech" with two dependent clauses: 1) "to get help from the dream act and go to college," and 2) "if your promoted." Roberto demonstrated the highest MLT (mean length of T-Unit; see Table 4) of any case study for this essay. Roberto's MLT for Essay 2 was nearly 20 words, as compared to 10.58 words for Santiago, and 9.58 for Mariana. Thus, although Roberto was deemed the struggling

writer as indicated by his low use of ENPs and essay quality scores, he did demonstrate relatively complex sentence structures. His approach suggests different pathways to the generation of more complex language use, that is, the use of embedding procedures versus production of denser ENPs as proposed by Danzak and Silliman (in press).

Second, the scale for ENP measurement in the present study may have been too fine-grained to observe trends of ENP use. The scale was based upon a combination of measures utilized in two previous studies that outlined ENP developmental trends in the oral and written language of children, adolescents, and adults (Eisenberg et al., 2008, Ravid & Berman, 2010). The detailed scale analyzed ENP use in terms of modifier position (pre- and post-head noun), as well as level of complexity. Complexity was defined for pre-ENPs by number of determiners and modifiers for pre1 (determiner only), pre2 (determiner + one modifier), and pre3 (determiner + two or more modifiers). For post-ENPs, complexity was determined by the incorporation of additional post-noun phrases for post1, post-noun relative clauses for post2, additional noun phrase embedding for post3, and use of a relative clause with an additional noun phrase for post4. However, it should be noted that a determiner is required with a noun in English in many instances (e.g. *the* boy waved goodbye versus, boy waved goodbye; determiner *the* is required). Thus, pre1 ENPs are not necessarily an appropriate indicator of an ENP and likely contributed to the inflated measures of pre-ENPs. Also, exact developmental trends for the use of each noun phrase structure is not presently known, or if such patterns of use even exist for ELLs and non-ELLs across age groups alike. It is possible that this measure is not appropriate for examining ENP complexity trends without explicit instruction. With respect to the statistical analysis, the ENP measure may also have been

too fine, resulting in the non-significant findings. With a more general measure of ENP use, trends may have been observed.

Most importantly, more than one element should be considered for the analysis of complex academic language use in written texts. Academic language is a multi-faceted entity and may be quantified in a myriad of ways, both at the micro-level (words, clauses, and sentences) and the macro-level (paragraphs and text structures). A variety of features of academic language may be analyzed to assess complexity. These include variety and level of vocabulary, such as the inclusion of infrequent and subject-specific terminology, complex sentence forms, such as embedded clauses with varying structures, paragraph structure and organization, and overall text configuration. Thus, further research is warranted to examine the use of ENPs as a measure of ability to produce academic language at the micro-level, in conjunction with other micro and macro-level measures.

Variability of Outcomes

Statistically, no study-wide improvement was observed in ENP use in terms of number (total ENPs) or complexity (type of ENP, i.e., pre- vs. post- modification) from Essay 1 to Essay 3. Three case studies illustrated the variability of outcomes in terms of ENP use and the quality of essays produced before and after instruction in writing strategies and syntactic complexity. Outcome variability may have been due to several reasons, such as time management skills, personal interest in the essay topic, environmental factors such as background noise or other distractions, and effort levels posed by students during the collection or writing samples. For example, most of Mariana's scores were relatively high across all essays; however, improvement was demonstrated from Essay 1 to Essay 2 and a subsequent decrease occurred to Essay 1-

levels in the final writing sample (see Table 8). This indicates that she may have experienced several of these explanations of variability from her second to third essays. Some participants may have also experienced difficulty in time management during the writing tasks, especially when integrating the planning and organizing steps of STOP and DARE, inhibiting them from completing the entire composition and thus the potential to receive higher scores.

Another explanation for the lack of improvement following intervention for students like Roberto is the possibility of an undetected language learning disability (LLD). Diagnosis of LLDs in ELLs is an intricate task due to the necessity of assessing age-appropriate language abilities in both the primary and secondary languages. Students who demonstrate significant difficulty in academic literacy tasks, such as persuasive writing, may call for an in-depth assessment of language and literacy skills to determine whether or not an LLD is present. Procedures for identifying LLD in ELLs, as well as developing interventions to improve the writing skills of ELLs with LLD, are pertinent to this area of research as well.

A final possible explanation for outcome variability may have been a lack of homogeneity of the participant group in ways that could have directly influenced their writing abilities. These influences include previously developed language and literacy skills, cultural influences on language learning, English language proficiency, the grasp of complex language structures specific to expository writing, particularly the persuasive writing task, and motivation and engagement in the writing tasks and critical literacy project as a whole.

Previously developed language and literacy skills in both English and

Spanish. The participants were diverse in terms of educational background and experiences in learning and using English, years of education in the U.S., and country of origin. Several participants, including the "struggling writer" Roberto, had received the majority or all of their schooling in the U.S.; however, their use of complex ENPs in persuasive writing in English was still minimal. This outcome was unexpected and does not support the assumption that greater amount of time spent in the U.S. education system --i.e., in an English-only school environment-- inherently leads to improvement in academic English language skills for ELLs. As Roberto demonstrated, these students may continue to struggle with academic tasks well into secondary education and beyond, possibly never demonstrating equivalent abilities to their non-ELL peers. Further research is needed to discover why some students continue to lag behind their peers after a nearly comparable amount of education in U.S. schools, as well as methods for closing the achievement gap among ELLs and non-ELLs.

Previously developed language and literacy skills in both English and Spanish may have influenced students' abilities to participate in structured instructional and academic writing tasks, as well as the ability to read, write, and comprehend information when learning the writing strategies. Prior exposure to academic language and literacy activities may also have influenced students' abilities to implement the strategies into their own essays.

Cultural influences on language learning. Although the participants were all Spanish-English bilinguals, their native countries varied. Research has pointed to differences in language use across speaker groups based on varying socio-cultural norms,

attitudes towards language policy, language use, and education, especially formal registers of academic language (Berman & Verhoeven, 2002). Bock, Carrierras, and Meseguer (2012) argue that, "differences among grammars in how they package thoughts could cause speakers...to categorize the same information differently" (p. 18), implying possible differences in communication styles and choices among speakers of different nationalities. Other factors influencing the heterogeneity of participants may have included previous exposure to instruction specific to the task of expository writing, as well as language and literacy strengths and weaknesses, including knowledge of mechanics, such as punctuation and capitalization, and the scope and depth of vocabulary knowledge, spelling, and reading comprehension.

English language proficiency. English proficiency could have affected understanding of the vocabulary and related terminology inherent to the writing strategies. Proficiency may have influenced participation in supplemental learning activities, how to apply techniques to English texts, and the lexical choices utilized in the essays.

The grasp of complex language structures specific to expository writing, particularly the persuasive writing task. The understanding of complex language particular to academic writing tasks may have influenced the students' understanding of the difference between oral language forms and functions and formal academic writing. Everyday oral language tends to be more socially oriented and is often characterized by simpler sentence structures. In contrast, academic writing is less conversational, utilizes more densely embedded clauses and non-canonical sentence structures and subject-specific vocabulary. Students may not have yet understood the communicative

differentiation between everyday oral language and the more formal academic register (characterized by denser sentence combining, use of varied vocabulary, use of figurative language, etc.) which then influenced the overall quality of their macro- and micro-structure efforts.

Motivation and engagement in the writing tasks and critical literacy project as a whole. Personal interest could have influenced students' attention and comprehension during writing tasks the writing tasks singularly or in combination with the previously mentioned factors. This variable may have limited some students during both the instructional activities and essay writing tasks, from successfully gaining mastery of and implementing the taught writing strategies.

Outcomes may also have been affected by personal interest in or previous knowledge about the essay topic, influencing participant effort and productivity during the task, as well as lexical and syntactic choices. Research has shown that both genre (expository versus narrative) and topic influence language use in writing tasks for children and adolescents (Berman & Verhoeven, 2002; Danzak, 2011; Nippold et al., 2008; Scott & Balthazar, 2010). Students who had a personal connection to or experience with an essay topic may have been better able to access emotions and personal narrative examples when composing their essays. Similarly, although all topics were presented and studied in class as a part of the critical literacy curriculum, some students may have had more previous background knowledge regarding a topic, allowing them to more easily formulate an opinion and discuss supporting examples and reasons in their essays.

Effectiveness of SRSD Instruction for Improving Academic Language Use

Diversity in outcomes of ENP use was observed, as were outcomes in the holistic and elements scores, as illustrated by the case study participants. There were, however, only small overall improvements in scores of either the quality or structure measures (or both) in the essays of these students (See Tables 4, 6, and 8). Even Roberto, the struggling writer, experienced a 2-point improvement in the inclusion of persuasive elements from Essay 1 to 3 (although his holistic score remained a 1 throughout). The steady improver, Santiago, experienced a 2 and 4-point increase of his holistic and elements scores, respectively, from Essay 1, to 3, and Mariana, the strong writer, experienced a 1 and 3-point increase, respectively, on these measures as well. Hence, improvements of some nature for these participants' essays were observed.

The outcomes indicated that participants were able to utilize the SRSD text planning and formulating techniques and apply them with varying degrees of proficiency, as indicated by Roberto, Santiago, and Mariana's holistic and quality scores. However, no study-wide trends in an increase of academic language use were observed as an effect of the enhanced SRSD instruction as demonstrated by the variability of ENP use across writing samples. It is possible that changing written language at the micro-structural level is a slower developing process than implementing changes at the macro-structural level.

Although there was no statistical improvement in ENP use across all participants following SRSD instruction, based on the outcomes suggested by the case studies, it may be appropriate to conclude that, if a writer is emerging in either a macro- or micro-structural area -- the use of text planning and construction or the use of complex academic language forms -- then difficulty in either area could restrict resource

development in the other area (such as Roberto's situation). The same case appears evident for having stronger abilities in either area (Mariana), or improving abilities across both areas (Santiago). The case study outcomes demonstrated that generally low scores on the ENP measure corresponded with low elements/holistic measures, and relatively high ENP scores corresponded with higher elements/holistic measures. Students demonstrating the struggling writer pattern of macro- and micro- structural writing abilities, as did Roberto, may require additional support and explicit instruction to establish stronger skills in both areas, if continual breakdown in the implementation of academic writing strategies is to be avoided.

Study Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, the study lacked a control group, which affected external validity. Additional research, including a control group or an experimental group exposed to more intensive intervention conditions, including explicit ENP instruction, would provide a basis for comparison of study outcomes, as well as provide insight into developmental trends.

Another limitation was the variety of students' educational backgrounds, as well as number of years exposed English, which made comparing participants difficult. Differences in language choices and styles may have been related to cultural or educational differences that were not accounted for in the present study.

A final limitation was the relatively short instructional period. The amount of time adolescents must be exposed to a new writing strategy before independent utilization is achieved is unknown. It is possible that the students required longer or more intensive

teaching to achieve successful application of the persuasive writing strategies, as well as incorporating more complex language into their texts.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the present study indicates, ELLs demonstrate varying abilities to rapidly learn writing strategies while producing texts with complex academic language. These outcomes have several implications for further research, including the development of complex language-use trends in the writing of ELLs, academic intervention that addresses the diverse needs of ELLs, how ENPs define complex language, and the use of SRSD instruction with ELLs.

The writing samples in this study indicate that many ELLs continue to struggle with academic writing tasks, even after attending many years of school in the United States. Research is needed in order to discover why, possibly by comparing writing abilities in the ELLs' native language as compared to English. Also needed are culturally sensitive means of analyzing linguistic elements that make the academic register of the language more abundant in writing. It is possible that mastery of academic language in writing in one's native language does not transfer to mastery in the L2, or vice versa. Best practices for instruction to allow ELLs to achieve such mastery in English are still needed.

The case studies revealed three profiles of students that may exist in any ESOL classroom receiving writing strategy instruction. The different experiences had by these students point to the need for individualized instructional plans for students who appear to be both struggling and excelling in certain areas. Not all ELLs are created equal, just as non-ELLs are not a homogenous group of learners with the same strengths and

weaknesses. Research is needed to support learning for all members of this diverse group, perhaps by modifying or individualizing teaching methods.

Additional research is also needed in the area of ENP use among adolescent students, as well as the types of ENPs that should be included in various kinds of content-area writing for the language use to be judged as "academic." In order to assess abilities utilizing ENPs and provide evaluations (such as improving, strong, or weak), it is necessary to know the frequency and forms (designating, descriptive, pre- or post-noun modified, etc.) of ENP use that is appropriate, and when this use should be expected (by a certain age, grade level, after a certain number of years in school, etc.). Further, if ENP use is in fact a strong indicator of academic language in English, and academic language is in fact a goal of middle school writing instruction in the U.S., methods for providing specific and explicit instruction in the use of ENPs to ELLs should be further developed.

Finally, further research on the use of SRSD instruction with ELL students in middle school and beyond to improve writing across all facets, constructing and composing at the macro-structural level, as well as higher-level language use at the micro-structural level, is needed. SRSD is an evidence-based practice for improving the writing abilities in many students considered struggling writers. However, as the present study has indicated, improvements were demonstrated mainly at the macro-structural level and SRSD implementation did not significantly increase students' use of sentence-level complex language, the ENP. ELLs are a unique yet diverse population that may require a variety of pedagogical methods to demonstrate the achievement in writing abilities desired in the U.S. educational system.

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, the present study explored the effects of enhanced SRSD instruction on linguistic complexity outcomes of the persuasive essays of ELL middle school students. Although statistical analysis revealed no improvement in ENP use across essays, the case studies revealed that writing, especially persuasive writing at the middle school level, is a complicated task. Complexity involves the integration of many skills, notably planning and organizing ideas around a central theme or prompt, developing reasons and supporting ideas for subtopic development, formulating a cohesive text structure, and utilizing literate language different from everyday conversation.

The case studies demonstrated that students might simultaneously experience strengths and weaknesses in some areas of academic writing, which then influence increased proficiency in some areas and inhibit writing processes in others, such as organizing and structuring a text, or constructing complex clauses and sentences. Intense and systematic instruction can have a positive effect on ELL writing abilities and it is the task of researchers and educators today to develop methods for providing instruction that will allow students to improve across all academic areas. Perhaps this will initiate a domino effect of progress towards developing strong academic language skills for ELLs across all academic subjects.

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Appendix A

Participant Questionnaire

Today's date: _____

Name: _____

Grade:_____

Date of birth (month, day, year): _____

Place of birth (city/state, country): _____

Parents' place of birth (country): Mom: _____ Dad: _____

Do you have sisters and/or brothers? List each sibling, their age, and country of birth below (for example: Francisco, 15, Mexico):

_____

_____

_____

Circle the grades when you were in school in **the U.S.**:

Kindergarten   1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th

Circle the grades when you were in school in **a different country**:

Kindergarten   1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th

Where did you go to school outside the US? (country) _____

When and where did you start speaking Spanish?
_____

When and where did you start speaking English?
_____

Appendix B

Persuasive Essay Prompts

Essay 1 (pre-instruction) prompt:

> Suppose an "English-only" activist has proposed a national law that all immigrants to the U.S. must learn English within one year of arrival. Do you think this is a good idea? Use reasons, details, and/or examples to convince readers to agree with your opinion. Write your response in a way that is appropriate for an audience of both student and adult readers.

Essay 2 (mid-instruction) prompt:

> The Dream Act proposes that undocumented students may qualify for a 6- year, temporary residency while attending college or the military. After that, they can apply for permanent residency and citizenship. Do you think the Dream Act is a good idea? Use reasons, details, and/or examples to convince readers to agree with your opinion. Write your response in a way that is appropriate for an audience of both student and adult readers.

Essay 3 (post-instruction) prompt:

> The Children's Act for Responsible Employment (CARE Act) would require farms to follow the same laws as other places where children and teens work. For example, the same age and hour requirements would apply. CARE would also increase the minimum age for hazardous work from 16 to 18, and protect children from exposure to pesticides. Do you think the CARE Act is a good idea? Use reasons, details, and/or examples to convince readers to agree with your opinion. Write your response in a way that is appropriate for an audience of both student and adult readers.

Appendix C

Holistic Measures Rubric

This rubric is based on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT)

2012 Grade 8 Persuasive Writing Calibration Scoring Guide (Florida Department of

Education, 2011, pp. 4-5).

Table A1

Holistic Measures Rubric

Area	6	5	4	3	2	1
Focus	Writing is focused, purposeful, with clear tone throughout. Commitment to and involvement with the subject.	Clearly focused on the topic.	Generally focused on topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material.	Generally focused on topic, but may include extraneous or loosely related material.	Related to topic but includes extraneous or loosely related material	Minimally addresses topic.
Organ-ization	Logical progression and clarity in presentation of ideas. Sense of completeness and wholeness with adherence to the main idea. Strong, well-crafted transitions.	Progression of ideas, although some lapses may occur. Sense of completeness or wholeness. Transitional devices within paragraphs.	Organized pattern is apparent, though some lapses may occur. Sense of completeness or wholeness. Use of transitions supports organizational plan.	Organization pattern attempted, but paper may lack sense of completeness or wholeness. Basic transitions.	Little evidence of organizational pattern, and may lack sense of completeness or wholeness. No logical progression of ideas. Formulaic transitions.	Fragmentary paper, or incoherent listing of related ideas or sentences, or both. Little, if any, organizational pattern apparent.
Sup-port	Substantial, specific,	Ample and well	Adequate development	Some attempt at	Inadequate or illogical	Little, if any, development of

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	relevant, concrete, and/or illustrative. Carefully selected details support topic sentences and bolster argument.	developed in each paragraph, clarifies intended meaning. Use of specific examples.	of support, although may be uneven. Use of specific examples. Development of support within each paragraph.	developed support included, but development is erratic. Support may be list-like and not extended.	development of support, or support limited and repetitive; e.g., list of reasons without development.	support.
Lan-guage	Mature command of language (word choice), freshness of expression. Use of creative writing strategies.	Mature command of language, including precision in word choice.	Word choice is adequate, some precise word choice.	Word choice is adequate but may be limited, predictable, or occasionally vague.	Word choice is limited, inappropriate, or vague. Formulaic transitions.	Limited or inappropriate word choice may obscure meaning.
Con-ven-tions*	Varied sentence structure, complete sentences except when fragments are use purposefully. Few, if any, errors in conventions.	Variation in sentence structure and, with rare exceptions, sentences are complete. Generally follows conventions.	Little variation in sentence structure; most sentences are complete. Generally follows conventions.	Little variation in sentence structure. Knowledge of mechanics and usage usually demonstrated, commonly used words usually spelled correctly.	Little, if any, variation in sentence structure; gross errors in sentence structure may occur. Errors in basic conventions; commonly used words may be misspelled.	Gross errors in sentence structure and usage may impede communication. Frequent and blatant errors in conventions.

* For FCAT, "conventions" = punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure.

Unscorable (score = 0):
- Response not related to prompt
- Simply a rewording of the prompt
- A copy of a published work
- Student refuses to write/paper is blank
- Response illegible
- Response incomprehensible
- **Response contains insufficient amount of writing to determine if student attempted to address the prompt.**

Elements Measure Criteria.

This measure is modeled after Harris, Graham, & Mason (2006) and based on components of DARE.

- **Develop a topic sentence.** One point for a topic sentence/s that introduces the topic and clearly states the writer's position (for or against).

- **Add supporting ideas.** One point per unique supporting idea (with some development; not just listing).

- **Reject an argument from the other side.** One point for each clearly developed rejection of an argument from the other side. They need to take the other side's perspective, and then refute that argument.

- **End with a conclusion.** One point for a concluding sentence/s that restates the writer's position and summarizes supporting ideas.

About the Author

Stephanie Cooper is a student at the University of South Florida, seeking her Master of Science Degree in Speech Language Pathology, expected in August of 2013. Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, Stephanie attended the undergraduate program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she received a Bachelor of Arts Degree, with distinction, in Spanish. Stephanie's professional interests include working with adults and children with developmental and acquired cognitive disorders, and providing patients with evidenced-based treatments aimed at improving quality of life and functional abilities. Her personal interests include travel, dining out at new restaurants, interior design, and animals.