

Record details

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Title

Protocol for a qualitative synthesis of research into the use of exemplars in the English for academic purposes context to develop student feedback literacy

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Review Question

- 1. How are exemplars defined and sourced?
- 2. How are exemplars implemented in pedagogical practice?
- 3. What are the affordances and limitations of exemplar use?
- 4. What factors contribute to the affordances and limitations of exemplar use?

Rationale

Use of exemplars and student feedback literacy are typically situated as part of a learning-oriented (Carless et al., 2006) and sustainable (Boud, 2000) approach to assessment in which students play an active role in feedback (Molloy et al., 2020). Exemplars refer, broadly, to texts which typify a genre, "chosen so as to be typical of designated levels of quality or competence" (Sadler, 1987, p. 200). They can form part of 'enabling' instructional activities for the development of student feedback literacy (Carless & Boud, 2018, p. 1320) at various stages of teaching and learning by assisting learners to generate and act upon evaluative judgements and internal feedback (Carless, 2022). Student feedback literacy refers to "the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies" (Carless & Boud, 2018, p. 1315). Several frameworks have been published in recent years with reference to the features (e.g., Molloy et al., 2020; Chong, 2021), enhancement (e.g., Yu & Liu, 2021; Xu & Carless, 2017), and measurement (e.g., Zhan, 2021; Yu et al., 2022) of this concept. At the same time, there has been a growth in research involving exemplars, investigating benefits, limitations, and perceptions of their use, which has included prior systematic reviews (e.g., Carter et al., 2018; To et al., 2021). However, such studies have tended to focus, more generally, on higher education. This research synthesis will explore the affordances and limitations of exemplar use in the English for academic purposes domain where teaching and learning goals may differ due to language, or the educational and cultural background of learners (Tribble & Wingate, 2013; Li & Han, 2022). The information gathered should allow for evaluation in this context of the relevance of existing conceptualisations of student feedback literacy and frameworks regarding its development.

References



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Boud, D. (2000). Sustainable Assessment: Rethinking assessment for the learning society. Studies in Continuing Education, 22(2), 151-167. https://doi.org/10.1080/713695728

Carless, D. (2020). From teacher transmission of information to student feedback literacy: Activating the

learner role in feedback processes. Active Learning in Higher Education, 23(2), 143-153. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787420945845

Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 43(8), 1315-1325. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354

Carless, D., Joughin, G., & Mok, M. M. C. (2006). Learning-oriented assessment: principles and practice.

Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 31(4), 395-398. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930600679043

Carter, R., Salamonson, Y., Ramjan, L. M., & Halcomb, E. (2018). Students use of exemplars to support

academic writing in higher education: An integrative review. Nurse Education Today, 65, 87-93. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2018.02.038

Chong, S. W. (2020). Reconsidering student feedback literacy from an ecological perspective. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 46(1), 92-104. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1730765

Li, F., & Han, Y. (2021). Student feedback literacy in L2 disciplinary writing: insights from international

graduate students at a UK university. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 47(2), 198-212.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1908957

Molloy, E., Boud, D., & Henderson, M. (2019). Developing a learning-centred framework for feedback literacy. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 45(4), 527-540. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2019.1667955

Sadler, D. R. (1987). Specifying and Promulgating Achievement Standards. Oxford Review of Education,

13(2), 191-209. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305498870130207

To, J., Panadero, E., & Carless, D. (2021). A systematic review of the educational uses and effects of exemplars. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 47(8), 1167-1182. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.2011134

Tribble, C., & Wingate, U. (2013). From text to corpus - A genre-based approach to academic literacy instruction. System, 41(2), 307-321. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.03.001



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Inclusion Criteria

Definition

Include: There is a clear definition of 'exemplar' for the purposes of the study, which is either explicitly provided, or implicit in the research materials as described (synonymous or near synonymous terms as specified in component one of the search string detailed in "search strategy" below are acceptable as alternatives).

Exclude: The term "exemplar" or a near synonym is employed without being defined either explicitly or implicitly via the research materials employed.

Rationale: The first review question relates to how exemplars are defined and sourced. Therefore, studies included in this review are required to contribute to the conceptualisation of the term.

Exemplar Source

Include: There is clear information regarding the author of the exemplar (e.g., teacher, student, published author)

Exclude: The author of the exemplar is not clearly specified.

Rationale: This information is required to answer the first review question pertaining to the source of the exemplars.

Exemplar format

Include: The exemplar employed is a full text, or a substantial extract (e.g., introduction, reference section) of a text.

Exclude: Exemplars at sentence level or below.

Rationale: The focus of the review is on the use of exemplars to typify texts of a particular genre. The use of exemplar sentences or clauses to exemplify language forms only is not within scope.

Implementation

Include: Use of exemplars in pedagogical practice is clearly described in the study.

Exclude: Papers which do not clearly describe the implementation of exemplars (e.g., references to their use in 'genre-based pedagogy' without further elaboration).

Rationale: The second review question pertains to the way in which exemplars are operationalised. To address this, studies need to detail one or more specific implementations of exemplars.

Affordances and limitations

Include: The affordances and limitations of the use of exemplars described are explicitly referenced. Exclude: The affordances and limitations of the highlighted use of exemplars are not referred to explicitly.

Rationale: The third review question refers to the affordances and limitations of exemplar use. To address this, included studies must evaluate the usefulness of the specified implementation of exemplars.

Language

Include: Publications are written in English.

Exclude: Publications are written in languages other than English.

Rationale: In terms of accessibility, the authors are based in the UK with limited access to academic publications that are written in languages other than English.

Type of publication

Include: Journal articles (e.g., primary studies, research syntheses) and book chapters reporting on research.



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Exclude: Publications that are reflective or conceptual without specific research reporting. Rationale: The excluded publications do not yield data from specific episodes of exemplar use, which is required to answer the review questions.

Publication date

Include: Articles and book chapters published since 2010. Exclude: Articles and book chapters published before 2010.

Rationale: The use of exemplars is an emerging research area, so the publications included in this review will be chosen to reflect this. The prior systematic review by To et al. (2021), which focuses on use of exemplars in all disciplines, was consulted as a reference point and reflects a considerable increase in publications relating to exemplar use from 2010 onwards.

Educational context

Include: Primary studies must be in the context of English for academic purposes. This includes relevant programmes within higher education. It also includes programmes within pre-university education directed at preparation for tertiary level academia such as 'post-secondary' or 'pre-university' settings. It also encompasses second language education contexts when learners are preparing for examinations which act as a gateway to university, namely 'TOEIC', 'TOEFL', and 'IELTS'.

Exclude: Studies are to be excluded when the context is not considered academic as described above.

Rationale: This review focuses specifically on English for academic purposes which is commonly practised in the above contexts.

References

To, J., Panadero, E., & Carless, D. (2021). A systematic review of the educational uses and effects of exemplars. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 47(8), 1167-1182. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.2011134

Information Sources

The sources for this research synthesis will be journals and book chapters identified and selected from Scopus and Web of Science (Core Collection).

Search Strategy

The research synthesis will employ the following search string:

("exemplar*" OR "model essay*" OR "model text*" OR "example essay*" OR "example text*" OR "writing model*" OR "sample essay*" OR "sample text*") AND (("higher education" OR "universit*" OR "post-compulsory education" OR "further education" OR "post-secondary" OR "college*" OR "undergraduate*" OR "postgraduate*" OR "tertiary" OR "EMI" OR "English medium" OR "pre-sessional" OR "in-sessional" OR "English for specific" OR "ESP" OR "English for academic" OR "EAP") OR ("IELTS" OR "TOEFL" OR "TOEIC" OR "L2" OR "ESL" OR "EFL" OR "TESOL" OR "second language" OR "language learning" OR "language education" or "language teaching"))

Since this research synthesis will be conducted as part of an MSc dissertation, the above search string was developed with the assistance of Sin Wang Chong, dissertation supervisor of the first author and a senior academic in language education, with extensive experience in conducting



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systematic reviews. The search string includes three components. The first component relates to the concept and components two and three refer to the educational context.

Component one: concept

("exemplar*" OR "model essay*" OR "model text*" OR "example essay*" OR "example text*" OR "writing model*" OR "sample essay*" OR "sample text*")

For this component, the intention is to capture synonymous or almost synonymous terms for 'exemplar'. A piloting of the terms was carried out at a broader educational scale, and a variety of synonymous terminologies were identified. The commonly used terms are included in the search string.

Components two and three are designed to represent the two broad and often overlapping educational contexts in which English for academic purposes is commonly taught. In piloting potential search strings, the first author identified a tendency for the search terms from both components to be relevant to and mentioned within papers identified using either search component. However, reference was not always made to both components in the title, keywords, and abstract. In other words, the authors tend to align their paper with either 'higher education' or 'language education' when the content may relate to both. Therefore, if both elements are required within the search strategy, it may lead to the exclusion of relevant papers. As a result, the search string consists of component one with the addition of either component two or three.

The authors will use the 'educational context' element of the inclusion criteria to ensure that the papers selected fulfil the criterion of representing English for academic purposes.

Component two: educational context (university or pre-university)
("higher education" OR "universit*" OR "post-compulsory education" OR "further education" OR
"post-secondary" OR "college*" OR "undergraduate*" OR "postgraduate*" OR "tertiary" OR "EMI" OR
"English medium" OR "pre-sessional" OR "in-sessional" OR "English for specific" OR "ESP" OR
"English for academic" OR "EAP")

This component is intended to identify papers pertaining to the university and pre-university context. It includes 'higher education' and its synonyms, along with words which might be used in their place such as 'postgraduate' or 'undergraduate'. It also includes terms relating to pre-university contexts such as 'post-secondary' and those which more directly refer to use of English in a higher education context such as 'English for academic purposes' or 'in-sessional'. Additionally, it includes terms relating to English medium instruction which is an additional relevant context.

Component three: educational context (language education)
("IELTS" OR "TOEFL" OR "TOEIC" OR "L2" OR "ESL" OR "EFL" OR "TESOL" OR "second language" OR "language learning" OR "language education" or "language teaching")

Component three is designed to capture papers which relate to language education settings where English for academic purposes is taught. This includes 'language education' and its synonymous terms, along with common acronyms referring to foreign language teaching such as 'EFL' or 'TESOL'. Additionally, it includes acronyms for gateway examinations such as 'IELTS' that are used for entrance into tertiary institutions where preparation often takes place in a language education context.

Once the search is complete, the results will be automatically limited by three of the inclusion



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criteria referred to above in 'Inclusion Criteria' using the database automatic filter functions. These criteria are 'language', 'publication date', and 'publication type'.

Data Management

Following identification of potential papers using the above search string and the first screening of abstracts, title, and keywords as identified below in "Selection Process", full-text PDFs of the publications considered potentially appropriate for inclusion (excluding duplicates) will be imported to 'Mendley Reference Manager'.

Following the second and third stage screenings referred to below in "Selection Process", excluded texts will be moved to a separate folder on 'Mendley Reference Manager'.

Data extracted from the included publications will be imported to 'NVivo', which is a qualitative data analysis tool that will be used for data synthesis.

Selection Process

The first author will conduct the screening processes outlined below, which will be in line with the requirements set out by the PRISMA checklist referred to in Page et al. (2021). The steps of the search and inclusion process will be conducted and illustrated as set out by the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Page et al., 2021). The process will also be guided by the methodological framework for conducting qualitative research synthesis in TESOL outlined in Chong and Plonsky (2021).

The selection process will be conducted in three stages:

Stage 1

Potential papers will be identified using the search string and limits set out in "search strategy" and the databases highlighted in "information sources". Titles, abstracts, and keywords from those papers will be screened to identify those that can immediately be excluded from the study based on one or more of the exclusion criteria.

Stage 2

Full-text PDFs of those publications considered potentially relevant for inclusion (excluding duplicates) will be imported to 'Mendley Reference Manager' whereupon they will undergo a second screening with the same inclusion and exclusion criteria at full-text level to ensure that all inclusion criteria are met.

Stage 3

Individual study quality will be appraised to determine eligibility using checklists which are appropriate to their methodology. Since English for academic purposes is situated within the field of TESOL, the authors will use the guidelines and additional checklists suggested by TESOL Quarterly, which is an authoritative journal in language education. Specifically, each study will be evaluated against the relevant sections of the TESOL Quarterly Research Guidelines (Mahboob et al., 2016) and the additional current TESOL Quarterly Submission Guidelines specific to quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies given on their webpage (TESOL Quarterly, 2022).

Research syntheses will be evaluated using the PRISMA checklist referred to in Page et al (2021). Synthesis of qualitative evidence will be further evaluated against the methodological framework detailed in Chong and Plonsky (2021). Appraisal of synthesised quantitative data will be considered alongside the meta-analysis processes and critical steps identified in Oswald and Plonsky (2010).



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As above in "Search Strategy", if ambiguity arises as to whether a paper should be included or excluded at any of the three stages outlined above, the first author will consult the dissertation supervisor who is a senior academic with considerable expertise and experience in both language education and research syntheses.

References

Chong, S. W., & Plonsky, L. (2021). A Primer on Qualitative Research Synthesis in TESOL. TESOL Quarterly, 55(3), 1024-1034. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3030

Mahboob, A., Paltridge, B., Phakiti, A., Wagner, E., Starfield, S., Burns, A., Jones, R. H., & De Costa, P. I.

(2016). TESOL Quarterly Research Guidelines. TESOL Quarterly, 50(1), 42-65. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.288

Oswald, F. L., & Plonsky, L. (2010). Meta-analysis in Second Language Research: Choices and Challenges. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 30, 85-110. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0267190510000115

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., . . . Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ, n71. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

TESOL Quarterly. (2022). TESOL Quarterly Submission Guidelines. Wiley Online Library. Retrieved January 31, 2023, from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/15457249/homepage/forauthors.html?3

Data Collection Process

This review will follow a similar procedure to a qualitative research synthesis which typically aggregates the findings of a smaller number of primary qualitative classroom studies to answer research questions and expand upon what is known about a specific pedagogical practice (Chong & Plonsky, 2021; Drisko, 2020). However, the synthesis will be more inclusive in that it will analyse all eligible qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies identified and as such can instead be described as a "qualitative synthesis of research" (Chong et al., 2023). Since research into the use of exemplars in pedagogical practice is an emerging area, particularly in the English for academic purposes domain, this review will take an all-encompassing approach to exploring research findings in a similar manner to a scoping review (Tricco et al., 2016). This should provide a broad view of the development of knowledge and understandings around exemplar use in this field.

The data extraction items detailed below in "Data Items" relate to the review questions. Feedback on their appropriacy will be sought from the dissertation supervisor, who, as previously stated, possesses expertise in language education and in conducting systematic reviews. Once these data items have been discussed and confirmed, they will be used to create a form for data extraction and the form will be piloted.

Piloting of data extraction will be conducted on 20% of the included publications, covering both journal articles and book chapters, as selected. It will be independently conducted by the first author



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and the third author who is currently a doctorate student in TESOL and possesses an understanding of how exemplars are typically conceptualised and used in pedagogical practice within the field of education, and a comprehensive understanding of coding in qualitative data analysis. Extracted data will be compared and discussed in a documented meeting.

Following the meeting, the first author will make any changes to the data extraction form deemed necessary to ensure all relevant data is extracted to address the review questions, and to avoid ambiguous language interpretations. These changes will be checked with the second reviewer before finalising the data extraction form.

The final list of data extraction items will be employed by the first author to extract the relevant data from the remaining publications.

References

Chong, S. W., Bond, M., & Chalmers, H. (2023). Opening the methodological black box of research synthesis in language education: where are we now and where are we heading? Applied Linguistics

Review, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2022-0193

Chong, S. W., & Plonsky, L. (2021). A Primer on Qualitative Research Synthesis in TESOL. TESOL Quarterly, 55(3), 1024-1034. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3030

Drisko, J. W. (2019). Qualitative research synthesis: An appreciative and critical introduction. Qualitative

Social Work, 19(4), 736-753. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325019848808

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis. International lournal

of Qualitative Methods, 16(1), 160940691773384. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Tricco, A. C., Lillie, E., Zarin, W., O'Brien, K., Colquhoun, H., Kastner, M., Levac, D., Ng, C., Sharpe, J. P.,

Wilson, K., Kenny, M., Warren, R., Wilson, C., Stelfox, H. T., & Straus, S. E. (2016). A scoping review

on the conduct and reporting of scoping reviews. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 16(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-016-0116-4

Data Items

The following items may be revised following the piloting phase mentioned above in "Data Collection Process".

Characteristics of studies:

- Year of publication
- Type of research/publication
- Author(s) positioning in study (researcher/teacher-researcher)
- Location of study (only applicable to primary studies)
- Institution type
- EAP setting



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- Number of participants
- Nationalities of participants
- · L1 of participants
- Research questions (or aims if no specific questions)
- Research design (qualitative, quantitative, mixed)

Review question 1: Definition and sourcing

- Definition of exemplar
- Exemplar author (e.g., teacher, student, published 'expert')
- Exemplar source (e.g., corpus, previous cohort, colleague)

Review question 2: Exemplar implementation

- Number of exemplars
- Exemplified performance levels
- Skill focus (e.g., writing, speaking)
- Format of exemplar (extract, full text)
- · Description of exemplar use
- Duration/frequency/repetition of exemplar use
- Number of teachers and their role(s) in implementation
- Learner role(s) in implementation

Review question 3: Affordances and limitations

- Method(s) of evaluating affordances and limitations (e.g., perceptions, grades, language analysis)
- Affordances of exemplar use as evidenced by raw data
- Affordances of exemplar use as interpreted by author(s)
- · Limitations of exemplar use as evidenced by raw data
- Limitations of exemplar use as interpreted by author(s)

Review question 4: Factors contributing to affordances and limitations

- Factors identified as contributing to affordances or limitations of exemplar use as evidenced by raw data
- Factors identified as contributing to affordances or limitations of exemplar use as interpreted by author(s)

Risk of bias/trustworthiness of individual studies

Methodological rigour, including bias and trustworthiness will be assessed using the guidelines and additional checklists suggested by TESOL Quarterly, which is an authoritative journal in language education. Specifically, each study will be evaluated against the relevant sections of the TESOL Quarterly Research Guidelines (Mahboob et al., 2016) and the additional current TESOL Quarterly Submission Guidelines specific to quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies given on their webpage (TESOL Quarterly, 2022).

References

Mahboob, A., Paltridge, B., Phakiti, A., Wagner, E., Starfield, S., Burns, A., Jones, R. H., & De Costa, P. I.

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https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/15457249/homepage/forauthors.hml?3

Data Synthesis

The intention of this review is to take an inductive approach to exploring exemplars and their use in an English for academic purposes context to potentially generate new understandings in this area. The synthesis will be completed using thematic analysis as described by Nowell et al. (2017). This approach is chosen because it is systematic and aims to build the trustworthiness criteria identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) into its steps. Specifically, the data synthesis will follow the five phases of the "step-by-step approach to conducting trustworthy thematic analysis" identified by Nowell et al. (2017, pp. 4-8), namely "familiarizing yourself with the data", "generating initial codes", "searching for themes", reviewing themes", "defining and naming themes", and "producing the report".

Coding of 20% of the included publications covering both journal articles and book chapters, as selected, will be conducted by the first and third authors independently. The codes and themes identified will be compared and discussed in a documented meeting to reach an agreement on interpretations. The accuracy of the notes from the meeting will be checked with the second reviewer.

Following this meeting and informed by the interpretations of the first author and the meeting discussions, the first author will complete the coding process.

Due to the variety of research designs which may be represented by the studies included in the review, narrative synthesis is deemed the most suitable method of bringing together the findings to address the research questions (Schwarz et al., 2019). This is a textual approach but allows for the inclusion of visuals such as integrated statistical data within the narrative, making it effective for integrating a diverse range of evidence (Popay et al., 2006).

References

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis. International lournal

of Qualitative Methods, 16(1), 160940691773384. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Lincoln, Y. S., Guba, E. G., & SAGE Publishing. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. SAGE Publications.

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Schwarz, C. M., Hoffmann, M., Schwarz, P., Kamolz, L. P., Brunner, G., & Sendlhofer, G. (2019). A systematic literature review and narrative synthesis on the risks of medical discharge letters for patients' safety. BMC Health Services Research, 19(1).

https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-019-3989-1



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Meta-biases

See "Selection Process" regarding the research process and reporting being informed by the PRISMA 2020 Checklist referred to in Page et al. (2021).

References

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., . . . Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ, n71. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

Confidence in cumulative evidence

See "Selection Process" regarding the research process and reporting being informed by the PRISMA 2020 Checklist referred to in Page et al. (2021). In addition, the Weight of Evidence Framework as applied to the appraisal of reviews (Gough, 2007) will inform the conclusions drawn from the evidence.

References

Gough, D. (2007). Weight of Evidence: a framework for the appraisal of the quality and relevance of evidence. Research Papers in Education, 22(2), 213-228. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671520701296189

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., . . . Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ, n71. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

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Details of Published Review



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