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Title

A protocol for a systematic literature review of the interventions used to help EAP students use synthesis when writing from sources.

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Review Question

The research questions which guide this systematic literature review are:

1. How are teaching interventions for synthesis writing from sources described and conceptualised?
2. What features do such interventions have when deployed in university contexts?
 - 3a. How effective are different interventions in helping students write from sources?
 - 3b. How are such interventions perceived by students and teachers?

Rationale

Writing from sources for academic purposes (Cumming et al., 2016) is accepted as a challenge for university students due to the combination of skills it requires (Wingate, 2015). Nelson & King (2022), who prefer the term 'discourse synthesis', note that interest in this area is multidisciplinary and draws from varied research traditions. As such, this protocol for a systematic review aims to draw on a wide range of sources with the aim of informing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practice.

The processes of writing from sources have received considerable research interest, including two systematic reviews. Firstly, a synthesis of research on the processes was undertaken by Cummings et al. (2016). The authors identified five claims in the literature, including agreement that writing from sources is challenging, but that teaching activities could help students improve their work. Following Cumming et al.'s (2016) synthesis, but interested in demonstrably effective interventions, Ockenburg et al. (2019) used a systematic literature search to find teaching studies with clear effect sizes. While this narrow approach was rigorous, their results were primarily informed by only six well-documented interventions.

This study will build on the work of Cumming et al.'s (2016) and Ockenburg et al.'s (2019) syntheses by investigating writing from sources teaching interventions. It will investigate more broadly how writing from sources teaching interventions are described and conceptualised (research question one), as well as investigate what teachers are doing in classes where these processes are taught (research question two). Research question three, in two parts, investigates the impact of writing

from source interventions in terms of effectiveness, as well as student and teacher perceptions of such interventions.

References:

Cumming, A., Lai, C., & Cho, H. (2016). Students' writing from sources for academic purposes: A synthesis of recent research. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 23, 47-58.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2016.06.002>

Nelson, N., & King, J. R. (2022). Discourse synthesis: Textual transformations in writing from sources. *Reading and Writing*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-021-10243-5>

Ockenburg, L. van, Weijen, D. van, & Rijlaarsdam, G. (2019). Learning to write synthesis texts: A review of intervention studies. *Journal of Writing Research*, 10(3), Article 3.
<https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2019.10.03.01>

Wingate, U. (2015). Academic literacy and student diversity: The case for inclusive practice. *Multilingual Matters*.

Inclusion Criteria

- Focus of the study

Include: Studies that relate to teaching writing from sources as integrated processes for successful student writing.

Exclude: Studies that explore the teaching of reading, writing, or specific tasks like paraphrasing, as isolated skills.

Rationale: This study seeks to provide useful information for developing approaches to teaching (and learning) reading and writing as integrated in the process of writing from sources. There are descriptions of these processes that are more likely to be found earlier or later in a non-linear sequence of text transformation. For example, as discussed in Cumming et al. (2016), 'reading to write' is likely to come earlier in the process. Such studies are relevant because they still focus on the integration of skills.

Include: Studies that focus on source-based argumentative writing.

Exclude: Studies that focus on other aspects of integrated reading into writing, such as reflective writing, book reviews, and similar.

Rationale: The processes of writing from sources that are most relevant to EAP courses and the research questions involve those where the writer is expected to develop their own position (or argument) from sources (Nelson & King, 2022; Wingate, 2015).

- Setting

Include: Studies that related to students studying reading into writing skills at university.

Exclude: Studies that focus on other educational contexts, such as primary or secondary education.

Rationale: As the study seeks to better understand how to develop writing from sources skills for EAP students, the university context is appropriate. The skills involved at, for example, GCSE or A-level (in the UK context) are (arguably) different.

- Type of publication

Include: Papers published in English.

Exclude: Papers not published in English.

Rationale: While there is no doubt valuable research available in other languages, it would not be

feasible for the researchers to include these in the study.

Information Sources

The searches will be conducted using EBSCO databases, including ERIC and the British Education Index, the SCOPUS database, the SSCI, and the DOAJ.

Searches for doctoral theses will be conducted using ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Searches for literature types not recognised by the searches above will be conducted through Google Scholar.

After the initial search and selection process, the search will be expanded by scanning the reference sections and using Google Scholar's citation tracking to check whether relevant related articles have been missed.

Search Strategy

The following search terms will be used for abstract, title and key-word searches.

("reading into writing" OR "reading to write" OR "source-based argument" OR "source based argument" OR "reading for writing" OR "writing from sources" OR "reading-writing nexus" OR "discourse synthesis" OR "synthesis writing" OR "paraphras*" OR "use of sources")

AND

("universit*" OR "higher education" OR "EAP" OR "English Academic Purposes" OR "pre-sessional" OR "college*")

Rationale: The first search is designed to find sources that capture the process of writing from sources, despite these skills being described differently in the literature.

The second search is designed to narrow the search to university contexts.

Data Management

Zotero is a tool that can assist in the collection and organisation of research texts. Zotero's folder system will be used to track of the screening process. Before screening, all texts that match the search string will be added to an initial Zotero folder. The Zotero screening process will involve two rounds, described in more detail in the next section.

Once screening is complete a data extraction form will be used, and this data will be stored using Microsoft Office software (MSWord and Excel) in preparation to be imported to NVivo. NVivo, described as a collaborative qualitative analysis software by the developers, will support analysis of the extracted data.

Selection Process

The screening process is as follows: initial search > first screening > second screening. As above Zotero will be used to organise titles, key word information, abstracts and documents. Screening will be based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria above. A record will be kept of excluded publications. As far as possible, duplicates will be removed before adding full-text PDFs to Zotero.

This process is informed by Page et al.'s (2021) updated PRISMA guidance on selection practices for systematic reviews and will use, as far as possible, their recommended flow chart to track and record the process.

The first and third authors will independently screen a matching 10% of papers during the first screening, and a matching alternate set of 10% of papers during the second screening. As discussed in Belur et al. (2021), after each screening, the first and third authors will complete an inter-rater reliability exercise and manage any disagreements through open discussion. Comparing decisions made and discussing any discrepancies that arise will provide an opportunity to refine the inclusion and exclusion criteria. As well as ensuring a consistent process, discussion will focus on the extent to which the authors are sure the criteria are appropriate meeting the research questions, and will adapt or adjust the criteria as appropriate.

If ambiguity arises at any point in the screening process, the first and third author may consult the second author, who is experienced in conducting research synthesis in language education. Any necessary changes to the screening process will then be made and tested again on a new sample.

References

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., ... & Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *International journal of surgery*, 88, 105906.

Belur, J., Tompson, L., Thornton, A., & Simon, M. (2021). Interrater Reliability in Systematic Review Methodology: Exploring Variation in Coder Decision-Making. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 50(2), 837-865. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124118799372>

Data Collection Process

Referring to Chong and Plonsky's (2023) typology, this study aims to follow guidelines appropriate for a practice-focused systematic literature review. In line with this approach, data will be collected from included sources using a data extraction form. The preliminary data items are listed in the following section.

As discussed in Büchter et al. (2020) there is a wide range of advice in the wider literature to ensure the data extraction form provides information that answers the research questions. Büchter et al. (2020), however, note that multi-author piloting, based on a sample of papers, is often described as best practice. As such, both authors will pilot the extraction form by first extracting data from the same 10% of selected papers, then comparing results.

Li et al. (2015) describes the trialling and development of the extraction form as an iterative process, and the third author may be consulted if there is any ambiguity in the process of trialling, updating and completing the data extraction form.

References

Büchter, R. B., Weise, A., & Pieper, D. (2020). Development, testing and use of data extraction forms in systematic reviews: a review of methodological guidance. *BMC medical research methodology*, 20(1), 1-14.

Chong, S. W., & Plonsky, L. (2023). A typology of secondary research in Applied Linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Review*, (0).

Li, T., Vedula, S. S., Hadar, N., Parkin, C., Lau, J., & Dickersin, K. (2015). Innovations in data collection, management, and archiving for systematic reviews. *Annals of internal medicine*, 162(4), 287-294.

Data Items

This is a provisional selection as discussed above.

Study information

- Title of study.
- Publication years.
- Context of the study.
- Research questions.
- Research design.
- Participant information.

Research Question 1

- Definitions (or descriptions) of interventions
- Definitions (or descriptions) of writing from sources skills

Research Question 2

- Description of activities.
- Duration of interventions.
- Frequency of interventions.
- Mode of delivery.
- Materials used.
- Other relevant features.

Research Question 3a

- Outcome measures.
- Quantitative results.

Research Question 3b

- Teachers' perceptions or experiences.
- Students' perceptions or experiences.

Risk of bias/trustworthiness of individual studies

This review will focus on a range of research articles with different quality criteria. Where judgements are being made on the quality or methodological rigour of studies, Hong et al.'s (2018) Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) and Spencer et al.'s (2004) framework for assessing research evidence will be used.

References

Hong, Q. N., Gonzalez-Reyes, A., & Pluye, P. (2018). Improving the usefulness of a tool for appraising the quality of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies, the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). *Journal of evaluation in clinical practice*, 24(3), 459-467.

Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Dillon, L. (2004). Quality in qualitative evaluation: a framework for assessing research evidence.

Data Synthesis

This study aims to follow guidelines for a thematic analysis of collected data. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) describe the process of developing themes through coding, described as identifying similarities and differences, with codes themselves acting as "tags" which can be used to sort ideas and information into categories. The approach for this will be guided by Nowell et al.'s (2017) process, similarly described in six phases by Braun and Clarke (2022), for working with data to identify and develop codes, and then themes, which can be used to meaningfully describe the data collected. This process will be supported by NVivo software as mentioned in a previous section.

Before any coding is undertaken the authors will meet to discuss the synthesis process. Several suggestions outlined by Nowell et al. (2017) will be followed, including the use of reflexive journaling during initial coding stages to help the authors ground their discussion on the development of codes in a rich reflection of the data collected.

Once the initial plan for coding is finalised, the first and third author will independently code a matching 10% sample of included studies while taking additional notes on the process. These notes will inform any adjustments required to the general process. It may take several meetings to develop a coherent approach to coding, and these will be documented. Once an approach has been agreed upon, a further 10% of studies will be coded by the first and third authors and any adjustments will be made before the final synthesis is completed by the first author, in consultation with the other authors.

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.

Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds?. *Currents in pharmacy teaching and learning*, 10(6), 807-815.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 16(1), 1609406917733847.

Meta-biases

Confidence in cumulative evidence

As discussed in other sections, this study will be informed by study collection processes outlined in the PRISMA 2020 checklist (Page et al., 2021). Where appropriate Gough's (2007) "Weight of Evidence Framework" will be referred to.

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.

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., ... & Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *International journal of surgery*, 88, 105906.

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