Effects of Self-Regulated Strategy Development on the Writing Performance and Sense of Self-Efficacy of Postsecondary English Language Learners

by

Antonina Maria Balsamo

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Graduate Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
University of Toronto

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Abstract

English language learners (ELLs) comprise a growing contingent in North American postsecondary institutions. However, success in postsecondary requires competence in written expression, a taxing activity for most ELLs. To foster writing development, this study adapted the strategy instruction model of Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD; Graham & Harris, 1996) to teach strategies for research writing and vocabulary expansion. Six postsecondary ELLs received 36 hours of instruction over six weeks. Collecting data through a mixed methods design, the study measured performance gains as high as 10%, which, though moderate, contribute to growing evidence for the effectiveness of SRSD among postsecondary ELLs. Participants also reported positive transformations in their sense of self-efficacy alongside elevated confidence and lowered anxiety and stress. The study highlights the importance of guiding postsecondary ELLs through the framework of writing strategy instruction and suggests that SRSD may benefit writers by both teaching new strategies and validating existing writing practices.
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Chapter 1:
Introduction

This thesis investigates the effect of a model of strategy instruction on the writing performance and sense of self-efficacy of postsecondary English language learners (ELLs). In particular, the study uses the framework of Graham and Harris’s (1996) Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) to teach strategies for writing research papers and expanding vocabulary. The purpose of this introductory chapter is threefold: to provide the background and rationale for the study, to introduce the research questions to be explored, and to establish the context for the literature review which follows in Chapter 2. The background and rationale for this study are clarified in the next section.

Background and Rationale

Given the current trajectory in globalization and immigration, the likelihood that postsecondary educators will encounter ELLs in their classrooms is greater than ever, at least in North American institutions. In Canada, 7,749,115 Canadians have reported a first language other than French, English, or any of the Canadian aboriginal languages (Statistics Canada, 2016). This figure, representing almost 21% of the country’s population, marks a 13% increase since 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Increasing enrolments in Canadian universities over the past two decades include growing numbers of international student enrolments, which are rising at a faster rate than that of Canadian students (Statistics Canada, 2018). In the 2016-2017 academic year, international students accounted for 12% of postsecondary enrolments in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2018). In the same academic year, over one million international students were reportedly enrolled in American postsecondary institutions, a number that has more than doubled since 1990 (Institute for International Education, 2018). Certainly, it cannot be assumed that all international students are ELLs, but the trends do suggest that a growing contingent in Canadian and American postsecondary institutions is linguistically (and culturally) diverse, with ELLs comprising a significant part. As these immigration trends continue in an increasingly global society, determining instruction that best supports postsecondary ELLs is a matter of increasing importance.
In no area, perhaps, is postsecondary ELL support more needed than in the domain of written expression. Not only are educators’ expectations of writing performance higher at the postsecondary level than at other levels of study, but it is also at this level that writing tasks form the primary—and in many courses the exclusive—means of assessment (Harrison, 2012; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette, Fredrick, & Gama, 2010). The success of postsecondary students relies heavily upon their competence in written expression. Writing skills largely function in a gatekeeping capacity by facilitating or hindering entrance into, success within, and graduation from postsecondary institutions (Gregg, Coleman, & Lindstrom, 2008). Beyond graduation, these vital skills are often required to access better job opportunities. In the workforce, writing proficiency is needed to successfully produce reports, prepare presentations, and articulate ideas (Viel-Ruma et al., 2010). As students advance in their studies and prepare for full-time work, the pressure to write well intensifies. This heightened emphasis on writing skills underscores the need to ensure that postsecondary ELLs are well equipped in this domain.

Writing is a sophisticated task, even for the average student. Oral communication does not place the same demands on syntax and vocabulary as does writing (Ndlovu & Geva, 2008). MacArthur, Philippakos, Graham, and Harris (2012) describe the micro skills required to write effectively:

Writing is a complex cognitive and social process. Proficient writing requires awareness of the audience and purpose for particular tasks, knowledge of content, effective strategies for planning and revising, critical reading, language ability, innovation, and self-regulation, as well as fluent text production. Even for skilled adults, writing is challenging, and most students find writing difficult. (p. 243)

In essence, a multitude of capabilities are required to perform what, at the outset, may appear to be a single, fluid activity.

Add to this the task of writing in a second (or tertiary) language (L2) as opposed to one’s native language (L1), and the challenges are exacerbated. L2 writers cannot always transfer their L1 writing experience into the L2 context (Kormos & Smith, 2012). These students may lack transferable skills in their native language and consequently must learn new scripts, syntax, and phonological and morphological rules, along with other important aspects of the language. Indeed, L2 writers have more difficulty composing than their L1 peers:
They plan less in their writing, have difficulty setting appropriate goals, and spend more time trying to generate material and locating suitable vocabulary for a given writing task. In addition, second language writers pause more often and have more starts-and-stops, making the process overall more time-consuming and arduous than for their native language peers. (Matsuda, Ortmeier-Hooper, & Matsuda, 2009, p. 462).

L2 writers also struggle to understand the genres of the dominant culture. For them, the process of writing is undoubtedly more protracted and laborious.

Given that writing is considerably more challenging for L2 students, one may wonder whether and how these students are motivated to persist when encountering such difficulties. Kormos (2012) posited that, together with interest and the value they attribute to writing tasks, L2 writers’ self-efficacy beliefs—judgments of their competence or ability to successfully accomplish a writing task—significantly influence, first, whether L2 learners engage in writing at all, and then, if they do, “[t]he attention, effort, and time devoted to the different phases of composing” (p. 399). Kormos’s assertion is rooted in the decades-long research of Bandura (1971, 1977, 1986, 1999, among others), who identified interest and positive self-efficacy beliefs as the most significant determinants of effort and persistence. Bandura (1999) claimed that perceptions of self-efficacy comprise the foundation of human agency:

Unless people believe that they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. [...] When faced with obstacles, setbacks and failures, those who doubt their capabilities slacken their efforts, give up, or settle for mediocre solutions. By contrast, those who have a strong belief in their capabilities redouble their efforts and try to figure out better ways to master the challenges. (p. 28)

Bandura (1986) aptly observed that “[c]ompetent functioning requires both skills and self-beliefs of efficacy to use them effectively” (p. 391). Applying this observation to L2 writers, one may argue that while students need to hone the skills and techniques of successful writers, they must also develop faith in their capabilities so that they might persist improvising their writing skills under challenging and stressful circumstances. Thus, a comprehensive instructional approach would need to promote positive perceptions of self-efficacy while teaching tangible writing techniques.
One point that remains under-researched is the specific means by which educators can support both goals for postsecondary L2 writers. The answer may lie in strategy instruction. In second language education (SLE) research, strategy instruction has taken the form of language learner strategies (LLS), also referred to as Strategy Based Instruction (SBI), which have become a topic of considerable interest (Oxford, 1990, 2002, 2017; Rubin, Chamot, Harris, & Anderson, 2007; Tseng, Dornyei, & Schmitt, 2006). LLS can be understood as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language” (Oxford, 2002, p. 124). Scholars’ interest in LLS stems from the recognition that “learners with strategic knowledge of language learning, compared to those without, become more efficient, resourceful, and flexible, thus acquiring a language more easily” (Tseng et al., 2006, p. 78). Studies conducted over the past three decades have suggested that strategy instruction can boost both the performance and motivation of language learners (Rubin et al., 2007; Tseng et al., 2006).

One important observation of LLS research is that successful L2 learners frequently combine cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Oxford, 2002). Studies such as Zaki and Ellis’s (1999) investigation of vocabulary learning among English as a second language (ESL) community college students have highlighted the benefit of pairing metacognitive strategies together with language strategies. This combination of components in Zaki and Ellis’s study led to improved reading comprehension and vocabulary learning among participants. A later study by Rasekh and Ranjbary (2003) achieved a similar outcome. In their 2003 study, English as a foreign language (EFL) college students in Iran received instruction in metacognitive strategies including self-questioning and self-evaluation to manage new and unknown vocabulary. The results of these and other studies have highlighted the value of self-regulatory strategies for the language learning process, and for vocabulary learning in particular.

L2 researchers have made another important observation with respect to strategies: that learners are truly strategic and successful not simply when they adopt a given set of activities, but rather when they select from a number of available activities those practices which are most appropriate and useful for their personal context (Chamot & Rubin, 1994; Tseng et al., 2006). Yet within the field of SLE, there does not seem to exist a reliable and comprehensive method of writing strategy instruction that fosters such thoughtful selection and personalization of
strategies. Despite the contributions of LLS studies, very little of the research has focused on writing strategies (Cohen, 2011). Definitional ambiguity, problems with assessment tools, and questions about the “reliability and robustness” of some LLS studies have slowed development in this area of research (Rubin et al., 2007, p. 152).

To fill the gap in SLE writing strategy instruction, it may be helpful to turn to another division of educational research—special education, in which strategy instruction has dominated much of the research on interventions for students with learning disabilities (LDs). Though SLE and special education have been somewhat reclusive in their research and implementation of instructional practices, these two important subsets of education could do well to converse and collaborate with one another in more intentional ways. While the profiles and needs of ELLs and students with LDs certainly vary, similarities between them do exist, and instructional approaches that prove effective in one circle may likewise effect positive outcomes in the other.

Drawing from the field of special education, a comprehensive evidence-based method of writing strategy instruction that integrates cognitive and metacognitive strategies is Graham and Harris’s (1996) Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD). Though originally designed to address the needs of young writers with LDs, SRSD has proven effective for many other kinds of students "by directly teaching the strategies, skills, knowledge, and motivational tools they need to become more skilled writers" (Graham, Harris, & McKeown, 2013, p. 409). Recognized by self-regulation researchers as “[t]he most extensively utilized self-regulated strategy package,” SRSD has an impressive research base to support its use (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997a, p. 93). In a meta-analysis of 39 SRSD studies, Graham (2006) reported large effect sizes for planning and revising strategies, whether applied to narrative or persuasive writing, and for students in both primary and secondary school. While the approach has been featured in over 100 studies to date (Harris, 2016), SRSD has been tested primarily on elementary and high school students, with only a few studies featuring postsecondary or adult learners. (These studies will be discussed in Chapter 2).

Several features of SRSD suggest that it would align well with SLE and prove beneficial for postsecondary ELLs. SRSD shares with LLS approaches the following components: awareness raising about students’ existing strategies, explicit instruction and modeling of new strategies, discussion of the application of these strategies, and the provision of opportunities for
practice (Cohen, 2011; Rubin et al., 2007). The design of both systems is to remove scaffolds gradually so that students can eventually perform independently (Graham et al., 2013; Rubin et al., 2007). However, whereas the tendency in LLS research has been to target isolated strategies, SRSD has been identified as “a training system in which multiple strategies are taught within a single package” (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 169). (The SRSD model will be more fully described in Chapter 3.) The comprehensive nature of the SRSD approach may make it a more suitable vehicle for teaching writing strategies since, as explained earlier, the ability to write effectively depends on the successful execution of many micro skills. Since L2 writers tend to encounter difficulties with several aspects of the writing process, a strategy instruction model that can target several subskills at once might be most effective.

One subskill that ought to be incorporated into a writing strategy intervention for ELLs is vocabulary building. Researchers have noted well that vocabulary proficiency is a key determinant of writing quality (Lee, 2003; Leki & Carson, 1994; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989). A strong command of vocabulary is especially important for L2 writers since, as Mizumoto and Takeuchi (2009) observed, “mastering vocabulary is one of the most challenging tasks that any learner faces while acquiring another language” (p. 426). As such, Oxford and Scarcella (1994) stressed the importance of teaching strategies that enable language learners to expand their vocabulary independently. Errors of a lexical nature are in fact considered by university professors to be the gravest of all writing errors among language learners, according to a study by Santos (1988). A writing treatment for postsecondary ELLs should therefore address this essential component. Thus far, SRSD has been used to teach a variety of writing strategies, including strategies for planning, writing and revising narrative and argumentative writing (Graham, 2006). The framework has also been adapted to teach strategies for spelling, reading, and mathematics (Luke, 2006). But the model has yet to be manipulated to teach vocabulary learning strategies. Fortunately, the SRSD model is adaptable so that a strategy for vocabulary development can be taught alongside planning, writing, and revision strategies.

**Research Questions**

With a rationale for the study established, several relevant questions surface. The focus of this thesis is to investigate the following questions:

1. Which strategies are postsecondary English language learners (ELLs) using to
accomplish writing tasks?

(2) How does instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) affect the writing performance of postsecondary ELLs?

(3) How does instruction in SRSD influence postsecondary ELLs’ sense of self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing?

A preliminary observation of the strategies that students are already using will better inform the research design and the interpretation of results. The effect of the intervention on writing performance is of course a critical measurement, but perhaps equally important is the intervention’s effect on students’ sense of self-efficacy. A study that features SRSD instruction should indeed examine changes in perceived self-efficacy, because one of the primary goals of SRSD is to aid learners in becoming more self-efficacious (Zito, Adkins, Gavins, Harris, & Graham, 2007). As mentioned earlier in the introduction and further explained in Chapter 2, aside from directly influencing writers’ behaviour, perceived self-efficacy impacts a host of determinants that, in turn, may ultimately affect behaviour—determinants which include motivation, self-regulatory behavior, and the ways in which individuals perceive and process taxing demands (Bandura, 1999). More specifically, Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997a) claim the existence of a link between writers’ sense of self-efficacy and both “their intrinsic motivation to write and their eventual literary outcomes” (p. 78). Thus, it will be of significant value to observe whether and to what extent the study effects changes in participants’ sense of self-efficacy as well as their attitudes towards writing.

**Positioning of the Researcher and Organization of the Literature Review**

As this chapter closes, it is important to provide context for the literature review that follows in Chapter 2. This literature review was conceptualized and organized with the expectation that participants in this study would include postsecondary ELLs with LDs. However, in the actual implementation of the study, the participant group consisted exclusively of ELLs who did not have an LD. This change was first of all due to the profiles of participants who self-selected for the study. As will be explained in Chapter 3, the inclusion criteria welcomed postsecondary ELLs regardless of whether they had an LD, and incidentally none who chose to participate had a disability. Besides, in retrospect I recognized that attempting to include those with and without learning disabilities would have made the management of this study more complex, and for the scope of a master’s thesis it proved ultimately wise to eliminate that
variable. As it was, the participant group already represented a considerable variety of linguistic and educational backgrounds and levels of English writing proficiency, resulting in different instructional needs and preferences for instructional pace.

Because of my original intention to study ELLs with learning disabilities, and also because of my experience in working with students with disabilities (further explained in my own profile in Chapter 4), the literature review is organized with an orientation that begins from the standpoint of special education and, more specifically, LD research. Despite not having ELLs with LDs in my study, I have chosen to present the literature review in its original configuration for two reasons. In my research and professional experience, I have noted several similarities between the challenges and instructional needs of ELLs and students with LDs (some of which were mentioned earlier in the introduction and others of which are mentioned in Chapter 4). Second, as expressed earlier in the introduction, I believe that the fields of second language education and special education stand to learn from one another and would benefit from more direct collaboration and dialogue. The literature review and the project itself are an attempt to bridge these two, somewhat disparate, circles within education. With an understanding of this orientation, we can proceed to the literature review in the next chapter.
Chapter 2: 
Literature Review

As explained in Chapter 1, because of my original intention to study English language learners (ELLs) with learning disabilities (LDs), this literature review was organized with an orientation that begins from the standpoint of LD research. In spite of having no ELLs with LDs as part of the actual participant group, I chose to maintain the original configuration of the review for reasons already described. The introduction also noted that Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) has been tested primarily on elementary and high school students. Comparatively few studies have featured postsecondary or adult learners, most of whom used English as their first language (L1). Consequently, this review references several SRSD studies that have involved student populations other than the target population (postsecondary ELLs with and without LDs). Included in the review are SRSD treatments and similar approaches that have succeeded among the following types of students: elementary and high school students, adult L1 speakers studying for purposes other than postsecondary (literacy learners or students studying to obtain their diploma), postsecondary L1 writers with disabilities, and postsecondary ELLs. Included in the latter are individuals studying English as a second language (ESL) and those studying English as a foreign language (EFL). While in other cases, the distinctions between ESL and EFL might be imperative, in the context of the current project, studies that feature either type of learner remain equally relevant. These findings will help to ascertain whether such treatments might be adapted for postsecondary ELLs with and without LDs. Finally, to close the chapter, Bandura’s (1986) concept of self-efficacy and its significance for the present study will be explained.

To begin, most modern approaches to supporting students with LDs are based on one of two models. One of the most current and well-recognized treatment models is known as cognitive-behavioural. This model is more comprehensive than other perspectives in that it accounts for “affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of LD” (Reid & Jacobson, 2010, p. 260). The cognitive-behavioural approach recognizes students as collaborators in their learning and prioritizes teaching students to manage their behaviours and thoughts to achieve academic success (Reid & Jacobson, 2010). To date, SRSD is classed among the most effective approaches that have been born out of the cognitive-behavioural model (Reid & Jacobson, 2010). Through
the SRSD method, students receive explicit instruction in specific writing strategies; the knowledge required to employ these strategies; and techniques to regulate these strategies along with their own behaviour (Graham et al., 2013). The six-stage model and its theoretical basis are further delineated in Chapter 3. The remainder of the current chapter is devoted to studies that support the effectiveness of this approach.

**Studies on Primary and Secondary Students**

Evidence for the success of SRSD comes from numerous studies, a vast majority of which have focused on participants in elementary or secondary school. These results were largely summarized in a recent meta-analysis by Graham et al. (2013) which interpreted the results of 18 SRSD studies. The meta-analysis found SRSD to be equally effective with both younger (elementary-aged) and older (middle and secondary school) students (Graham et al., 2013). The study further reported significant effect sizes (ESs) for specific subgroups of students. Average ESs were statistically significant for all sub-categories of students analyzed—students who have difficulty writing, students with Emotional Behavioural Disorder, students with ADHD, and average students. The most significant results, however, were observed among students with LDs, with a calculated effect size of 2.37 at post-test for writing quality. This calculation was the largest of all ESs reported in the meta-analysis, which suggests that students with LDs, the students for whom this strategy was originally designed, may make the most substantial gains.

While a majority of SRSD studies have featured L1 writers in primary and secondary grades, some studies have introduced SRSD to second language (L2) students with success. For instance, Mastan, Maarof, and Embi (2017) tested an 8-12 week SRSD intervention on 36 Malaysian ESL students at the upper secondary school level. They found a statistically significant increase in the writing scores of students who received the SRSD treatment as compared with a control group that did not receive the instruction. Such studies are considerably less common, however, than SRSD studies that have featured L1 writers in primary or secondary grades.

**Studies on Adult L1 Students Studying for Purposes Other than Postsecondary**

Although most research on SRSD and other models of strategy instruction has focused on elementary and secondary school students (Graham & Perin, 2007), a smaller number of studies
have featured adult learners studying in their L1. For instance, a study by Berry and Mason (2010) introduced SRSD to a small group of adult writers with written expression difficulties in a General Equivalency Diploma preparation class. The intervention included explicit instruction in three strategies: POW (Pick an idea, Organize, Write and say more); TREE (Topic sentence, Reasons, Explanation, Ending); and COPS (Capitalize, Organize, Punctuate, [ensure that the draft makes] Sense) (Berry & Mason, 2010). The treatment incorporated self-instruction, goal-setting, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement, all of which are components of self-regulation. Results included "longer, more complete, and more organized essays" (Berry & Mason, 2010, p. 134). Gains were most apparent in the organization of their texts, as measured by the number of essay parts and transition words employed. The authors of the study concluded that their results "point to the robust effect of SRSD strategies in writing for students of all ages with and without disabilities" (p. 135). Berry and Mason suggested, however, that future research involve a larger student sample and explore SRSD in a postsecondary context for purposes other than test preparation.

Though not labeled as an SRSD approach, a similar study by MacArthur and Lembo (2009) explored the effects of individualized writing and metacognitive strategy instruction on adult L1 literacy learners. Participants learned strategies for planning, writing, and revising persuasive papers alongside strategies for goal setting and self-evaluation. The three students who completed the study showed noticeable improvements in overall quality and essay organization. The participants were not L2 but, rather, native English speakers who did not report having a learning disability. Nonetheless, the results suggest that this type of writing instruction “may prove to be as effective in adult education as it is with younger struggling writers” (MacArthur & Lembo, 2009, p. 1036).

Studies on Postsecondary Students with Disabilities

More recently, Woods-Groves et al. (2015) conducted a study on the effects of another kind of strategy instruction on postsecondary writers with developmental disabilities. Though the strategy was tested on students with developmental disabilities rather than learning disabilities, and on L1 rather than L2 writers, the encouraging results point to an approach that might prove effective for other types of students with written expression difficulties. The sample size for the study consisted of 19 postsecondary students. Students were taught the EDIT strategy, a tool
designed to help students identify and correct grammatical errors in their work with the use of a computer (Woods-Groves et al., 2015). The program included the following steps: "(1) Enter your first draft; (2) Do a spell check; (3) Interrogate yourself using the capitalization, overall appearance, punctuation, and spelling (COPS) questions, and (4) Type in corrections and run the spell checker" (Woods-Groves et al., 2015, p. 97).

The results of Woods-Groves et al.’s testing favoured the treatment group, who corrected 28.4% more overall appearance errors and 47.8% more punctuation errors than the control group. Though the results suggest that the EDIT strategy may benefit postsecondary students who have disabilities that affect written expression, one key limitation of the study is that the passages that participants corrected were provided by the instructor. Future studies would need to examine whether students can effectively apply the same editing skills to their own compositions (Woods-Groves et al., 2015).

Torres (2016) also investigated the effects of SRSD on postsecondary students with various disabilities. Participants were 10 college students, all of whom had at least one disability and half of whom were considered Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD), meaning “students who have cultural or linguistic backgrounds that are different from the mainstream or majority population” (Torres, 2016, p. 4). Most of these CLD students were considered to have limited English proficiency. The intervention, conducted in a 2-week workshop format, was adapted using a method called CREATE (Culturally Responsive and Evidence-based Approach to Excellence) in Writing to include culturally responsive and linguistically supportive elements. Findings included statistically significant gains in fluency and overall writing quality, as well as more positive self-perceptions of the students as writers.

Studies on Postsecondary ELLs

A small number of researchers within the field of Second Language Education (SLE) have begun to explore the effects of SRSD and other forms of writing strategy instruction on postsecondary learners of English. A notable study within this category, though not directly implementing SRSD but fostering self-regulation skills nonetheless, was that of Jun (2012). Jun’s participants were 5 adults with Korean as their first language, none of whom had learning disabilities. The students were not enrolled in a postsecondary institution at an English-speaking country; rather, they were graduates or postsecondary students from South Korea studying
English in Canada at the time of Jun’s study. Jun’s treatment, designed to help students resolve lexical issues in their writing, combined the Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) skills model of Zimmerman, Bonner and Kovach (1996) with targeted vocabulary instruction. The SRL approach has some overlap with SRSD in that it includes planning, monitoring and evaluative phases and uses explicit instruction and feedback to facilitate the end goal of independent mastery (Zimmerman et al., 1996). As Graham and Harris (1997) have stressed, however, researchers of self-regulation represent a variety of theoretical backgrounds, and these theoretical emphases have contributed to differences in their definitions and understandings of self-regulation. The model used by Jun and proposed by Zimmerman and colleagues recognizes three main categories of self-regulation—behavioural, environmental, and personal—and assigns equal importance to each. This model also stresses the role of self-monitoring loops and the way in which these can affect a writer’s sense of self-efficacy (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997b).

Jun’s (2012) study was organized in two phases conducted over 9 weeks. The first phase focused on identifying the lexical difficulties of participants. The second was devoted to individually teaching writing strategies which focused on vocabulary development and developing SRL skills as each student wrote and revised 3 argumentative essays. The treatment equipped participants to better formulate language for their purposes, and consequently both their sense of self-efficacy and quality of writing improved. Jun concluded his study by reiterating that “[e]quipping the participants with SRL skills seemed essential for developing their writing skills in that writing itself requires highly self-regulatory behaviours” (p. 236). The findings also suggest that adult ELLs may benefit significantly from instruction that teaches self-regulatory skills alongside explicit writing and vocabulary development.

Other writing strategy studies involving postsecondary ELLs have used SRSD as their model. One such study is that of Vaddapalli and Woerner (2012), who investigated the effects of an SRSD intervention on the planning and organization of EFL students’ opinion essays. Participants were Arabic L1 speakers studying at a university in Oman. Vaddapalli and Woerner’s findings revealed considerable gains in organization and vocabulary, suggesting that SRSD can be an effective method of instruction for struggling L2 writers at the university level. However, given that most papers written by postsecondary students (in North American universities, at least) are not opinion essays but rather source-based, argumentative papers, it
would be important to know whether similar results might be produced with research papers, for example.

Another SRSD study featuring postsecondary EFL students was conducted by Baghbadorania and Roohani (2014). Participants were 60 undergraduates studying at universities in Iran. Half of the participants were placed in a control group which received non-SRSD writing instruction; the other half received instruction in the POW and TREE strategies (see Berry and Mason’s 2010 study above) through the SRSD model. While both groups improved significantly in their persuasive writing ability, the SRSD group demonstrated greater gains, particularly with respect to content, coherence, organization, sentence construction, and vocabulary. Yet again, these favourable results were evidenced in a genre other than source-based papers: persuasive essays. The authors concluded from the results that the inclusion of self-regulating elements in writing instruction enables students to achieve L2 writing competence more quickly.

Virtually the same strategies as those used by Baghbadorania and Roohani (2014) were featured in an SRSD study by Kindle and Butterfield (2017). Kindle and Butterfield introduced 29 undergraduate ELLs in Cameroon to the POWER (same as POW, but with the addition of Edit and Revise) and TREE strategies. Taught in a total of 18 instructional hours over 8 weeks, the strategies were used to write 5-paragraph persuasive essays. Though some students’ performance declined, most students demonstrated overall improvement in their writing and reported an increased sense of self-efficacy, adding further support to the belief that SRSD instruction holds great value for L2 writers at the postsecondary level.

Summary of SRSD Studies

To review, the literature supports the exploration of SRSD among postsecondary ELLs with and without LDs. SRSD and similar approaches already have a strong evidence base among elementary and secondary students, as evidenced in recent meta-analyses. Findings were also presented to demonstrate the effectiveness of SRSD (and similar models of writing strategy instruction) among other student populations: English L1 adult learners with and without written expression difficulties, postsecondary students with disabilities (some of whom were CLD), and postsecondary ELLs. Though studies on the target population are few, taken together, these results indicate that postsecondary ELLs with and without LDs may gain from SRSD instruction that targets their argumentative writing skills.
Self-Efficacy and its Importance for Postsecondary ELL Writers

To close this chapter, self-efficacy beliefs and their significance for postsecondary ELL writers should be accented. Proposed by Bandura (1986), self-efficacy beliefs (or perceptions of self-efficacy) can be understood as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (p. 391). As indicated in the introduction, self-efficacy beliefs influence students’ behavior both directly and indirectly, by affecting a host of other determinants that contribute to behavior (Bandura, 1986). Among those determinants are self-regulatory behavior and motivation (Bandura, 1986), two important foci for SRSD instruction. Self-efficacy beliefs impact individuals’ perception and processing of taxing demands. This in turn influences the extent to which individuals are vulnerable to anxious or depressive feelings, and such feelings can ultimately hamper functioning (Bandura, 1986). Because of the way in which self-efficacy beliefs so strongly influence human functioning, their impact on the performance of postsecondary ELL writers should be recognized.

As expressed in the introduction, writing in a second language presents a host of challenges for students, particularly for those studying at the postsecondary level. Judgments of their own capabilities as writers may be tested due to the difficulties they encounter in attempting to compose quality academic text. While Bandura did not study L2 writers specifically, his observations of human functioning imply that to have the greatest chance of success as writers, postsecondary L2 students must possess not only tangible skills but also positive perceptions of their abilities to execute those skills.

Self-efficacy is central to Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT), which recognizes human functioning as a product of the reciprocal relationship between three main facets: behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events. Through this theory Bandura (1999) asserts that “[p]eople are not only knowers and performers. They are also self-reactors with a capacity to motivate, guide and regulate their activities” (p. 27). Self-regulation in fact forms another integral component of SCT. Bandura (1986) explained that once an individual has set personal standards, any perceived differences between those standards and actual performance may prompt “evaluative self-reactions” which subsequently affect future behavior (p. 20). However, in order to regulate their efforts effectively, people must have
sufficient information in order to set suitable standards (Bandura, 1986). In the case of postsecondary ELLs, SRSD instruction may help writers to establish such standards for themselves.

According to Bandura (1977, 1986), perceptions of self-efficacy are derived from four sources. The most influential of these are mastery experiences—direct experiences in which an individual masters something or controls an environment successfully, bolstering one’s confidence in that particular arena (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy beliefs can also be promoted through vicarious experiences: Watching others succeed by sustained effort generates the belief that one can do the same (Bandura, 1986). Third, through verbal persuasion, influential people may convince others that they are capable of mastery. Finally, Bandura added, an individual’s physiological state (feelings of stress, for instance) can provide information that contributes to a person’s sense of self-efficacy. In theory, an SRSD intervention should contribute to building students’ sense of self-efficacy since it acts as a vehicle for at least the first three of these sources. As will be explained more thoroughly in Chapter 3, the final goal of SRSD is independent mastery, and earlier stages of the process involve modeling successful writing habits and providing feedback and encouragement. Thus, one might expect that an intervention of this kind would provide the sources of input needed to promote positive perceptions of writers’ self-efficacy.

Having now situated the study within the body of literature, I will proceed in Chapter 3 to outline the methodology for the project.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This case study was designed to explore the effect of a Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) treatment on the writing performance, sense of self-efficacy, and attitudes towards writing of a small group of postsecondary English Language Learners (ELLs). This chapter will outline the theoretical basis for SRSD, the typical components of this approach, and my own implementation of the teaching model. A rationale for the case study approach will be articulated along with other details of the project, including the class schedule and mixed methods design for data collection. We turn, now, to a survey of the theories that have contributed to the design of SRSD.

SRSD Framework

Theoretical basis.

SRSD (Graham & Harris, 1996) is a teaching model that was founded and continues to be informed by a combination of theories which reflect the complexity of the writing process (Gillespie Rouse & Collins, 2016). While some of these theories might be perceived by others as incompatible, Harris and Graham (2017) maintain that “triangulation across and integration of the evidence from various theories, perspectives and lines of research” is critical to the formation of effective teaching methods (p. 121). They argue that learning is too complex to be encapsulated in a single theory, and that the best components of various theories should be woven together to produce a robust teaching model. The contributions of several theories to SRSD will be described here, although this list reflects only a fraction of the influences.

Among the theories that have informed the development of SRSD are cognitive-behavioral models. For instance, Meichenbaum’s (1977) cognitive-behavioral intervention model emphasizes Socratic dialogue and several stages of intervention including interactive learning, ideas which were incorporated into SRSD. The approach was also shaped by cognitive models of writing such as those of Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) and Flower and Hayes (1981), who recognized the role of working memory in the writing process. These scholars noted that writing involves such complex micro skills as the ability to draw from one’s knowledge of the topic
while recalling the process of writing from long-term memory. Building on these findings, SRSD intentionally reduces demands on working memory by teaching strategy steps to the point of automaticity (Jacobson & Reid, 2010). SRSD was also shaped by Hayes’ (1996) revised model, which highlights the roles of motivation and affect in writing (Gillespie Rouse & Collins, 2016). A major goal of SRSD is to build students’ confidence as writers and to help them to think more positively about writing.

Together with cognitive theories, constructivist theories have contributed significantly to the design of SRSD. Constructivists perceive the roles of both the individual student and social interaction as critical to learning, and assert that learners participate in shaping meaning through the linguistic information made available to them. These facets of constructivism are housed in SRSD. The SRSD instructor cultivates an atmosphere of cooperative learning by leading group discussions about writing strategies, for example. Yet in this same process, the instructor gives attention to individuals and tailors instruction to suit the unique needs and pace of each student. The influence of social constructivism in particular is evident in that strategy instruction models such as SRSD recognize students as collaborators and agents in their learning (Reid & Jacobson, 2010; Harris et al., 2003). In fact, Harris and Graham (2017) attribute much of their design to the ideas of a group of social constructivists from the former USSR including Vygotsky (1978), whose sociocultural theory has contributed significantly to educational psychology. A hallmark of Vygotsky’s theory is the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which can be understood as the difference between learners’ current competence and their potential. Described in other terms, the ZPD represents tasks that a learner cannot yet accomplish alone but, rather, with the help of a more experienced teacher (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD concept undergirds SRSD instruction since the approach involves modelling writing tasks and scaffolding support until learners can work independently.

Added to these influences are theories about metacognition, self-control, and self-regulation. Harris and Graham (2017) cite Brown, Campione and Day (1981) as being among those who established the value of “informed instruction” and metacognitive practices for students. Self-regulation components such as self-monitoring are central to the design of SRSD. These components help to facilitate independence and encourage the maintenance and generalization of strategies (Graham, 2006; MacArthur & Lembo, 2009; MacArthur et al., 2012).
Graham and Harris’s (1996) incorporation of elements from a variety of educational theories has resulted in a robust instructional approach. What follows is a description of the SRSD model drawn from these theories and upon which the current project is based.

**SRSD model.**

SRSD involves six stages, each of which can be adapted, skipped or revisited according to student need (Graham et al., 2013). Instruction is criterion- rather than time-based, meaning that students do not proceed to a new stage of instruction until they have mastered the previous one. The first stage focuses on the development of background knowledge. In this stage, instructor and students will read together and analyze model texts. The instructor teaches relevant vocabulary. He or she will ask students to reflect on whether they have any negative thoughts about their writing abilities and then teach them how to recast those negative self-concepts. In the second stage, participants discuss their current writing strategies and performance, and then identify the target writing strategy. The instructor introduces mnemonics to facilitate memorization of the strategy. Together, instructor and students discuss the benefits of the target strategy and consider its applications (Graham et al., 2013).

In the third stage of SRSD, participants receive modeled instruction in the target writing strategy alongside self-regulation strategies (Graham et al., 2013). While composing a paper, the teacher self-instructs aloud, striving to match the students' language. This script includes several elements:

1. Problem definition ("What is it I have to do here?")
2. Focusing attention and planning ("I have to concentrate. First I need to... Then...")
3. Strategy step statements ("I need to write down my strategy reminder.")
4. Self-evaluation and error correcting ("Have I used all my parts? Oops, I missed one, better add it.")
5. Coping and self-control ("I can handle this if I go slow and take my time.")
6. Self-reinforcement ("I like this ending!") (Graham et al., 2013, p. 410)

Along with these components, the instructor sets goals aloud and evaluates the extent to which those goals have been reached. Students then formulate and record their own personalized instructions.
Next, students take time to memorize their individualized instructions. Once the memorization process is complete, students proceed to the fifth stage, which involves receiving scaffolded support and feedback on both their writing progress and their mastery of strategies. Writing experiences generally begin as collaborative and move towards independent practice. The instructor supplies prompts to facilitate student success and gradually fades support. The final stage and goal of the intervention is independent performance.

Throughout each stage of the intervention, the instructor promotes maintenance and generalization of the strategy. Maintenance can be facilitated by asking students to consider a broader application of the strategy, by assigning such a task for homework, and by offering opportunities for review (Graham et al., 2013). This six-stage model is flexible in that it can be used to teach a wide variety of planning, composing, and revising strategies to students. The specific adaptation and implementation of Graham and Harris’s (1996) model for this study will be described next.

**SRSD implementation.**

In the present study, the six-stage SRSD model was employed to teach techniques for writing effective research papers, with two strategic modifications made at the outset of the intervention. A change was made to the sequence of steps, so that instead of having students immediately personalize and memorize strategy steps after seeing them modeled, I encouraged them to have some practice with each strategy and to “try them on for size” before personalizing the steps and committing them to memory. It seemed counterintuitive to expect students to authentically personalize a strategy and feel motivated to commit the strategy to memory without first testing it. Instead, I gave them the opportunity to practice and gain familiarity with the strategy first. This was an intentional departure from Graham and Harris’s (1996) sequence of steps.

Another purposeful adaptation of the SRSD framework lay in the approach to memorization. While Graham and Harris’s (1996) model would have students write and memorize a lengthy script in keeping with the instructor’s think-aloud, it seemed that requiring mature students to craft and memorize a detailed script could be perceived as juvenile and excessive. I believed it would be sufficient to have students familiarize themselves with the
strategies, personalize the steps, and then memorize the acronyms associated with each. This approach seemed more realistic and age-appropriate for this participant group.

This modified SRSD framework was used to teach strategies for planning, writing and revising research papers along with strategies for vocabulary expansion. The latter was recognized as indispensable since the acquisition of vocabulary has been found to be one of the most challenging aspects (if not indeed the most challenging aspect) of language learning (Lewis, 1993; Mizumoto & Takeuchi, 2009; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). Outlined below are the selected strategies, followed by the intervention schedule.

Selected writing strategies. The target writing strategies were informed by feedback collected from the pre-intervention questionnaire and interview, a midpoint survey, observations, and informal discussions with participants. Here, a significant modification to my original design was made that, unlike the other modifications described above, had not been planned at the outset but occurred during the course of the intervention. My intent had been to facilitate the acquisition of two or at most three strategy sets (vocabulary building and a research process strategy to start, followed by a strategy for paragraph structure or revision only if all students seemed ready to proceed, and if time permitted). However, as the classes unfolded, and as students offered feedback on the lessons, it seemed that a compromise would be needed to sustain interest. As an instructor, I was influenced by the ongoing tension between my preference to prioritize reinforcing fewer strategies and my wish to satisfy demands for new content. As a result, I introduced more strategy sets than I had planned for this intervention. The outcomes of this modification will be explored later in the discussion (Chapter 6).

Based on participants’ interests and needs, the following strategies were introduced using the SRSD model:

- **DIRT** for building vocabulary: **D**evelop a bank of common academic words and phrases, **I**nclude keywords and technical terms, **R**eplace repetitive words, **T**ie it to something you know
- **STBARTS** for engaging in the research and writing process: Make **S**ense of the task and set a schedule, **T**hink a **B**rainstorm, **A**sk a good research question, **R**ead relevant sources, **T**ake good notes, **S**ynthesize
- MAD criteria for developing research questions and thesis statements (summary statements that present one’s argument): Manageable, Arguable, Defensible
- TEST for structuring essays and paragraphs: Thesis statement (and introduction) or Topic sentence, Evidence and Explanations, Summary, Transitions
- UP3C for paraphrasing: Understand the passage, Put away the source, Change the wording and sentence structure, Compare with the original, Credit the source
- STAR for revising: Substitute, Take away, Add, Rearrange

For further details on the selected strategies, including supplementary teaching materials used in the lessons, see Appendix 1. The schedule of classes for the intervention is delineated next.

*Schedule of classes.* The core of the intervention included 12 classes, 3 hours each, held twice per week over a six-week period. With few exceptions, each class began with a brief review of the previous lesson’s material. The review was followed by a new or continued lesson and then a short break halfway through the class. The second part of the class was typically devoted to practicing the focus strategy, asking questions, and completing journal entries. An increasingly larger part of the latter classes (the final four classes especially) was devoted to strategy practice and individual feedback as students applied the strategies to a final research paper. A basic overview of the class schedule is outlined in Table 1. For a more detailed makeup of each lesson, see Appendix 1.1.

Table 1
*Class Schedule and Overview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class and Date</th>
<th>Lesson Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: June 4</td>
<td>Introduction and welcome to the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: June 6</td>
<td>Developing background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussing current writing strategies and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: June 11</td>
<td>Identifying and learning target writing strategies:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>DIRT</strong> strategy for vocabulary building (to be practiced at each session)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: June 13</td>
<td>Learning STBARTS research process strategy and MAD sub-strategy for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: June 18</td>
<td>Practicing STBARTS and MAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: June 20</td>
<td>Practicing and personalizing STBARTS and MAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: June 25</td>
<td>Learning TEST strategy for paragraph structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: June 27</td>
<td>Practicing and personalizing TEST strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: July 4</td>
<td>Applying DIRT, STBARTS, MAD and TEST strategies to final research paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: July 9</td>
<td>Applying strategies to final research paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11: July 11</td>
<td>Applying strategies to final research paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12: July 16</td>
<td>Applying strategies to final research paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample lesson. As a means of illustrating the way in which classes were conducted, the following is a sample script of the lesson on using TEST for essay structure (Class 6). This lesson took place during the second half of the class, after students had spent time practicing and personalizing STBARTS and MAD strategies while I circulated the room, monitoring and guiding them individually.

Introducing the target writing strategy

“For the rest of today’s class we will be discussing a writing strategy for organizing your essay. The strategy is called TEST. I’ll teach you a trick for remembering the strategy. After I’ve introduced the steps of the strategy to you, we’ll talk about why these are useful and how we might apply them to our work.”
Over the next several classes, we will have more opportunities to practice this together, but for today, I want you to have an overall idea of how this strategy works, and how it can be useful to you. Does that make sense?

In our earlier classes, you shared with me some of the ways in which you organize your ideas during the writing process. Some of you mentioned that you create a rough outline by listing out your points or evidence, some of you like to write your introduction first to know where you are going with your ideas, and some of you are accustomed to writing freely first and then reviewing what you wrote to create a structure later. However you do it, organizing information in an essay is a task that most students find challenging, but this strategy may help you to accomplish this task more easily and effectively.

Why is this important? Well, as writer I like to think of myself as a kind of tour guide, leading my reader through a journey of discovery as he or she reads about my topic. It’s my job to make sure that the journey goes as smoothly as possible, and that the route is a logical one. That’s why organization is so important.

To develop a good structure or organization for a paper, I like to use a strategy called TEST. Today I’m going to show you how the TEST strategy works on a large scale, for the structure of an essay. But this acronym can also be used to organize writing on a smaller scale, for the structure of a paragraph. Next class, we’ll look at how it works on that smaller scale. Now, let’s see how we can use TEST for essay organization by breaking down this strategy step-by-step.”

*Explaining the “T” in TEST for essay structure: Thesis statement (and introduction)*

“You might find your own trick for remembering this strategy, but the way I remember the acronym is this: It’s important for me to check that my paragraphs and essays pass the TEST. [Write this mnemonic on the board.] So, let’s apply this acronym first to the big structure, the structure of the essay as a whole. On his level, the ‘T’ stands for ‘Thesis statement.’” [Write “T—Thesis statement” on the board.]

How would you explain what a thesis statement is, to someone who doesn’t know? [Invite responses.] Yes, the thesis represents your big idea. It’s typically a one- or two-sentence statement that tells your readers exactly what you think they should know. A
thesis is not a topic, but a statement or opinion about the topic. Remember when we discussed the STBARTS strategy, and we talked about A—asking a good research question? And remember what we said, that the answer to your question, in a sentence or two, will usually be your thesis.

Now where would we normally place a thesis in a paper? This depends to some extent on the discipline we are writing for. As a general rule, though, where does it appear? That’s right, it often appears at the end of the introductory paragraph.

How do we know if our thesis is good? Well, remember that sub-strategy we talked about along with STBARTS? This is where MAD comes in. Why don’t we review the MAD strategy briefly. The MAD strategy gives us criteria to help us first create a good research question, and then develop a good thesis statement. As a review, what does MAD stand for?

Manageable: It should be narrow enough that you can properly answer it with the space you have.
Arguable: Unless you are writing a purely expository (informational) essay, the question (and as a result the thesis) should be one that not everyone will feel the same way about.
Defensible: The question needs to be one that you will be able to defend your answer to.

Now let’s talk for a few minutes about the introduction, since this is where the thesis will normally be situated in a paper. While it is most important to have a thesis drafted in my essay outline, if I have other ideas to include in my introduction, I will normally jot those down, too, so I can use them later. In an introduction, what are we trying to accomplish? Yes, we want to establish the importance of the topic, we want to give the reader a reason to continue reading, we probably want to contextualize the topic. How
do we do these things? Yes, we might use some kind of hook, depending on the nature of
the topic and what might be customary for your discipline. This is where reading model
papers is helpful once again. We can read papers within our field and look at how authors
introduce their topics. For example, it might be effective to include a relevant statistic.
Sometimes an analogy, an anecdote or even a quote can do the trick. So if, as I’m doing
my research, I come across something that could be useful for the introduction, I will jot
that down.

Now, you can create a different system for outlining the structure of your essay, but I like
to use a template such as this one. [Show essay outline template (Appendix 1.8) on
board.] You are welcome to use this template if you like. You can find it in our shared
folder. OK, if there are no questions, let’s continue on with the next part of the strategy
now."

*Introducing the “E” in TEST: Evidence and Explanations*

“So we said that the ‘T’ is for thesis. Can you guess what the ‘E’ stands for? [Invite
responses.]

The ‘E’ in the essay represents the core of your paper which is the explanations and
evidence (or proof) for the thesis statement or that opinion you have about the topic.
Every paragraph in between the introduction and conclusion is part of your ‘E,’ and it
takes some piece of your thesis and zooms in on it. These ‘E’ paragraphs will usually
include combinations of your own ideas and logic, support from your research, and
examples to illustrate your points. When I am drafting an outline for my paper, using a
template like this one, I will try to include the main points of explanation or evidence for
my thesis statement. Now, keep in mind that a point isn’t always equal to a paragraph.
Some points may be more complex and require more than one paragraph to spell out
properly. But at this stage of writing, I won’t worry too much about that. For now, I am
just trying to get down the main ideas.

Now, I may play around a bit with the order I want to present those ideas in. What are
some of the organizational patterns you’ve used for your research papers? Yes, depending
on the topic and my purpose for the paper, I might arrange ideas in chronological order,
in climactic order (finishing with my most important reason or strongest proof), or in a different order, such as cause and effect or a point-by-point comparison. The order isn’t fixed at this point in the process, and you can always rearrange ideas later, but it may be less work for you later on if you make those considerations now.”

*Introducing the “S” in TEST: Summary*

“Now, can anyone guess what the ‘S’ stands for? The ‘S’ is for summary. When we are looking at the big structure of an essay, the summary is also known as the conclusion. The summary is an essential part of the essay, because it’s your opportunity to recap the important ideas and leave your reader with a final thought, something that leaves a good lasting impression, even something that you want to leave your reader to chew on. Some of the same techniques that are useful in an introduction can be used to close off a paper, like a quote, an illustration, or maybe a statement of the topic’s broader significance. Remember the model essay we read about counsellors and PTSD? If you recall, one of the things we liked about that paper was the conclusion, and the way that the writer panned out to show how the topic was significant on a larger scale. So here, at this stage, if I have ideas I might want to put in the conclusion or summary, I’ll include these in my template, too.”

*Briefly introduce the “T” in TEST: Transitions*

“Now for the last letter in the TEST strategy for essay structure. What do you think the last ‘T’ represents? The last ‘T’ stands for transitions. How would you explain a “transition” to someone? In writing, a transition is a word or phrase that helps to signal connections between ideas. In an essay, it is important to have transitions at the beginning of paragraphs to show how they connect to the ideas of the previous paragraph. We also use the same kinds of transitions within paragraphs as well.

Now, transitions aren’t something you need to be concerned about when you are at the stage of outlining your paper. You just need to remember to build these in later, when you start to draft your paragraphs. We will look at more examples of these when I model the strategy for you, but you are probably familiar with some of them. First, there are the standard transitional phrases. Which ones do you know? [Invite responses.] However,
moreover, also, in addition… yes. Next class I will bring you a tip sheet that includes many of these common words (Appendix 1.9). Another simple way to create transitions is by repeating key words or ideas and linking them to the next thought. Again, we’ll look at these more closely when we start writing paragraphs.”

**Discussing the benefits of the strategy and when to apply it**

“Now that you have an overview of this strategy, let’s talk about why and when we might use it. Why might you choose to use this strategy when you write?”

[Record responses on board, for example: It saves time when you know the parts; it helps you to make sure you aren’t missing anything.]

“Those are all great reasons. Now, when do you think you might use these strategies in your studies?”

[Jot down responses on board, for example: I could use these strategies any time I am writing, but especially when I am writing a longer paper and really need to keep a clear structure to make sure I don’t wander in my paper.]

**Reviewing and modeling the strategy**

Now, I’m going to model for you how I would use this strategy. I’ve been using the example of this paper I am writing on mental health and the church. So, I’m going to pull up the notes that I’ve organized on the topic. Because I used the notetaking template from the STBARTS strategy, my research is already somewhat organized and categorized according to sub-points. So these are actually the first things I will input into my TEST template, even though this represents the “E” in the strategy. You might find that your brain works a bit differently, but I find it helpful to look at all of my points together before I draft my thesis, which is why I’m doing this part first.

So, I’m thinking about my topic and my audience and I need to choose a strategic pattern of organization for these points. Looking at these four points, I guess I have a couple of options. I could organize them from the least to the most important, but I’m not sure if that would be the most suitable pattern. The research question I’m trying to answer is
“What is the role of the church in promoting mental health?” When I look at my points, it actually seems like there is a chronology of some kind. Certain things need to happen before the church can do other things. So I can present the points in order from what needs to be done first to what finally needs to happen. I will copy and paste each point from my notes into the template, in the “E” section, in chronological order. Now that I can see all of the points laid out on the template, I can write a statement that answers my question. Writing a thesis statement is something that can stress me out sometimes, but it helps if I remember that this is a working thesis statement, meaning that it’s not set in stone and I can tweak it at any point. So here’s what I’m going to write in the “T” section for now: ‘To promote mental health, the church should first acknowledge and remove the stigma by initiating regular conversations about mental health. It should also take preventative measures which include offering education to both church leaders and congregants.’ [Type this statement into the template.]

Now, let’s see, do I have anything interesting from my research to include in my introduction? Hmm… I remember reading a statistic about how many people are affected by mental health problems in Canada. That might be a good way to establish the significance of the topic, in my introduction. Let me look through my notes… Oh, there it is—1 in 5 people are affected. I’ll type that into the thesis and introduction section.

Okay, onto the ‘S’ for summary… I don’t think I have any ideas for that right now, so I’m going to leave that and come back to it after. And the other ‘T,’ that’s for transitions, which I can think about later on.”

Reviewing the strategy and previewing the next class

“So that is the TEST strategy for essay structure, in brief. Are there any questions about what we’ve discussed so far? Okay, let’s review what we talked about. [Briefly review TEST strategy for essay structure.]

Next class, we are going to look at more examples, then see how the TEST strategy can be adapted on a smaller scale to structure your paragraphs. The steps are very similar to the ones we discussed today. Are there any questions?”
Thus far, this chapter has supplied the theoretical framework, together with a detailed explanation of the SRSD model and the manner in which it was implemented in the study. With this foundation laid, the next section will provide a rationale for the case study design, a description of the participants, and an explanation of the method by which they were recruited.

**Case Study**

**Rationale for case study.**

A case study appeared to be the most appropriate method for this project for a few reasons. Case studies allow for in-depth study of individual learners and enable researchers to examine “the complexities of particular cases in their particular contexts” (Johnson, 1993, p. 7). Since one of the features of SRSD instruction is that it is tailored to meet the needs of individuals, investigating the unique profiles of students and their responses to the treatment seemed most fitting. Though some generalizations can be made about language learners, each has a distinct profile that may impact the learning process and outcomes differently. Variables such as the students’ language proficiency, beliefs about language learning, cultural differences, educational history, and motivation may affect the nature and outcomes of strategy instruction (Rees-Miller, 1993). The target demographic is by nature a highly heterogeneous group, thereby justifying the examination of each case and its particularities apart from the other participants.

**Participants.**

Participants in this case study were six English language learners enrolled in master’s level courses at a small university in southwestern Ontario. The inclusion criteria were that students be enrolled in an undergraduate or a graduate program, be at least 18 years of age, and have a first language other than English. Students of any linguistic background, at any level of English proficiency, and at any stage of undergraduate or graduate study were invited to participate. That all participants were ultimately graduate level students was coincidental; however, such an outcome was not surprising since a notably higher percentage of second language (L2) students at the university were enrolled in graduate programs as opposed to undergraduate. As indicated in the introduction, the original hope was that included among the participants would be ELLs with learning disabilities (LDs); however, none of the students who enrolled in the study had a diagnosed disability.
Recruitment.

To recruit participants for the study, an advertisement was posted on information boards at the partnering university college. In addition to circulating this advertisement throughout the campus, I sent a recruitment email to L2 students who had accessed writing services at the institution. These students were identified as potential candidates for the study, given that they were ELLs and many of them had demonstrated an interest in refining their writing through any means possible. Thus, I surmised that some of these students might welcome the opportunity to augment their writing skills through the study.

The poster advertisement and recruitment email message were composed in clear and simple terms to ensure that students understood their rights and responsibilities if they chose to participate in the study. In all recruitment materials, as well as in the information session and consent forms which followed (see Appendix 3), the voluntary nature of the study was made clear to potential participants. I informed interested students of their rights to confidentiality and explained the way in which personal information would be protected, by using pseudonyms, for example.

The group was self-selected, as those who ultimately chose to enroll satisfied the criteria and the minimum number of participants I had hoped to recruit, so I did not have to exclude any interested participants. All of the participants hoped to refine their writing skills and several were particularly interested in the study because of the good rapport already established between us through the school’s writing centre. Regardless of the extent to which I felt I knew any particular student, I was careful to set aside preconceived notions and impartially review their baseline tests and initial writing samples to determine a starting point for each student. I knew that even in the case of students with whom I already had an existing working relationship, I had much to learn about them as writers and as individuals, and I looked forward to being surprised by my discoveries about each of them during the course of the study.

Having articulated the basis for the case study, the makeup of participants, and the details of recruitment, I will now explain the means of data collection for the project.
Mixed Methods Design for Data Collection

The project was organized into three main parts, with data gathered at each stage from pre- through to post-intervention. To support a more rich and credible set of data than what might be garnered through one method alone, methodological triangulation was employed (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Methodological triangulation entails using multiple measures of obtaining data to support the validity and accuracy of research findings within a study (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The means of data collection selected for this study are described in each of the following stages, beginning with the pre-intervention phase.

Pre-intervention.

The initial stage consisted of gathering background information to establish baseline data for each student, understand which strategies students were already employing in their writing, and determine which strategies would be most useful to target in the lessons.

Background information. After signing consent forms, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire to provide information regarding their age, language background, level of English proficiency, and educational history (see Appendix 2.1). Together with the questionnaire, participants completed an initial survey (see Appendix 2.2) to provide further insight into such areas as attitudes towards writing, knowledge of writing processes and strategies, level of motivation, and perceptions of writing self-efficacy. These topics were addressed through a series of statements to which participants were asked to respond on a frequency scale of 1 to 5 as follows:

1) Never or Almost Never
2) Rarely (less than half of the time)
3) Sometimes (About half of the time)
4) Usually (More than half of the time)
5) Always or Almost Always

The writing strategy portion of the survey was largely adapted from a writing strategy questionnaire designed and validated by Petric and Czarl (2003), who themselves promoted methodological triangulation to enhance understanding of the nature of writing strategies. In
keeping with Petric and Czarl’s recommendation, as a complement to the survey, individual 
interviews were conducted to learn more about participants’ learning goals and attitudes towards 
writing in English (for a sample question set, see Appendix 2.3). Questions in these initial 
transcriptions were also designed to assist in answering the first research question (Which strategies 
are postsecondary ELLs using to accomplish writing tasks?).

Baseline testing.

In addition to collecting background information from participants, I conducted a set of 
three tests to collect baseline data. This data would be used to gauge participants’ writing 
abilities and inform my teaching as well as the later analysis of post-intervention results. The 
first of these initial assessments was the Test of Written Language, Fourth Edition (TOWL-4), 
designed by Hamill and Larsen (2009). Although intended for primary students through to high 
school, the test was chosen, in part, due to a lack of established writing assessments for 
postsecondary students, but, more importantly, because of the detail with which the test measures 
several subcategories of writing, including the following: vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, 
logical sentences, sentence combining, contextual conventions, and story composition. In order 
to compensate for missing age- and grade-based norms, results were interpreted by comparing 
raw scores across subcategories and between participants. Approaching the analysis in this 
manner seemed to be a more meaningful way to read scores for this group of participants.

The other two baseline assessments, though less comprehensive than the TOWL-4, have 
garnered recognition as indicators of overall written expression ability. One is a Curriculum-
Based Measurement exercise, in which students are given a story prompt, allowed to think for 1 
minute, and then asked to write for 3 minutes (see Appendix 2.4). The term Curriculum-Based 
Measurement (CBM), developed by Deno and Mirkin over 40 years ago, represents a set of 
systems used to assess students’ progress in several areas of learning (Tindal, 2013). Though it 
originated in special education, CBM has been the subject of extensive research in both general 
and special education, and it has been found to be predictive of written expression skills (Tindal, 
2013). Results of the story starter exercise were measured according to the number of correct 
word sequences, since this method of scoring is considered a more reliable indicator of writing 
performance in older students.
Participants also completed the test of Alphabet Writing Fluency, a recognized subtest of the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-III (WIAT-III; Wechsler, 2009). This subtest is based on considerable research which recognizes a strong correlation between handwriting speed and fluency of composition as well as overall writing quality (Berninger et al., 1992; Christensen, 2009; Graham, Harris & Fink, 2000; Graham & Weintraub, 1996). Students were instructed to write the letters of the alphabet from A to Z as many times and as quickly as possible in 30 seconds. These three baseline tests were administered together to aid in identifying participants who might have greater difficulties with written expression.

*Initial writing samples.*

Before beginning the intervention, participants submitted an academic writing sample. I had initially sought a source-based (research) paper of 4-6 pages and hoped to obtain new writing samples from participants to ensure relative uniformity in the samples and control for variables such as the influence of writing tutors on their work. Due to time constraints, however, and in order to ease the burden for participants and facilitate their involvement in the study, I accepted their most recently written source-based samples, which, due to different course requirements, varied to some degree in length, scope, and purpose. Samples were scored quantitatively using an analytic rating scale to measure aspects of writing quality including organization, content, vocabulary, grammar, and source integration (for scoring rubric, see Appendix 2.6). The rubric was organized according to four levels, where 1 corresponds to 40%, 2 to 60%, 3 to 80%, and 4 to 100%. Level 1 represents performance that, while falling short of the minimum expectations, still exhibits reasonable effort and as such is equated with a grade of 40%. Level 2 represents adequate performance, where the basic requirements have been reached but the writer cannot yet be seen as skilled in that capacity; hence the equivalent grade of 60%. Level 3 represents an effective demonstration of the writing skill in question, and 4 is reserved for a demonstration of excellence. The rationale for this correspondence of levels to percentages is further articulated in Appendix 2.6.

*During intervention.*

During the six-week intervention, data was collected through several methods so as to monitor students’ progress and adjust instruction according to their needs. Sources of data for this phase of the study are described below.
Anecdotes. At intervals throughout the classes, anecdotal observations were recorded, noting each participant’s mastery of self-regulation skills and writing skills as well as changes in their perceptions of self-efficacy as writers.

Journals and other submissions. During the intervention, participants reflected on their learning by completing regular journal entries. Participants were provided with a set of questions for their consideration, but were not confined to answering these prompts (see Appendix 2.7). Although journal keeping does present some potential drawbacks as a form of data collection, one of the benefits is that it can be a “vehicle for facilitating the language learning process” (Schumann & Schumann, 1977, p. 241). Moreover, as a means of reinforcing self-regulation skills, Graham and Harris (1997) recommend having students reflect on their writing development in a journal format by which they might review learning material and draw on specific accounts to share with the instructor and other students. In the present study, journal entries were later examined for themes and evidence of change in participants’ sense of self-efficacy.

Alongside journal entries, participants were periodically invited to complete review exercises and submit portions of their drafted work for feedback. An example of a review exercise included a quiz on vocabulary-building strategies (see Appendix 2.8). Some work was shared during class time for immediate feedback from the instructor-researcher or other participants. Writing shared included personalized STBARTS plans, paragraphs drafted using the TEST strategy, and essay outlines created using the TEST strategy.

Halfway point questions. Following the sixth class, participants were invited to provide feedback via a brief survey. Survey responses were used to inform instruction during the second half of the intervention.

Post-intervention.

At the end of the study, data was collected through several means to determine the effects of the intervention.

Survey. A follow-up survey (see Appendix 2.10) was administered post-intervention to gauge the usefulness of strategies taught and the extent to which participants’ sense of self-
efficacy and attitudes towards writing had changed. Using the same frequency scale as that which had been presented in the initial survey (with 1 representing “never” and 5 representing “always”), participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they intended to use each of the new writing strategies in the future. Changes in self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing were measured both quantitatively, by comparing scaled responses in this survey to responses in the initial survey, and qualitatively, through short answer responses.

Writing samples. Students were given approximately one week following the final class to submit a source-based writing sample. As with the pre-intervention sample, the post-study sample was assessed using the same analytic rating scale (see Appendix 2.6), and some compromises were again made regarding specifications for the sample. In order to ease the burden for prospective participants and allow for immediate return on their investment in the study, I had negotiated with participants who were simultaneously enrolled in summer courses to submit to me the same source-based paper that they were required to write as a final term paper. While this compromise introduced some variation in the scope and complexity of writing, some minimum requirements were set for all submissions. The results of these post-intervention papers were subsequently compared with the scores from initial writing samples to study the effect of the intervention on students’ writing performance.

Follow-up interview. Finally, an interview was conducted with each participant to gain insight regarding their writing processes and changes in their sense of self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing (see Appendix 2.11 for interview questions).

In this chapter I have explained the methodology for the project in detail. The framework for the intervention was delineated, expounding on the way in which Graham and Harris’s (1996) approach was adapted and executed in the context of this 6-week intervention. The construction of the case study and recruitment of participants were described next, ending with an explanation of the data collection which was accomplished through a mixed methods design. Having illuminated these details, I will proceed in the next chapter to introduce the individuals involved in the study, beginning with myself as the researcher-instructor and continuing with the six student participants. These portraits should provide context and help to situate the results which will be reported in the posterior chapter.
Chapter 4:

Portraits

This chapter presents profiles on each member of the study, beginning with myself as both the researcher and instructor and continuing with each of the six participants. These vignettes should aid in contextualizing both the results of the study and the discussion that follow in subsequent chapters.

The Researcher-Instructor

To begin, it may be of interest to know the combination of professional, personal, and academic experiences that have shaped my perspective. By the time that my research questions were formulated, I had been directing a writing and academic tutoring centre for more than six years at a university where I had also taught a first-year composition class. These professional experiences had afforded me considerable exposure to both proficient and struggling postsecondary writers. I have had a longstanding concern for vulnerable students in particular, the result primarily of having grown alongside a sibling with a developmental disability. Some of my work in earlier years included support work for youth with disabilities, and my Bachelor of Education internship was purposely arranged in a special education resource centre at an elementary school.

Alongside a commitment to supporting students with disabilities, I developed a passion for equipping English language learners (ELLs). This interest developed through my work at the university together with leisurely and business travel to various parts of the globe, including a rare opportunity to co-train non-native English teachers in an Asian country. Through work at home and abroad, I became acutely aware of the challenges that ELLs face with respect to written communication. My respect for students who compose at an advanced level in a non-native language was and is immense.

Because of my history with youth with disabilities, I could easily recognize parallels between them and second language learners. Many distinctions exist, to be certain, but on a very basic level, both student populations are somehow at risk, and as such greatly benefit from—one could argue that they rightfully deserve—bolstered supports. The overlap in my pedagogical
interests caused me to consider introducing Graham and Harris’s (1996) Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), a successful approach in the field of learning disability (LD) research, to postsecondary ELL writers. I had learned about SRSD while enrolled in a course on the education of students with learning disabilities, and I took interest in the approach because of its evidence-based and readily adaptable framework. Further exploration led me to identify a research gap, revealing the opportunity to introduce this approach to a different group of at-risk students with the hope of enhancing students’ writing performance and sense of self-efficacy as writers of English.

Another reason I chose the SRSD model was that it drew from a variety of theories to ensure a comprehensive approach. Much like Graham and Harris, I have felt constrained by the expectation that a scholar’s research and teaching practice should be aligned with a single theory. That scholars might have the freedom to strategically synthesize the most pertinent aspects of theories seems more logical. In the absence of that freedom, however, when pressed to identify with one particular viewpoint, I am inclined towards constructivism. My belief that meaning is co-constructed has shaped my attitude towards students. I have always felt that I stand to learn much from them, at least as much as they might learn from me, and that students can learn a great deal from one another. Together we create new understandings that may not have been present or apparent before. When we convene in the classroom, the students and I embark on a journey of discovery together, and I am somehow changed by every student with whom I am privileged to interact. The students who participated in this study are no exception.

The Participants

This next segment will introduce the six participants in greater detail. As a preview to individual profiles and a means of highlighting salient characteristics, a summary table is included (Table 2). In accordance with confidentiality measures, the names assigned to participants and any individuals associated with them are pseudonyms. Levels of proficiency outlined in the table are self-reported and follow the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), with A1 being “very beginner” and C2 being “proficient.” The baseline findings summarized here are taken primarily from results of the Test of Written Language 4 (TOWL-4), which assesses aptitude in several subcategories of writing, as well as from an evaluation of the students’ pre-intervention essay sample. Two other two baseline
measures have factored into these findings, albeit to a lesser extent: the Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) Story Starter and Alphabet Writing Fluency tests. Further observations from the baseline tests (TOWL-4, CBM Story Starter, and Alphabet Writing Fluency) and detailed comparisons of pre- and post-intervention samples are reported in the results (Chapter 5). Descriptions of these assessment tools were provided in the previous chapter (Chapter 3).

Table 2

Overview of Student Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Native Language (L1) and Other Known Languages (with Proficiency)</th>
<th>Age When Student Began to Learn English</th>
<th>Number of Years Student has Lived in an Officially English Country</th>
<th>Baseline Findings</th>
<th>Greatest Strengths</th>
<th>Greatest Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Cantonese B2 English A2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Spelling, Logical Sentences</td>
<td>Vocabulary, Sentence Combining (Syntax), Story Composition, Correct Word Sequences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel a</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Spanish C2 English B1 French A2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Contextual (Grammatical) Conventions, Spelling, Vocabulary, Story Composition</td>
<td>Logical Sentences, Organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Cantonese C2 Mandarin C2 English B1 French A1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Story Composition, Logical Sentences, Correct Word Sequences</td>
<td>Vocabulary*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Mandarin C2 English B2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Vocabulary, Contextual (Grammatical) Conventions, Logical Sentences, Sentence Combining, Spelling,</td>
<td>Story Composition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Language Levels</td>
<td>Alphabet Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Vocabularies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Korean C2, English B2, German A1, Japanese A1</td>
<td>14, 13</td>
<td>Vocabulary, Story Composition, Contextual (Grammatical) Conventions, Sentence Combining (Syntax), Logical Sentences, Alphabet Writing Fluency**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Mandarin B2, English B1</td>
<td>12, 16</td>
<td>Logical Sentences, Alphabet Writing Fluency, Vocabulary, Spelling, Sentence Combining (Syntax), Contextual (Grammatical) Conventions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Baseline findings for this student with respect to vocabulary are conflicting. While her performance in the TOWL-4 subtest was not strong, the student’s initial writing sample suggests a fairly developed vocabulary, more so than the samples of some participants who obtained higher scores on the TOWL-4 subtest.

** Baseline results for this participant are difficult to report because her performance on the standardized tests was considerably lower than expected, given her demonstration of skill in the pre-intervention writing sample. That said, difficulties with syntax appear in all writing contexts.

** Susan. **

Background. Susan is an inquisitive 40-year-old woman. She values extensive dialogue as part of her learning and engages in authentic, heartfelt conversations. An occasional student in pastoral studies at this institution, Susan is enrolled elsewhere in a Spiritual Health Care Practitioner residency. Prior to these pursuits, Susan studied at a larger university in southwestern Ontario and spent 15 years working in palliative care. Born in Hong Kong where she began studying English in kindergarten, Susan has lived in Canada for the past 22 years and recognizes herself as part of the decimal generation. She considers herself an upper intermediate (B2) native Cantonese speaker and fears that she has been gradually losing her native ability since moving here. Rating her English skills as elementary (A2), Susan believes that she is “a
beginner in terms of [her English] writing.” Susan speaks often of the struggle of feeling stuck between two languages:

   In English […] sometimes I feel paralyzed. […] I can’t find the vocabulary to express myself. […] And I’m already feeling the guilt of not knowing Chinese much. I feel very behind in my Chinese. At home when I need to speak with my parents or grandma, at times with Chinese I lack the vocabulary. I attend church in English. I listen to podcasts in English. I have the identity crisis. Because you feel the split… always, always. I am losing the Chinese, but at least I hope I can be stronger in one.

Consistent with this tension, Susan experiences strong feelings of shame because she does not feel especially adept at either Cantonese or English. While she has produced a wider variety of written communication in English than she has in her native language (L1), Susan reports feelings of intimidation and the fear of making mistakes in English. Yet, in our classes and in conversation with me, Susan speaks openly and at length about a variety of topics that interest her.

   Motivation to improve English writing. Susan’s desire to improve her English writing skills is grounded in her goal to work as a spiritual health care practitioner and the compulsion to advocate for more vulnerable members of the population, including individuals with mental health problems. “I want to express myself better,” Susan says. “Those research papers I write, they’re not just for fun. It’s for people. […] If I don’t have those basic skills, how can they be represented? How can I be a voice for the people who don’t have one?” She adds, “I want to be able to express myself in a personal way. And that is important, because the work I am doing is personal work.” Susan feels that within her field she is often perceived as less professional because of her less-than-perfect English. She hopes that her communication skills will improve in time.

   Writing strengths and challenges. When prompted, Susan is able to reflect on her specific areas of difficulty. She cites a challenge primarily in organizing her ideas. “Tangential” is the word she uses to describe her thought patterns. Susan also has difficulty retrieving vocabulary, a struggle felt equally whether she is writing in English or Cantonese. She mentions problems with grammar, and, more specifically, inconsistencies in verb tense. Susan demonstrates self-awareness in that these three areas—vocabulary, grammar and, to a lesser extent, organization—
do in fact surface as potential trouble areas in her baseline testing and initial essay sample. Her pre-intervention sample contains grammatical errors that at times obstruct clarity and word choices that are sometimes repetitive. Baseline tests reflect the same challenges, but they also reveal some of Susan’s strengths. Specifically, Susan’s scores in spelling and the formation of logical sentences (a subtest of the TOWL-4 that measures cognitive and syntactic aspects of writing) are above average when compared with the scores of the other participants.

**Known writing strategies.** In the initial survey, Susan reports never or almost never feeling as though she has effective writing strategies that enable her to complete writing assignments. On further reflection, however, she cites mind maps as a tool that facilitates her organization. When she feels stuck in her thoughts, Susan also enjoys talking to others and finds that doing so helps to broaden her perspective on the selected writing topic. Susan also tries to study model papers when possible.

**Gabriela.**

**Background.** Gabriela is an energetic and expressive 50-year-old woman. She is registered in the graduate level clinical counseling program and has completed just over one-third of the credits required. Before moving to Canada with her family 6 years ago, Gabriela practiced psychology in her home country, Mexico. While she had planned to continue her work as a psychologist, Gabriela soon discovered that the requirements in Canada were different, and that she would need to return to school to join the order of psychotherapists and start her own practice. Gabriela considers herself a proficient (C2) speaker of Spanish, her first language; an elementary (A2) speaker of French, which she acquired in Montreal when she landed in Canada; and an intermediate (B1) user of English. Gabriela began learning English at the age of 7, but did not use it much until she moved here. When asked how she would describe herself as an English writer, Gabriela says, “Right now I would use it in the opposite—‘I am not.’ I am not a good writer, because I don’t have enough vocabulary. That’s it. Everything is about vocabulary. And also I need to have a strategy.” While Gabriela lacks confidence in her ability as an English writer, unlike students such as Susan, Gabriela retains a high level of proficiency in her L1. Contrasted to the challenges of writing in English is the ease with which she composes in Spanish:
In English you have to think... But in Spanish, no. Maybe it’s because I have been writing a lot in Spanish. I exercised a lot in Spanish, writing a lot as a psychologist.

Along with the typical difficulties faced by ELLs, Gabriela cites other constraints. One of these is the change that she feels in the brain’s capacity; as she grows older, her ability to grasp and retain words seems to be changing, and the amount of time required for learning and recall is increasing. More than once in the initial interview, Gabriela mentions feeling “overwhelmed.” This feeling of overwhelm stems from the heavy reading and writing demands placed on her at school and her extensive commitment to volunteer counselling at her church. It is therefore unsurprising that Gabriela reports always feeling anxious or stressed when she writes in English. But Gabriela is a determined woman who does not quit easily.

**Motivation to improve English writing.** Gabriela’s motives for refining her English writing are manifold. First, she trusts that these skills will aid in the successful completion of her studies. Like Susan and most of the other participants, Gabriela also needs to be able to write well for her chosen field. She notes the added drive to be independent, “to be able to write and edit my own work.” Gabriela wants to reclaim the sense of autonomy that she feels she has lost as an adult immigrant. Lastly, Gabriela sees this training as a protective health measure: “[I]t’s going to help my brain. I am not going to have Alzheimer’s.”

**Writing strengths and challenges.** As indicated, Gabriela believes vocabulary to be her greatest source of difficulty with English writing. “Right now I am a bit dry in my words,” she laments. “Each language is beautiful, and I cannot express in English the way I did in Spanish.” While acquiring new vocabulary is the single greatest struggle for most second language (L2) writers, Gabriela, in fact, scored relatively high on vocabulary in the TOWL-4 test, placing second-highest among the participant group. These results align with her pre-intervention essay sample, where Gabriela’s word choice is for the most part specific, purposeful, and varied for the most part. Her baseline tests highlight additional skills; compared with her co-participants, Gabriela performs very well with respect to contextual conventions, spelling, and story composition, holding the highest or second to highest raw scores in those categories. Gabriela’s performance in the story writing component of the TOWL-4 supports her claim that when given the opportunity to write in less restricted contexts than the confinements of an academic research assignment, Gabriela demonstrates creativity and a capacity to write at length. In Mexico, she
had been accustomed to primarily opinion-based and loosely-structured writing, but in Canada, Gabriela has noticed a heightened emphasis on substantiating ideas and organizing them systematically. Understandably, one of the most apparent challenges in Gabriela’s writing is organization. Gabriela also does not perform as well in the logical sentences subtest as she does in other subtests of the TOWL-4. The results of this subtest, together with an examination of her pre-intervention writing sample, suggest some challenges with syntax.

**Known writing strategies.** When asked about the strategies that she is already using in her writing process, Gabriela claims to have none. At least, she does not have any strategies that feel “personal” to her:

I am just applying what [my husband Mateo] says I should do. Or what [Valeria, my daughter,] says. But these are their own strategies. My brain works differently. I have to know about me and what works for me.

Though Gabriela does not recognize them as strategies, when prompted in the initial writing survey, she reports several habits as part of her regular writing routine. These include drafting outlines in her L1, choosing her work environment carefully, seeking outside help when needed, and using an online dictionary.

**Rachel.**

**Background.** Rachel, 27, belies her young age with a mature and pensive attitude. She enjoys grappling with complex and seemingly contradictory concepts; meanwhile an infectious laugh betrays the spark in her personality. Although born in Hong Kong like Susan, Rachel arrived in Canada only 8 months before the start of this project. Rachel has just completed the first two semesters of her Master of Divinity program and holds a degree in Chinese Language and Literature. As one might guess, Rachel is a proficient (C2) communicator in both Cantonese, her native language, and Mandarin, which she studied from the age of 10, although she reports slightly lower speaking and listening skills in Mandarin. Her English abilities Rachel places lower on the scale, rating herself as upper intermediate (B2) in everything but writing, in which she claims to be only intermediate (B1).
While potentially an asset, Rachel’s strong linguistic background contributes to a hyperawareness of the asymmetries of writing in English as compared with Chinese, and the apparent incongruity is a significant source of frustration. Rachel observes,

Writing in Chinese I would only use one-third the amount of time I am using to write in English. I take a lot of things for granted when I write in Chinese. […] Because my English language skills and abilities limit me, I feel restricted. I’m sure I can do it in Chinese, but I don’t know how to do it in English.

Rachel would like to be able to compose in English in more sophisticated ways, much in the same way that she is able to do so in Chinese. When asked what she would like to study in the writing classes, beyond the suggested topics (for instance, vocabulary), Rachel indicates that she is interested in learning how to articulate more complex ideas. Under the constraints of North American academia, Rachel feels that she is missing a quality of genuineness in her writing:

I feel like I am not really a writer when I do assignments. […] It’s not like poetry and things from the heart. The technical part takes over. At the master’s level, especially in Canada, they require a certain kind of skill level. I used to write from the heart, but now it feels different. I think when I write in English… I’m not really writing authentically.

As someone who generally professes a passion for literature and delights in the selection and arrangement of words on a page, Rachel wonders whether these incongruences might be resolved. But she hopes somehow to become unfettered and enjoy a measure of integration between her experiences of writing in her L1 and her L2.

*Motivation to improve English writing.* Given Rachel’s background and interest in languages and literature, her dedication to refining her English writing would appear to be natural. Rachel has excelled and pushed the boundaries of her writing in Cantonese and Mandarin, and so she has an acute consciousness of what may still be possible for her in English. Beyond that, it is Rachel’s sense of vocation that propels her towards better writing: “I have a particular interest in [Christian cross-cultural] missions, so communicating in English is important.” Rachel also recognizes a more immediate benefit to improving her writing skills: finding increased enjoyment in school. “Right now,” she says, “I feel like my effort is in my English instead of exploring what I’m really interested in.”
**Writing strengths and challenges.** When asked which aspect of writing in English she finds most challenging, Rachel simply declares, “The language itself.” Aside from the limitations already discussed, Rachel cites differences in conventions and the limits of authorial license: “In English I’m not sure how far I can go with my writing. I don’t know the boundaries. For example, in Chinese you don’t really need a topic sentence, and there are many ways to present things.” Baseline assessments identify an area of challenge in vocabulary as well. Curiously, though, Rachel’s low vocabulary score on the TOWL-4 does not appear to align with her use of vocabulary in her initial research paper. In this paper, Rachel’s word choice is consistently varied, purposeful, and specific. Other areas of strength highlighted in initial assessments are Rachel’s skill in crafting logical sentences and writing correct word sequences. These tests measure the cognitive and syntactical aspects of writing. Rachel also obtains a high score in story composition, which is a measure of the overall quality of a spontaneous composition. These results resemble the writing quality reflected in Rachel’s initial research paper.

**Known writing strategies.** Rachel relies on several strategies as part of her writing process. Much of her effort is invested into the planning stage. Rachel regularly creates a schedule for her writing process, engages in brainstorming activities, and considers her audience when planning her paper. Her essay outlines often undergo at least one major revision after the initial draft. Rachel also engages in several vocabulary-building practices. She strives to read frequently and use new words from those readings in her communication. Knowing that paraphrasing is an essential aspect of academic writing, Rachel attempts to paraphrase the same passages in a variety of ways.

**Peter.**

**Background.** At 47, Peter is an optimistic individual, friendly and forthright in his approach. Accomplished in his business career, Peter decided after many years of leading youth at his church that he should attend school for training in ministry. On a part-time basis, Peter is pursuing a degree in theological studies and has completed about one-quarter of the program. His wife, Jessica, studies at the university with him, and the couple opted to participate in this study together. Born in mainland China, Peter is a fluent (C2) user of Mandarin, although he suspects that he is gradually losing some of his native proficiency, especially in writing. Peter began studying English at the age of 12, and he and Jessica have lived in Canada for the last 16 years,
where they are raising two children. Rating his English skills as upper intermediate (B2), Peter thinks of himself as “an average writer.” In casual conversation and at work he seems to communicate without difficulty, but the same cannot be said for Peter’s academic writing:

For me in the workplace, in any email or presentation, I’m fine. For those genres we have some charts and other tools. And no one cares as long as you can describe the process clearly. But the goal [in academics] is different, and also the context, the channel, and the medium. At school, writing is the only means to tell the prof this is my understanding and knowledge. [...] There’s no luxury to call the prof and follow up and clarify in person. Peter explains that, because of these differences, he must put his full efforts into academic writing.

While Peter is cognizant of the challenges he faces in English, he does not appear to be discouraged, as he believes his writing is “getting much better now.” In the initial survey, Peter is the only participant to report that he always enjoys writing in English and that he never feels anxious or stressed when writing. While Peter only sometimes thinks that he is a good English writer, he usually feels confident about sharing his writing with others and always feels good about his work when it is finished. Peter’s reported feelings about writing in English are the most positive of the six participants, and my observations of his attitude towards writing throughout the study support that.

Motivation to improve English writing. Peter’s motivation for improving his English writing skills is practical. As he has noted, writing is often the sole means by which postsecondary students are expected to demonstrate comprehension, and Peter feels that this is his “weak area.” He has taken advantage of writing resources at the school and sees this project as another opportunity to refine his skills.

Writing strengths and challenges. When asked about his particular challenges with writing in English, Peter cites some of the same struggles as other participants. Much like Susan, Peter believes his greatest struggles are in the planning and organization of his ideas. Similar to Rachel, Peter recognizes the task of adhering to a different set of conventions in English:
In Chinese writing, people can write papers in any way they like. In English, there is a norm. In English, if you put a topic sentence at the end, it’s not right. But in Chinese, you can put it anywhere. This is the reason I say planning is difficult.

While adapting to a different and perhaps more rigid set of structural conventions can be understandably difficult, Peter’s pre-intervention writing sample in fact reflects good organization. With the exception of a few sentences that appear to be orphaned, the order is fairly clear and logical. Transitions are also managed effectively, suggesting that even if Peter finds this aspect of writing to be taxing, he generally succeeds in executing effective organization. Peter’s writing sample also reveals some grammatical errors that are common to language learners but do not impede clarity, errors such as incorrect articles and prepositions. These observations support Peter’s perception that grammar is not his greatest area of difficulty.

Indeed, his initial writing sample and baseline tests would suggest that overall, Peter’s writing skills may be the strongest of the group. His story composition score aside, Peter scored highest or second highest in the TOWL-4 subtests, including vocabulary (something that Peter feels particularly confident about), along with logical sentences, sentence combining, and contextual conventions, subtests which address the cognitive, syntactical, and grammatical aspects of writing. These results are generally substantiated by his initial writing sample, in which Peter’s word choice is fairly varied and effective, and his mechanics usually do not obstruct clarity. Also of note, Peter’s alphabet writing fluency is the strongest of the group, and as indicated in the previous chapter (Chapter 3), this measure has been shown to correlate positively with overall writing quality.

**Known writing strategies.** Peter reports that to some extent he feels he has good writing strategies already in place. In the planning stage, Peter brainstorms and jots a long list of ideas to choose from for his papers. Among other practices, he always reads model papers and creates an outline before beginning to write. While drafting, Peter rarely consults a dictionary or grammar guide and will usually rephrase an idea if he cannot find the words for what he wants to say. During the editing stage, Peter reads his draft aloud and reviews his work in rounds, each time focusing on a different aspect of his writing, be it grammar or another element.

To build his vocabulary, Peter uses two strategies in combination. When he encounters an unfamiliar word, Peter types it into an application that provides the definition, synonyms,
antonyms, and pronunciation of the word. Then, he adds the new word to a file on his computer entitled “New Words.” Peter explains, “If I see any beautiful sentences, I just copy the whole sentence, or a word. Even today I found one. I might not always have time to reread it, but I throw it there.”

Finally, it seems notable that Peter is the only participant who claims to celebrate or reward himself each time he a paper. Some of the other participants do so, but with less consistency.

Diana.

Background. Diana, 55, is a caring and observant woman who works long hours at her studies while parenting two older children. Enrolled in clinical counselling, Diana has completed approximately one-quarter of the program, which she says has been challenging but also very rewarding. Diana has lived in North America for the past 13 years, and, prior to registering in her current program, she studied academic English at another institution. She rates her English proficiency as upper intermediate (B2), and remains fully fluent (C2) in her native language, Korean. Similar to Rachel, Diana’s mastery of her L1 and its centrality for her in her home country feed her frustration with her level of English proficiency. For Diana, the contrast is striking, as she explains:

My job was speaking Korean. My career was anchor-reporter and DJ at a broadcasting company. I can speak Korean perfectly. [...] I know language is really important. So the contrast makes it even more frustrating. When I lived in Korea I could very easily understand others. Socio-economics and personality—I could pick up everything from their language. Now I feel stupid and foolish, like a football player with feet tied, because of how I represent myself, with wrong pronouns, vocabulary, grammar. Some people, their faces change when I speak. “What are you talking about?” They want to understand, but they can’t.

That Diana feels uncomfortable with her limitations in English is comprehensible. She explains that her uncertainty about the “nuances” of words makes her very cautious in personal communications for fear of making a mistake or hurting someone with the wrong word choice. “It makes me tired,” she remarks. In the initial survey, Diana reports that she has never believed
that she is a good writer of English, nor does she ever feel confident about sharing her writing with others. She notes, however, that to compare her English with Korean is not entirely straightforward:

Korean is automatic. Definitely easier. But this field, I only started to study in English. So I don’t compare a lot. If I switched to Korean now in my studies, it would also be tricky. I would have to learn new terminology. Sometimes I feel strange… Korean is more tricky, as a language. Maybe if I studied in English when I was young, I would say Korean is harder.[…] In Korean we need to listen until the end of the sentence to understand. In English, having a subject then verb first makes the meaning clear.

Even if English might objectively be the easier language, Diana believes it to be her “weak point.” The barrier to improvement, she laments, is time. Diana does not think that she has the time required to substantially improve her English language skills.

Motivation to improve English writing. Diana’s desire to refine her English writing is in part related to the discord she experiences with her Korean facility. She also cites the role of English in her sense of vocation, much like Susan and Rachel: “English opens doors for communication. I don’t want to restrict my help to Koreans only. I want to prepare myself for mission. I don’t want to have any limitation.” A stronger command of English would better enable Diana to access other ethnic and linguistic groups.

Writing strengths and challenges. As indicated in Table 2, reporting on the strengths and limitations of Diana’s writing is complex. The results of the standardized tests appear to conflict somewhat with Diana’s performance as suggested by her initial paper. One possible attributor to this discrepancy is that Diana perhaps performs better within a less pressured context, where time limits are less strict. When asked to describe herself as an English writer, Diana’s first response is “weak in grammar.” Admittedly, she has noticeable problems with syntax, an area of weakness that surfaces both in the TOWL-4 subtests and in her pre-intervention writing sample. In her initial writing sample, however, Diana succeeds in communicating her ideas in spite of the syntactical errors. Grammatical errors which include incorrect verb conjugations, missing and incorrect prepositions and articles, and inverted word order may be distracting but are usually not so grave as to obstruct the reader’s comprehension. The essay also demonstrates Diana’s capacity for logical organization.
One of the strengths highlighted in Diana’s baseline assessments is vocabulary. Her performance on the TOWL-4 vocabulary subtest places her at slightly above average within the group, and while her essay shows evidence of word repetition, several of her word choices are specific and effective. Diana contends, though, that word choice is perhaps the most challenging aspect of writing in English. Like many language learners, she says that grasping nuances is especially difficult:

I cannot catch sometimes different meanings of words. Sometimes an English speaker uses an expression, and I might use it but I wouldn’t have that sense of feeling. [...] It’s hard to pick up the right word for the context. English speakers pick up the right words but sometimes I don’t know the differences.

I am slowly learning the power of some expressions. Sometimes I didn’t mean the feeling that is communicated. For example, in Korean the word “liar” is not so serious. Here, if I called someone that, the relationship is done.

Understanding the numerous connotations of English words is not easy and that level of word mastery takes time. But as Diana herself professes, she is slowly learning.

*Known writing strategies.* In the initial survey, Diana reports she does not feel that she has developed good strategies for her writing process. More pointed questions in the survey and in the interview prompt her to recall some of her tactics, however. Diana frequently shares her writing with others and tries to learn from the feedback she receives, whether that feedback comes from a writing tutor or her professor. She also says that to plan her writing, she brainstorms and creates an outline or “skeleton,” one to which she refers frequently while she is writing and makes changes as required. Diana also says that she prays about her work, and at times she will record herself speaking about the topic. “But reading a lot is the best way,” she insists. Diana devotes much time at the beginning of the process to reading and researching before narrowing her topic and drafting an outline for the paper.

*Jessica.*

*Background.* Jessica is a 44-year-old woman with a good sense of humour and a knack for brevity. Enrolled in a theological diploma program, she is studying alongside her husband,
Peter, so that the two of them can be better trained for their work with the youth at their church. Born in mainland China, Jessica rates her Mandarin (L1) skills as upper intermediate (B2) and her English as intermediate (B1). Jessica began studying English at the age of 12, and for the last 16 years she has lived in Canada where she and Peter are raising their children. A teacher of Mandarin who finds herself having to use more English with the church youth as time passes, Jessica relies frequently on code-switching:

Because I am serving the youth group I need both languages. We have a Chinese group and an English group. Sometimes the kids encourage me. They say, “Your English is better than my mom’s!” But when I get stuck, I switch to Chinese.

Jessica also relies on code-switching for some of her writing tasks: “Last week I was writing a thank-you letter in Chinese and I had to switch to English. So right now it [my writing skills] is all bad.” The feeling that she lacks proficiency in both languages is one that Jessica shares with Susan.

Jessica’s estimation of her English writing skills is considerably low. When asked how she would describe herself as an English writer, she responds: “Struggle. Embarrassing. No confidence.” In the initial survey Jessica reports that she usually tries to avoid writing in English when possible and rarely feels comfortable sharing her writing with others. Jessica is not without hope, however. “I know I am improving,” she asserts. “I just need the practice.”

*Motivation to improve English writing.* Jessica’s motivations align with those of other participants. Simply stated, Jessica needs to advance her writing skills for both her studies and her work in ministry: “I need it for any class I am taking right now. I use too much time for the language. And because I am serving the youth group, I need both languages.”

*Writing strengths and challenges.* When asked about her challenges with respect to writing, Jessica is not sure where to begin. “So many!” she says with a laugh. She wonders if the difficulty stems, in part, from the way in which her experience of English writing instruction in China did not seem to adequately prepare her for the demands of writing in Canada:
In China, when we learn English we start with grammar and vocabulary, and we use it to make sentences in a formula. There is not much reading, so there is no context. A single sentence is fine to write, but it’s difficult to come up with a whole paragraph.

As one might expect, Jessica struggles to create cohesive paragraphs; her initial writing sample reflects this weakness. In this sample, Jessica’s tendency toward brevity is also apparent. She misses opportunities for deeper analysis and more abundant support for her claims. Other challenges are evident in both the writing sample and the TOWL-4 assessment: chiefly, vocabulary and grammar. Grammatical errors in the essay and various TOWL-4 subtests are often substantial enough that they impede the reader’s focus and understanding.

The baseline assessments reflect not only Jessica’s challenges but also her strengths. Jessica performs reasonably well in the logical sentences subtest of TOWL-4, which measures cognitive and syntactic aspects of writing. She also achieves the second highest alphabet writing speed, an ability that tends to be positively correlated with overall writing quality. While the correlation may be atypical in this instance, it is interesting to note that if Jessica faces challenges in the writing process, it may have little to do with the rate at which she can recall and use the alphabet.

Known writing strategies. Jessica relies on a few strategies to manage the challenges of writing in English. One strategy, which she has realized does not work well, is direct Chinese to English translation. Jessica has attempted to use a Chinese-English dictionary for her writing, but she has discovered that many Chinese words are not used the same way in English. Strategies that Jessica has found to be more effective include reading sample essays and building a sentence bank so that she can mimic sentence structures. She also relies on resources from the school’s writing centre such as tip sheets and meetings with tutors to review her work.

The purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the individuals involved in the research. I have presented myself, my background and motivations for this study. I have also attempted to depict each of the participants by delineating their cultural and educational backgrounds, motivations, writing profiles, and strategies. With these sketches in mind, we will proceed to the results of the study.
Chapter 5:

Results

Having introduced the participants of the study in the previous chapter, I will now present the results of the study, describing the findings for these individuals and for the group as a whole. Addressing the three research questions in sequence, the core of the chapter is organized as follows: writing strategies that students were using prior to the intervention, performance gains as a result of the intervention, and changes in students’ sense of self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing. I will begin, then, by charting the writing strategies already in use among participants at the outset of the study.

Writing Strategies of Students Prior to the Intervention

In the initial survey and interview, participants were asked to reflect on the writing strategies that they were already using in their practice. This information would help to illuminate the first research question: Which strategies are postsecondary English language learners (ELLs) using to accomplish writing tasks? As explained in the introduction, my reason for posing this question was pragmatic; before initiating an intervention on writing strategies, it seemed critical to inform myself of the strategies that students were already familiar with and using in their writing process. To have succeeded thus far in their studies, the students must have acquired several effective habits, I surmised, and I wanted to ensure that the instructional content offered was needed and not redundant. The individual portraits presented in the previous chapter highlight several of the most prominent and consistently-used strategies for each student. In this section, known writing strategies are presented more broadly, marking trends among the group as a whole.

The first source of data for known writing strategies was the initial survey (Appendix 2.2), which was administered at the start of the study alongside a demographic questionnaire. Part three of the survey prompted students to consider the frequency with which they used various writing strategies in the pre-writing (planning), writing (drafting), and revising stages. Questions were scaled from 1 to 5 as follows:
1) Never or Almost Never  
2) Rarely (Less than half of the time)  
3) Sometimes (About half of the time)  
4) Usually (More than half of the time)  
5) Always or Almost Always

While prompting students by way of a predetermined list has limitations, the intent was to stimulate students’ thinking about a broader range of writing activities that could be considered as strategies. By way of an open-ended question at the end of the survey and through several open-ended questions in the initial interview (Appendix 2.3), opportunity was given for students to list any additional strategies that they were using. Tables 3A, 3B, and 3C report average frequency of use for planning, drafting, and revising strategies respectively. While the mode, median and mean for each statement were calculated, the mode and the median together appear to best represent the participant data. For most statements, the mean resulted in decimal figures that were close to the mode and/or median figures, and many of decimal figures were difficult to equate to a degree of frequency on the scale (e.g., a mean of 3.3 is less easy to translate than either a 3, 3.5, or 4). As the mean values did not appear to add significance to the interpretation of the results, these calculations were excluded from reporting in the tables.

Table 3A  
*Planning Strategies in Use According to Initial Survey (n = 6)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before I start to write an essay in English…</th>
<th>Mode(s)</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I make a schedule for my writing process.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do a brainstorming activity (e.g., mind map).</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I notice if I am feeling overwhelmed or nervous about writing and I try to relax.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look at a good paper written by a native speaker or other skilled writer.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I form a research question about my topic.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes/Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I write a plan or outline for my essay in English.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes/Usually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I write a plan or outline for my essay in my native language. 4 Usually 3.5 Sometimes/Usually
I develop a plan for writing in my mind, but I don’t put it on paper. 3 Sometimes 2.5 Rarely/Sometimes
I talk to other people about my topic. 2 Rarely 2.5 Rarely/Sometimes
I talk to my professor or a writing consultant to make sure I understand what I need to do. 4 Usually 3.5 Sometimes/Usually
I make sure I am in a good environment to write (comfortable and without distractions). 4 Usually 4 Usually
I reflect on what I already know about the topic. 4 Usually 4 Usually
I think about my reader audience and plan with that in my mind. 4 Usually 4 Usually

Table 3B
Drafting Strategies in Use According to Initial Survey (n = 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I write an essay in English...</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I write everything in my native language first and then translate into English.</td>
<td>1 Never</td>
<td>1 Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stop to read and check each sentence before I write the next one.</td>
<td>2, 3 Rarely, Sometimes</td>
<td>2.5 Rarely/Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stop and check my writing after I finish an idea or a whole paragraph.</td>
<td>3 Sometimes</td>
<td>3.5 Sometimes/Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I don’t know a word in English, I write it in my native language and then try to find an English word for it later.</td>
<td>2, 4 Rarely, Usually</td>
<td>3.5 Sometimes/Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask someone for help (e.g., instructor, writing consultant) if I have difficulty while I am writing.</td>
<td>2, 4 Rarely, Usually</td>
<td>3.5 Sometimes/Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I don’t know the words for what I want to say in English, I try to describe it in a different way.</td>
<td>4 Usually</td>
<td>4 Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I don’t know the word in English, I stop writing to look it up in a dictionary.</td>
<td>4 Usually</td>
<td>4 Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I refer to my outline or plan and make changes to it if I need to.</td>
<td>3 Sometimes</td>
<td>3.5 Sometimes/Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stick to my outline or plan no matter what.</td>
<td>3 Sometimes</td>
<td>2.5 Rarely/Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I take a break from writing when it feels difficult. | 3 | 3.5
---|---|---
Sometimes | Sometimes/Usually

Table 3C

Revising Strategies in Use According to Initial Survey (n = 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I revise an essay in English…</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read my work out loud or silently.</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes, Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes/Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I put away my work for a day or two so I can come back to it with a new perspective.</td>
<td>3, 5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes, Always</td>
<td>Sometimes/Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share my work with someone for feedback.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check the vocabulary.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check grammar and spelling.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check the structure of the paper.</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually, Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check the ideas.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use a dictionary or grammar guide.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hand in my paper without reading it through.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check the assignment instructions to make sure I have accomplished the task.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I get feedback on my work, I try to use that information to help me write better.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually/Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I celebrate or give myself a reward for finishing my writing task.</td>
<td>1, 3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never, Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes/Usually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While over-reporting can be a factor in any self-reported data, apparent use of several strategies is high. These results suggest that as advanced ELLs, participants were already engaging in several strategic practices prior to the intervention. Whether they consciously recognized these as strategies, however, is a point for later discussion (see Chapter 6). With respect to the planning strategies presented, the most popular response is “usually,” suggesting
that students were engaging in these pre-writing activities with considerably high frequency. Practiced with even greater consistency were many strategies for revising. The extent to which drafting strategies were used exhibits greater variation, however. Of particular interest in the tables are the following: the frequency with which students were creating essay plans in their native language (L1), especially as compared with the extent to which they were drafting papers in their L1, and the frequency with which they would celebrate or reward themselves for completing a writing task.

As indicated, participants were invited to name any additional strategies that they were practicing as part of their writing habits. This data was elicited through an open-ended question at the end of the initial survey and in the initial interview. These additional strategies are consolidated in Table 4. Most of the strategies listed were unique to one participant and not common to the group. Of particular interest here are participants’ reported vocabulary-building strategies, which were not addressed in the initial survey. Some participants claimed to have no such strategies in place, while others appeared to be making calculated efforts to develop these skills.

Table 4
Other Strategies in Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-recording while talking about the topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drafting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicing paraphrasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating verbatim from L1 to English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revising in rounds, focusing on a different aspect of writing each time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing words from readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying vocabulary into a personal word and/or sentence bank</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Praying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having addressed the first major research question, I will present data that answers the next question: How does instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) affect the writing performance of postsecondary ELLs?

**Effects of SRSD Instruction on Writing Performance**

To answer the second research question, a post-intervention writing sample was collected from each participant and compared with a pre-intervention writing sample taken at the beginning of the project. Writing samples were assessed according to several aspects, such as content, organization, mechanics, and reasoning (see Appendix 2.6 for rubric). Both quantitative and qualitative assessments were recorded for each participant’s set of writing samples, and differences between the pre- and post-intervention samples were examined across each aspect of composition.

An important consideration in this analysis is that, in some categories and for some participants, a direct comparison was complicated by differences in expectations for papers that had been assigned outside of the study. As indicated in the methodology (Chapter 3), the original intent had been to limit variables in the pre- and post-intervention samples by having each student write a paper before and after the intervention for the sole purpose of the study; however, this ideal was ultimately not feasible for participants. To lessen their burden and enable their involvement in the study, I permitted students to submit as the pre-intervention sample a paper already written for a course, provided that the paper involved some interaction with sources and was at least 4 pages in length. While I had preferred to collect a research paper, some students had not written one recently and could offer only a take-home exam or book review, which, though not my preferred genres, nonetheless represented their most recent academic writing. Similarly, participants who were simultaneously enrolled in a summer course chose to participate in the study on the condition that they would be able to submit as their post-intervention sample the final research paper for that class. The latter situation was less problematic from my standpoint, but in either case I had to consider that some differences might be introduced due to professors’ criteria and varying levels of motivation on the part of the students. I recognized that participants who wrote papers in the context of a course might have felt more determined to write well than those who wrote papers for the sole purpose of the study. Of course, such
considerations regarding motivation can only be speculative, but to remain transparent, any variables that might affect comparison of the writing samples should be acknowledged.

The results of participants’ writing samples are presented next. For each participant, a chart depicts the pre- and post-intervention scores according to each element assessed. As explained in Chapter 3 and presented in Appendix 2.6, a rubric was used to assess writing samples which were submitted prior to and following the intervention. The rubric was organized according to four levels, where 1 corresponds to 40%, 2 to 60%, 3 to 80%, and 4 to 100%. The rationale for this correspondence of levels to percentages is explained in Chapter 3 and further articulated in Appendix 2.6. The charts (Figures 1 through 6) will serve as a reference for detailed elaborations on each student’s performance gains.

**Figure 1.** Comparison of Susan’s pre- and post-intervention writing samples scored across several aspects of writing quality.

**Susan.**

A comparison of Susan’s writing before and after the SRSD intervention reveals significant gains in a few categories (see Figure 1). Of note, Susan’s pre-intervention sample was a book review, making some of the criteria challenging to assess. For instance, a true thesis
statement was not evident in the pre-intervention sample; however, I could not discern whether this element of the paper was weak because Susan lacked an understanding of what constitutes a proper thesis statement or because the assignment criteria required that Susan simply state the thesis of the book. In either case, Susan’s post-intervention paper shows considerable development, as she effectively communicates her core argument, even though she takes three sentences to do so. This accomplishment seems particularly remarkable since Susan herself had reflected, “I always find struggles to create the thesis statement. It’s hard. I could almost spend two to three weeks on it.” Along with an effective thesis statement, Susan’s second paper demonstrates a more creative and thoughtful attempt at a conclusion.

Of particular interest are Susan’s results in the areas of vocabulary and organization. As discussed in Susan’s portrait (Chapter 4), these aspects had been identified in the baseline tests as two of her greatest challenges with respect to writing. Although it could be seen as a modest increase (from 2.5 to 3), Susan’s improvement in vocabulary is notable. Whereas in the first sample Susan’s vocabulary is sometimes redundant and clichéd, her word choice in the post-intervention paper is more consistently specific, purposeful, and varied. In the post-study paper, Susan uses many more technical terms such as “cognitive dysregulation” and “psychosocial impairment.” Even if these were words appropriated through her research, that Susan can use them effectively is an encouraging finding. As for organizing her ideas, Susan’s capacity in this domain appears to have decreased from the pre- to post-intervention text. One possible explanation is that the increased length and greater complexity of Susan’s post-intervention paper may have contributed to the challenge in arranging her ideas. A book review, especially with explicit guidelines from her professor, might have been less difficult for Susan to structure. In fact, Susan spoke with me at length about a few possibilities for structuring her post-intervention paper, as the organization did not seem obvious or straightforward to her. Susan eventually developed a plan for the post-study paper and followed it to a certain extent, but transitions were often missing and information was at times misplaced. As will be articulated in the discussion, such persistent areas of difficulty may require a longer treatment than this project was able to accommodate. Overall, however, Susan’s improvement from pre- to post-intervention is still noticeable at 4%.
Gabriela’s writing samples, contrary to Susan’s, show a slightly negative net change overall. The overall loss of 1% explains little on its own, but an examination of some of the assessment subcategories (see Figure 2) may help to elucidate the real changes. The introduction in the second paper, for instance, shows a greater effort to secure the reader’s attention—in this case, detailing the topic’s coverage in recent media—whereas the introduction in the pre-intervention paper was lacking in originality and interest. The thesis, too, is more clearly worded in the post-intervention sample. Vocabulary is also slightly enhanced, as some words were used inappropriately in the first sample, but the second paper includes a selection of vocabulary that is suitably complex and appropriate for the topic. In addition, Gabriela’s style appears to have improved slightly, as her sentences are generally clear and concise.

Alongside these gains, it is of interest to know whether any change is apparent in Gabriela’s specific areas of difficulty. In the previous chapter, two particular challenges were identified in Gabriela’s writing: syntax and organization. With respect to syntax, there appears to be no net change. This result is unsurprising, since syntax was not the direct focus of any writing...
strategy taught in the study. Unexpectedly, Gabriela’s post-intervention paper exhibits less effective organization than does the pre-intervention paper, even though this component of writing was targeted through the TEST strategy (see Chapter 3). Several paragraphs in Gabriela’s second paper seem excessively short and might have been logically combined. While the occasional sentence in the pre-intervention paper might have been out of place, the overall organization appears to be better in that first paper. Though it may seem odd that a decline was observed, this could be attributed, perhaps, to the greater complexity of the task in the second paper and the more specific, pointed guidelines for structuring the first paper, an artwork analysis produced as a course requirement. Once again, the challenge of working with documents that are not uniform in their specifications contributes some complexity to the analysis.

![Comparison of Rachel’s pre- and post-intervention writing samples scored across several aspects of writing quality.](image)

**Figure 3.** Comparison of Rachel’s pre- and post-intervention writing samples scored across several aspects of writing quality.

**Rachel.**

Rachel has the highest pre- and post-intervention writing scores of all the participants, which, as noted in the previous chapter, do not align with the lower performance exhibited in her baseline tests. The overall gain in writing samples is very modest at 2%; however, one might expect that a stronger writer such as Rachel would demonstrate more moderate gains in response
to the intervention. Rachel was already using several of the selected strategies prior to the SRSD intervention, so it would seem logical that the effect of the study on her writing performance would be more modest than its effect on that of a student with fewer pre-established strategies. In any case, a more precise picture of Rachel’s progress can be obtained through a closer examination of her performance in several categories (see Figure 3).

This in-depth comparison of Rachel’s research papers illuminates specific areas of improvement as well as ongoing challenge. Rachel’s post-intervention paper begins with a very strong and interesting introduction that effectively previews the paper’s structure. This is a marked improvement from the pre-intervention paper, which, though sufficiently effective, is not nearly as strong. In a conversation with Rachel during the process of drafting her second paper, it was evident that she was making an explicit attempt to strengthen her introduction based on guidelines given in the TEST strategy (see Chapter 3). Along with this improvement, Rachel’s second paper showed evidence of more effective organization, for instance, through more consistent and effective use of transitions. This change was likewise influenced by instruction in the TEST strategy, as Rachel spoke about her strategic edits and reordering of ideas to achieve better transitions, keeping in mind the lessons on TEST. Despite slight decreases in conclusion and vocabulary scores, Rachel’s style seems slightly improved in the post-intervention paper, contributing to a positive net change overall.
Peter.

The overall difference between Peter’s writing samples, like those of Gabriela and Rachel, appears to be relatively small at a net gain of 2%. As his pre-intervention writing sample, Peter submitted a copy of a take-home exam written for a theology course. Comparing this text with his post-intervention paper (written solely for this project) was not a straightforward process in some categories of textual analysis. For instance, Peter obtained higher scores for his introduction and thesis statement in the post-intervention paper (see Figure 4), although it is possible that the take-home exam prioritized content and de-emphasized these form-focused features of a traditional essay. In any case, while the introduction in the pre-intervention sample is difficult to delineate, the introduction to Peter’s post-intervention paper secures the reader’s interest, states the topic clearly, and effectively previews the structure of the paper. As for the thesis statement, one is included in the introduction in the first paper, but it does not effectively preview the entire paper. The thesis statement in Peter’s second paper, on the other hand, is clear, specific, and arguable. It suggests a two-part structure which is generally followed in the body of the paper.
In most categories, Peter’s pre- and post-intervention papers demonstrate consistent quality. The content is well-researched in both papers and the organization effective, with a score of 3 (out of a possible 4) for both categories. Both papers, however, reflect an area for further development in Peter’s writing: more effective and seamless integration of sources. The study only briefly addressed paraphrasing skills through the UP3C strategy (outlined in the methodology chapter), and this is an advanced writing skill that depends heavily on other micro skills, so it is not surprising that Peter appears not to have mastered this ability.

Figure 5. Comparison of Diana’s pre- and post-intervention writing samples scored across several aspects of writing quality.

Diana.

Together with Jessica, Diana demonstrates the greatest overall improvement from pre- to post-intervention with a gain of 10%. Of all the categories assessed, the improvements in content and reasoning seem most striking (see Figure 5). Whereas her pre-intervention sample appears to be missing a deeper analysis and critical observation of the topic, Diana’s post-intervention paper reflects deep thought and considers a multitude of perspectives. Both papers were completed in
fulfillment of course requirements, and though there might have been a greater incentive to research the second paper more thoroughly because of its heavier weighting in the course, Diana’s treatment of the subject here is considerably more comprehensive. Alongside the content, Diana’s reasoning is substantially stronger in the second paper. The complexity of thought is more evident here, whereas in the pre-intervention sample Diana appears to speculate at times and does not always substantiate her observations with logic.

Along with these aspects, Diana’s post-intervention paper shows moderate improvements in other areas, namely vocabulary and style. When compared with the first sample, Diana’s second paper exhibits more specific, purposeful and varied word choice. Style and voice in the second paper appear to be stronger. Creativity and careful thinking in her approach to the topic are also apparent. Diana, together with Jessica, is the only participant who demonstrates either improvement or no net change in every category save one.

Figure 6. Comparison of Jessica’s pre- and post-intervention writing samples scored across several aspects of writing quality.
Jessica.

Incidentally, Jessica’s overall difference in writing scores matches Diana’s at 10%. The most substantial gains appear to be in the introduction, thesis statement, and conclusion (see Figure 6). In the pre-intervention paper these features are very weak, although it is difficult to know whether these aspects were de-emphasized because of different requirements for the take-home exam, the only recent sample of academic writing that Jessica was able to provide. Using one of the techniques taught through the TEST strategy, Jessica incorporated a relevant statistic in the post-intervention paper to secure the reader’s attention in the introduction. In this second paper, written solely for the study, Jessica also included a thesis statement, although it is not effective since it provides no hint of the paper’s structure nor does it offer a solution to the problem represented. Though further development in this area of writing is needed, organization is slightly improved in the second paper in that paragraphs tend to be more focused and neither excessively long nor short as they often were in the first paper. This post-intervention paper also contains more consistent transitions than those in the earlier paper, a change that may reflect Jessica’s application of the TEST strategy.

As for the challenges evident in Jessica’s writing samples, the most significant is perhaps the insufficiency of source support and shallowness of topic analysis. These shortcomings can be seen in both the pre- and post-intervention samples. Both papers would benefit from greater detail, substantiation, and criticism. Based on reflections she shared during our classroom sessions, Jessica’s tendency to oversimplify and abbreviate her writing seems to be attributed, at least in part, to limitations in her English language facility.

**Overall Observations of Performance Gains.**

A comparison of pre- and post-intervention samples revealed performance gains for most participants, with changes in writing scores ranging from -1% to 10%. The most marginal overall changes were evident for Peter, Gabriela and Rachel, who incidentally held the three highest overall scores in the primary baseline assessment, the Test of Written Language-4 (see Chapter 3). Consistent with what will be discussed in Chapter 6, this pattern is not unusual since SRSD interventions have been found to be more effective on weaker writers than on writers in general (Graham et al., 2013). Therefore, one might expect that students with a stronger command of
English would demonstrate more modest improvement in their writing, and that, conversely, students who are less advanced would demonstrate a more dramatic response to the treatment.

Besides observing performance gains for each individual, it is worthwhile to compare the group’s results according to each measure of writing quality. Examining the data from this angle will help to determine whether the intervention had a greater effect on any one aspect of writing. Figures 7 through 16 depict scores for the participant group according to each aspect of writing identified in the scoring rubric. Of note are gains of at least 10% for almost all participants in the following: essay introductions (Figure 7), thesis statements (Figure 8), and style (Figure 16). The only aspect of writing in which no changes were observed was mechanics (Figure 13). Performance in several other categories (including reasoning, organization, conclusions, and vocabulary) is mixed, with some participants demonstrating improvement and others demonstrating decline. Interpretations and implications of these trends will be discussed in Chapter 6.

*Figure 7. Pre- and post-intervention scores for essay introductions.*
Figure 8. Pre- and post-intervention scores for thesis statements.

Figure 9. Pre- and post-intervention scores for essay content.
Figure 10. Pre- and post-intervention scores for reasoning in essays.

Figure 11. Pre- and post-intervention scores for essay organization.
Figure 12. Pre- and post-intervention scores for essay conclusions.

Figure 13. Pre- and post-intervention scores for mechanics.
Figure 14. Pre- and post-intervention scores for vocabulary.

Figure 15. Pre- and post-intervention scores for source selection and integration.
Figure 16. Pre- and post-intervention scores for writing style.

Having presented findings that correspond to the first two research questions, I will address the third question in the next part of this chapter.

Influence of SRSD Instruction on Sense of Self-Efficacy and Attitudes Towards Writing

The third research question for this study was as follows: How does instruction in SRSD influence postsecondary ELLs’ sense of self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing? To answer this question, data was collected from the initial and follow-up surveys and interviews. In the initial and follow-up surveys (Appendices 2.2 and 2.10, respectively), participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which each statement seemed to be true, as follows:

1) Never or Almost Never
2) Rarely (less than half of the time)
3) Sometimes (About half of the time)
4) Usually (More than half of the time)
5) Always or Almost Always
As indicated in Chapter 3, several statements were presented in both the initial and follow-up surveys in an effort to quantitatively measure changes in participants’ sense of self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing. Together with anecdotal comments from the surveys and interviews, these scores were analyzed to determine the intervention’s effect. Figures 17 through 22 depict the responses of each participant to relevant statements in the initial and follow-up surveys.

Two important notes must be made regarding these results. Omitted from these graphs are statements that express, in negative terms, the opposite of a statement already included in the table as a positive formulation. For instance, the graphs include responses to the statement "I enjoy writing in English" but exclude the statement “I dislike writing in English.” Negative formulations were excluded from the table for two reasons: 1) these formulations seem to complicate the table reading because a lower number on the scale in fact indicates that the study had a favourable effect on participants, and 2) the results of these negative statements do not appear to contribute significant data (e.g., in almost all instances, when participants report feeling more calm after the intervention, they simultaneously report feeling less anxious or stressed than they felt prior to the intervention). Also important to acknowledge is that while modest differences in responses (increases or decreases of 0.5 or 1 on the 5-point scale) could be questioned as arbitrary shifts, advances of 2 or 3 points cannot be as easily dismissed and should be accepted as indicators of significant attitudinal and perceptual change. These findings are corroborated by the students’ personal reflections, particularly in interviews. Together this data should provide a more comprehensive view of the transformations in perceptions of self-efficacy and attitudes with respect to writing.
Changes in Susan’s sense of self-efficacy and attitude towards writing in English are evident in her follow-up survey and interview responses. In the initial interview, Susan’s impression of herself as a writer of English and her feelings about writing were decidedly negative. Susan reported strong emotions including paralysis, “failure,” and “discouragement.” She worried that readers spent too much time attempting to understand her writing, and this was causing her to feel “so much guilt.” Susan admitted that she would avoid writing in English whenever possible because of her fear of making grammatical errors. She considered herself a “beginner in terms of [her] writing.” After participating in the study, however, some of Susan’s feelings were changed.

Susan’s comments in the follow-up survey and interview have a comparatively lighter and more hopeful tone. Susan’s participation in the study led her to believe that persistence is essential to improving one’s skill in English writing. While she still did not feel proud of her writing “because of the grammatical mistakes,” Susan gleaned several benefits from her participation in the study:
By taking part in this research, I found myself became aware of the available resources, finding myself increase some confidence and comfortable to make error and mistakes when it is still a learning process.

Along with these insights, Susan reported that the process of writing the final paper for the study was less anxiety-inducing than other writing experiences had been: “It’s interesting that this time I didn’t feel panic or stress.” Susan could not pinpoint exactly why her stress was lowered, but she did remark that she felt less judged as a writer. That feeling of guilt perhaps did not weigh as heavily as it once did.

![Figure 18](image)

*Figure 18. Gabriela’s responses to selected survey statements regarding her sense of self-efficacy and attitude towards writing.*

**Gabriela.**

The most pronounced expressions of perceptual transformation in the group are perhaps those of Gabriela. As indicated in Chapter 4, during the initial interview Gabriela reported low confidence in her English writing ability. When asked how she would describe herself as a writer of English, she answered, “Right now I would use the opposite—I am *not* a good writer.” A feeling that surfaced more than once in the first interview was that of being “overwhelmed” by writing and other tasks in her life. Gabriela also longed for a sense of
independence, which she believed was lost when she moved to Canada and began her studies in English. A later conversation with Gabriela, however, showed that her feelings about writing in English were transformed through her participation in the study.

In her own words, Gabriela’s thoughts and feelings about writing changed “completely.” As articulated in her profile (Chapter 4), Gabriela’s hope was that she might acquire strategies that felt personally suited to her learning preferences to take the place of ill-fitting strategies that had been passed on by her family members. Equipped with new strategies that she was finally able to make her own, Gabriela reported a heightened sense of excitement about the writing process. Using these strategies to write a paper was “wonderful,” she remarked. Whereas in her initial interview the word “overwhelm” arose repeatedly, Gabriela’s most frequent words in the follow-up were “really easy,” words that she used to describe various aspects of her new writing process. Gabriela had the opportunity to apply the SRSD strategies to two papers at the end of the study: a research paper written exclusively for this project and one for a summer course. She explained the way in which her sense of self-efficacy grew as she continued to practice the strategies from one paper to the next. For the first paper, written exclusively for this project, Gabriela said, “I felt excited about the information I had and the strategies. [...] I wasn’t worried about the writing.” As Gabriela persisted in practicing these strategies while writing her course paper, she experienced a pronounced shift:

For the first paper, I was processing more. But after that there was a click in the brain. Maybe because I felt more secure and more confident. Because for this longer paper, I knew how to do it. Before I was overwhelmed. I didn’t know how to make a research question, how to organize, or how to structure a paragraph. But now it’s really easy. [...] Definitely I am more confident, secure, and I think I can focus more on my learning than just seeing my writing as a burden.

When asked again how she would describe herself as a writer of English, Gabriela no longer used a negative construction. “I’m in the process of being a good writer,” she said, a process that encouraged her.
Figure 19. Rachel’s responses to selected survey statements regarding her sense of self-efficacy and attitude towards writing.

Rachel.

Having already been acquainted with many of the strategies featured in the study, Rachel exhibited a subtler but still encouraging response to the intervention. As mentioned in her profile (Chapter 4), Rachel explained in the initial interview that writing in English felt very distinct from writing in Chinese, for several reasons. Most pronounced was the sense that writing in English felt inauthentic whereas writing in Chinese was more heartfelt. Added to that was a feeling of uncertainty, as Rachel did not know her boundaries when writing in English. While the revelations that she received from the study were perhaps more nuanced than those of other participants, changes in Rachel’s perceptions and feelings about writing are nonetheless significant.

The most evident shift in Rachel’s perceptions of writing and of herself as a writer of English stems from the sense of affirmation that she gained by participating the study. Through the intervention, Rachel explained, she became more conscious of her writing habits and was assured that many aspects of her writing process could be considered “normal” and even strategic:
I like knowing I am on the right track. It gives me more objectivity and general ideas about how people consider the writing process. [...] Before there was a lack of confidence. Having a model, knowing you’re doing the right thing, is reassuring. Now I can say this is normal—taking my time revising, and so on.

That reassurance appears to have affected Rachel’s confidence and stress levels as she constructed her post-intervention paper. Referring to some of the strategies acquired through the intervention, she explained,

The project helped me to feel more sure about what I was doing. I think asking questions while I was reading helped me. Reorganizing [my research] according to themes helped me to save time, too. And I think the [writing] schedule now I’m less stressed about. [...] I think I took less time to write my first draft because I spend less time worrying about the little things.

Combining this heightened sense of self-efficacy with an awareness that she has room yet to grow, Rachel identified herself as an “apprentice” who continues to learn.

Beyond these affective changes, Rachel gleaned unexpected insights through her experience. At the beginning of the study, Rachel had expressed a feeling of fragmentation in that she was unable to find points of continuity between the English and Chinese ways of writing. Through her participation in the study, however, Rachel was able to draw connections and recognize the two writing systems as less disparate:

Talking about the strategies helps to build a link between Chinese and English writing. Some of the sentence features, such as parallelism, I do this in Chinese. I am able to see what I can transfer into English writing. I think that’s why naming the processes is important. I still feel like writing in Chinese and English are two different things. [...] But I think I can transfer some of the basic skills [from Chinese] and build on that foundation.

Finding these commonalities for Rachel was one of the most profound takeaways from the study, and it speaks to the value of explicit instruction, which is a hallmark of the SRSD approach.
Peter. Similar to Rachel, Peter experienced an increase in confidence while simultaneously recognizing the need to continue to hone his writing skills. In the initial interview (see Chapter 4), Peter called himself “an average writer.” While cognizant of his writing challenges, Peter felt encouraged by the conviction that his English writing was “getting much better.” At the outset of the study, Peter presented as the most optimistic and confident participant.

As his post-intervention reflections indicate, Peter’s already positive estimation of his writing abilities was bolstered through the SRSD treatment. When asked if his thoughts and feelings about writing had changed, Peter responded, “I certainly think so. The framework makes the writing process much clearer. For example, STAR guides me to refine my paper and I do not need to worry about anything I might miss.” While he felt rushed to complete the final paper because of other commitments and “guilty” for being unable to meet the deadline, Peter observed, “I didn’t feel that difficulty to write. I just felt that with enough time, the paper would be much better.” He spoke repeatedly about the way in which the new writing strategies provided a sort of checklist by which he could ensure that his writing was on track:

*Figure 20.* Peter’s responses to selected survey statements regarding her sense of self-efficacy and attitude towards writing.
Prior to this class, I felt there might be things I need to check, but I didn’t know what exactly. But with this structure it serves as a checkpoint that made it feel easier. [...] That gave me some good feeling.

Having a framework for his writing process gave Peter comfort and assurance. It might follow naturally, then, that while Peter considered himself an average writer at the start of the study, his sense of self-efficacy in the follow-up interview was somewhat elevated:

I would say myself is average or slightly above average. Certainly not advanced, that’s for sure. But not the same as before this class, definitely. I feel more comfortable now. Still if compared with people around me, I am average. But compared vertically, I am better.

Peter’s point about comparing himself vertically is important. As a writer, he has been able to assess and recognize his personal progress by measuring the distance traveled. From that vantage point, Peter could consider himself “a better writer equipped with good frameworks.”

![Bar chart showing responses to survey statements regarding self-efficacy and attitude towards writing.](Figure 21. Diana’s responses to selected survey statements regarding her sense of self-efficacy and attitude towards writing.)
Diana.

Like that of the other participants, a progression in Diana’s thoughts and feelings about writing in English can be traced by comparing her comments before and after the intervention. As discussed in her portrait (Chapter 4), Diana conveyed her English writing skills in the initial interview with little self-confidence. “Weak in grammar” and “uncomfortable with limitations” were some of the ways that she described herself. That feeling of restriction in English was vividly illustrated through her identification with a football player whose feet were bound, unable to participate in the sport. In the follow-up survey, however, Diana described her “confidence building up.” Whereas writing had felt like a “burden” to her, Diana began to express some “excitement” about the activity. This excitement seemed tied to a newfound direction and awareness of how to advance her writing goals:

Before […] there was no strategy. I never thought about the process. Even if I knew a lot of it, it [my writing practice] is more organized now. I’m more aware of what I am doing and why. It helps me to pace myself and lowers my stress level. I feel I can handle it.

Similar to the follow-up interviews of other participants, Diana’s had an often-repeated theme. Diana’s most frequent phrase was this: “I feel I can handle it.” Equipped with a clearer sense of direction and concrete processes, Diana felt empowered to accomplish her writing tasks: in other words, she felt more self-efficacious.

While the overall outcome of the writing intervention for Diana was positive, her heightened awareness of the incongruity between her existing writing practices (or lack thereof) and the new strategies, not all of which were applied to the post-intervention paper, seems to have produced a double-edged effect:

Unfortunately, I did not use all of the strategies. Having a standard made me more aware of my weak point and I felt embarrassed. But I felt I could handle it [the writing] because there is still a way of measuring where I am. At least I understand that. And understanding makes me more comfortable.

While the intent of the study was certainly not to generate negative feelings about one’s existing writing practices, inviting students to be mindful of more strategic approaches to writing may, as
a byproduct, lead some students to become hypercritical of their habits. Ultimately, though, Diana expressed appreciation for what she had gained through the project:

I feel like I got a map. Before [I was] working in the darkness. Now I can handle the task. And I feel I can rest if I reach a stage in the process because I know where I am.

Here, Diana used yet another vivid image to describe herself as a writer, except that this time, instead of an immobilized athlete, she identified with a journeyer whose path has been illuminated by a map.

![Bar chart showing changes in Jessica's sense of self-efficacy and attitude towards writing.](image)

*Figure 22.* Jessica’s responses to selected survey statements regarding her sense of self-efficacy and attitude towards writing.

**Jessica.**

Changes in Jessica’s sense of self-efficacy and attitude toward writing appear to be more gradual when compared to those of other participants. “I cannot say it changed a lot because it takes time,” she said in the follow-up interview. In both her initial interview and the follow-up, Jessica underscored the value of practice and time to solidify learning. Prior to the study, Jessica’s focus had been solely on using correct vocabulary and grammar. She explained that she
had not considered the ways in which a more strategic process might help her to become a more successful writer.

As reported in Chapter 4, Jessica’s initial impression of herself as a writer was decidedly negative: “Struggle. Embarrassing. No confidence.” Through the intervention, however, Jessica was able to locate herself on an upward trajectory: “I used to have no confidence in writing in English and didn’t know exactly how to improve it. Now I know where to start on the way of improving my English writing.” Like other students in the study, Jessica saw the strategies as a reference point for her place in the writing process. Employing a practical analogy, she shared her experience of applying the new strategies to her post-intervention paper:

I would not say confident but I think it’s less stressful than before. I know where I am supposed to go. Before I didn’t know where I was supposed to go or how to prepare. Like cooking, if you don’t know or you never tried, sometimes you grab this or that and it doesn’t always work together. You should find a recipe and follow steps. […] All these [strategies] are like the recipe. And if you never cook, you won’t have the skill. […] I think about this analogy because I like to cook.

The implication is that writing strategies, like recipes, can help to ensure a successful product, and that practice contributes to success, especially in the long-term. As chefs need practice to hone their skills, so, too, do writers.

Thus concludes this section on the changes in participants’ perceptions of themselves as writers of English and with it the primary findings for this study. In the chapter that follows, pertinent themes and observations, taken largely from the results in this chapter, will be interpreted and elaborated upon.
Chapter 6:
Discussion

In response to the results of the intervention presented in Chapter 5, this chapter will discuss the most significant findings from the study. Observations that relate directly to the research questions will be discussed along with additional points of interest that merit discussion. Corresponding to the same order as the research questions listed in Chapter 1 and the results reported in Chapter 5, the following themes will be explored: pre-intervention strategy use and students’ awareness of their existing writing practices; effect of the intervention on students’ writing performance; and students’ sense of self-efficacy and their attitudes towards writing, both changed and persisting. We begin with a discussion of the students’ writing strategies prior to the study.

Pre-Intervention Strategy Use

Through initial surveys and interviews (see Appendices 2.2 and 2.3 for data collection instruments), information was gathered to satisfy the first research question: Which strategies are postsecondary English language learners (ELLs) using to accomplish writing tasks? As indicated in the previous chapter as well as in the introduction, this question had the practical purpose of informing my choice of target strategies for the intervention. The use of a tailored teaching approach such as that of Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), seems to necessitate an understanding of students’ baseline so as to situate instruction within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), a level of instruction that lies slightly beyond a student’s current capacity and represents what she can accomplish with a teacher’s support (Vygotsky, 1978). Explained in Chapter 3, the ZPD contributes to the underpinning of Graham and Harris’s (1996) SRSD design, and so it was important to know the participants’ abilities prior to introducing the intervention.

The Link Between Awareness and Strategy

Beyond aiding me in the instructional design, reflecting on their existing writing practices afforded direct value to the participants. The participants’ reflections illuminated an interesting paradox: Almost none of the students felt that they possessed good writing strategies (half of
them reported “never” feeling confident in this regard), and yet with further probing in the initial survey and interview, most participants reported practices that could be considered strategic approaches to writing. This apparent discrepancy in reporting might be attributed to at least one cause. Although participants may have been engaging in effective practices as part of their writing process, they may not have been conscious of these behaviours or perhaps did not consider them as strategies. Granted, it may be true that definitions of strategy are many and varied, and among Second Language Education (SLE) scholars, at least, there appears to be no consensus as to what a language learning strategy entails (Griffiths & Oxford, 2014); yet two definitions, one proposed by Griffiths (2008), in the field of SLE, and one posited by Santangelo, Harris, and Graham (2008), representing special education, might illuminate this discussion. For if we accept Griffiths’s articulation that strategies are “activities consciously chosen by learners” (p. 87) together with that of Santangelo and colleagues, defining strategy as “a set of operations or actions that a person consciously undertakes to accomplish a desired goal” (p. 81), then we understand consciousness as integral to labeling a behaviour as strategic. In other words, one of the essential qualities of a strategy (Alexander, Graham, and Harris [1998] listed six) is that it be purposeful. The learner’s own awareness of his writing processes, then, becomes a critical component. If students are not cognizant of their decisions at the planning, drafting, and revising stages of their work, these behaviours cannot properly be classified as strategies.

The role of metacognitive practices in strategic learning cannot be overstated. Educational researchers have stressed that successful learners are typically those who reflect on their performance and use this knowledge to shape their future behaviours (Alexander et al., 1998). The development of such metacognitive skills, particularly for those with learning difficulties but also perhaps for other learners, is facilitated through explicit instruction (Brown & Campione, 1990). The link between explicit instruction and metacognitive development is supported by this study’s outcomes, which show that through participation in the intervention (an intervention which features explicit instruction), participants became more cognizant of writing practices that could be considered strategies, both those used prior to the study and those later acquired as a result of the instruction.

To illustrate transformations in strategy awareness, it seems fitting to cite reflections from Rachel’s post-study interview. One of the more advanced writers, with respect to both her performance in the writing samples and her prior use of the strategies taught, Rachel spoke of the
merit in explicitly studying strategies and naming writing practices that she had previously exercised in a rote manner. As shared in Chapter 5, explicit discussion of strategies throughout the intervention enabled Rachel to draw connections between English and Chinese writing, two systems that she had, until then, viewed as relatively disparate. In Rachel’s words, “This is why naming the processes is important.” For Rachel, this metacognitive activity revealed that she might be able to “transfer some of the basic skills [from Chinese] and build on that foundation.” Karim and Nassaji (2013) noted that first language (L1) transfer into L2 (second language) writing can be promoted by raising students’ awareness of their own strategies and training them to reflect on their writing processes. Rachel’s case illustrates that SRSD can foster the transfer of writing skills not only from one context to another but also from one language system to another. This finding suggests instruction that cultivates writing strategy awareness can yield benefits even for advanced postsecondary ELLs who are already engaging in effective practices.

**Specific Strategies in Use.**

As for the specific writing strategies that were in use at the outset of the study, the initial survey and interview data confirmed what was expected—that, being ELLs at an advanced level of study, participants were already using a variety of planning, drafting, and revising strategies. Granted, given what has just been discussed regarding the role of awareness, to label all reported pre-intervention writing practices as strategies may not be accurate, but, at the very least, we can say that participants were engaged in practices which were helping them to accomplish writing tasks, perhaps to varying degrees of effectiveness. In any case, for the sake of simplicity we will continue to refer to these activities as strategies for the remainder of this discussion.

The majority of prewriting strategies listed in the survey were relatively popular among participants (i.e., for almost all prewriting strategies, participants reported frequency of use no less than 3 out of a possible 5, meaning at least “sometimes”). A few of the prewriting strategies were particularly favoured. These strategies included task-focused activities, such as reading model papers, and self-regulatory activities, such as noticing their own anxiety and then doing something to relax. One important insight drawn from classroom observations is that even if students had previously engaged in certain writing strategies, it does not necessarily follow that they were executing these activities effectively. For instance, while in the initial survey Susan reported “always” studying model papers, when we later analyzed exemplars as a class, Susan
disclosed that she did not know which writing features to analyze nor how to use these exemplars in a strategic manner. This finding suggests that the SRSD model might be harnessed as a vehicle not only to introduce new strategies to students but also to refine strategies already familiar to them.

By comparison, trends in pre-intervention drafting strategies were less evident. Responses to statements about drafting activities were too varied to note many meaningful patterns among them. Two strategies, however, seemed to be exercised with considerable frequency among all participants, and both of these could be classified by some models (Oxford’s [1990] Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, for example) as compensatory strategies: (1) rephrasing an idea when the words cannot be retrieved in the L2 and (2) pausing to locate a word in the dictionary. Interestingly, while some participants reported that they sometimes create outlines in their L1, none of the students write drafts in their L1 and translate them into English. This finding suggests that while occasionally some students prefer to conceptualize and organize ideas in their L1, they have sufficient mastery of the language to execute and expand their plans in English. Wolfersberger (2003) posits that using the L1 for idea generation and organization and the L2 for drafting is a compensatory strategy that “may work well for writers whose L2 proficiency is not high enough to allow them to compose completely in English but also is not low enough to warrant writing a complete draft in the L1” (p. 10). I would add that this approach might be strategically employed on a case-by-case basis. While working on her post-intervention paper, for instance, Diana commented that the nature of her topic was very complex and that conceptualizing and structuring the ideas in Korean helped to manage the overall difficulty of the writing task. This comment indicates that planning in the L1 might not be rendered necessary or efficient in every writing situation, so students might discern when such an approach could enhance efficiency and the finished product. Instructors might do well to explicitly identify this strategy as one that students could consider employing based on their level of proficiency and the complexity of the writing task.

Of the three types of strategies presented in the initial survey, participants seemed to engage most frequently in revising strategies. Most participants never submit their work without reviewing it first, and most will edit their writing for both global concerns (such as ideas and structure) and local issues (such as grammar and vocabulary). The frequency with which participants revise their work is not unusual since, as several scholars have found (Hall 1990;
Silva, 1993; Tagong, 1991), L2 writers tend to revise more than their L1 counterparts. Although L2 writers may be more preoccupied with revision, in contrast to L1 writers, they are less able to depend on intuition to edit their work (Silva, 1993), a fact which may explain why several of the participants expressed interest in learning strategies for revision.

**Effects of the Intervention on Writing Performance**

As explained in the methodology and results (Chapters 3 and 5), the effects of the SRSD intervention on students’ writing performance were gauged through a comparison of pre- and post-intervention writing samples which were assessed according to several categories (see Appendix 2.6 for the rubric). Detailed results for each individual are presented in Chapter 5. The discussion in this section examines general trends.

**Overall Performance Gains.**

As indicated in Chapter 5, overall differences in writing scores from pre- to post-intervention ranged from a net loss of 1% to a gain of 10%. The net loss, also explained in the results, could be attributed to the increased complexity of the post-intervention writing task, which may have presented greater challenges for the student (Gabriela) in organizing her ideas, as an example. As explained in Chapter 3, a modification was made to the data collection in that students were permitted to submit as their writing samples work that had been assigned in courses. While this variation made comparisons slightly less straightforward, the concession was necessary to facilitate students’ participation in the study.

Though none of the changes in scores might be deemed dramatic, a small trend is apparent in that the three students with the least significant changes in writing sample scores (net changes of -1% for Gabriela and increases of 2% for Rachel and Peter) conversely possessed the highest overall scores in the Test of Written Language-4 (TOWL-4), the primary baseline test administered at the beginning of the study (see Chapter 3 for further information on the TOWL-4). These students also held the highest pre-intervention sample scores. In comparison, students with the most significant gains in writing sample scores (Susan, Diana, and Jessica, with gains of 4%, 10%, and 10% respectively) were those with the lowest TOWL-4 scores. This pattern appears to align with Graham et al.’s (2013) findings in a recent meta-analysis of SRSD studies: SRSD instruction was shown to have a greater effect on students with weaker writing skills than
on students in general, although both types of students responded positively to this type of instruction. In this meta-analysis that featured 18 SRSD studies of students at the elementary and secondary level, effect sizes (ESs) on writing quality were calculated at 1.97 for weaker writers and 1.75 for students in general, both of which are recognized as statistically significant numbers. While the results of the current study might not be statistically significant, the pattern does support the claim that SRSD instruction can benefit any student and that the most novice writers are likely to experience more substantial improvement in writing quality. The findings here also contribute to the small but growing base of evidence for the effectiveness of SRSD instruction on the writing quality of postsecondary ELLs.

Aspects of Writing Most Affected and Factors Affecting Performance.

In addition to comparing the differences in scores for participants before and after the intervention, I analyzed the data according to each measure of writing quality in the scoring rubric (see Appendix 2.6 for the rubric and Chapter 5 for a full report on the effects of the intervention by category). As noted in Chapter 5, almost all of the participants improved by at least 10% in the following aspects: essay introductions, thesis statements, and style. Improvements in essay introductions and thesis statements seem logical given that strategies were explicitly taught to better manage both elements. Techniques for writing effective introductions formed a part of the TEST strategy for essays. As part of that lesson (see the sample lesson in Chapter 3), we discussed techniques for writing effective introductions and I modeled this practice for the students. Students including Rachel shared with me their purposeful efforts to strengthen essay introductions based on the instruction, so it ensues that participants who were studying and focusing on more effective ways of writing introductions produced better introductions in their post-intervention papers.

The same can be said of thesis statements. In fact, techniques for developing more effective thesis statements were taught with even greater emphasis, since they were discussed as part of three strategy sets: the STBARTS strategy (in which the “A” represents asking a good research question as the first step in formulating an effective thesis statement), the MAD sub-strategy (which outlines criteria used to evaluate the strength of research questions and thesis statements), and the TEST strategy for essays (in which the first “T” represents thesis statements). Given that considerable time was devoted to teaching and reinforcing this aspect of
writing, and added to this that participants such as Susan had identified the thesis statement as a particularly difficult aspect of writing, one might expect to witness considerable improvement in this area.

The other aspect of writing that saw notable improvement as a result of the intervention was style. For the purposes of this study, effective style was defined as follows: style and voice that are appropriate to the given audience and purpose, with sentences that are clear, active, concise, and varied. As this is a broader, less concrete aspect of writing that permeates text, I cannot allege that instruction in any one strategy or strategy set effected improvements in style. Rather, I would suggest that refined style is likely a byproduct of increased writing practice, individualized support, and heightened awareness of effective writing strategies.

While in the categories already mentioned almost all participants demonstrated progress, results in other categories were less consistent, with some participants exhibiting improvement and others showing a decrease in the same category. This phenomenon was evident for the following elements of writing: reasoning, organization, conclusion, and vocabulary. The decrease for students in some categories may have resulted from a shift in focus: While students focused on refining one or more aspects of their writing, they may have in turn neglected or given less effort to other aspects. The apparent decline in some of these categories might also be related to differences in the nature and complexity of the pre- and post-intervention papers. As explained in Chapters 3 and 5, to facilitate their involvement in the study, I compromised with participants by allowing them to submit as the pre-intervention sample a paper already written for a course. Likewise, students simultaneously enrolled in a summer course participated on the condition that they could submit as the post-intervention sample the final research paper for that class. Minimum requirements were set for these papers, but some flexibility had to be exercised in order to enable students’ participation. This adjustment to the study design introduced some complexity to the assessment and may have contributed in some cases to an apparent decrease in one or more aspects of writing quality.

To illustrate, Susan submitted a short book review as her pre-intervention sample but wrote a lengthier post-intervention research paper for the exclusive purpose of this study. Typically, a book review will lend itself to a more obvious structure (chronological, thematic, strengths-and-weaknesses-based, or another pattern depending on the details of the assignment.
prompt). The content of a book review also tends to be more straightforward than that of a research paper which requires the writer to generate all of the content and then determine an effective sequence of ideas. Thus, for Susan and other students including Gabriela, what appears to be a decline in organizational ability may instead reflect an increase in the length and complexity of the writing task.

Finally, the possibility must be acknowledged that persistent areas of difficulty may simply require a longer treatment than the project was able to accommodate. As explained in Chapter 3, SRSD instruction is intended to be criterion- rather than time-based. Ideally, students should not proceed to a new stage of instruction until they have mastered the previous one. However, due to time constraints and the small group design for the lessons, it was not always possible to wait for each participant to fully master each stage before advancing to the next part of the intervention as a group. I of course endeavoured to scaffold and individualize instruction during class time and carefully gauged the group’s overall progress to set a suitable pace for instruction. Even so, working with a unique group of ELLs who represented different English proficiency levels and varying linguistic and educational backgrounds meant that the pace of instruction would not be perfectly suited to every participant. In retrospect, given the time to facilitate more than one set of classes, I might have better catered to the various needs by creating two smaller groups on the basis of initial assessments.

In follow-up interviews, some students indicated that they would have benefited from having more time to master strategies. As explained in Chapter 5, Gabriela experienced greater ease and confidence in applying the writing strategies to a course paper after first using the strategies to write her post-intervention paper. Gabriela’s observation underscores the value of additional processing time: “Every time I apply it, I’m going to apply it better.” Diana and Jessica shared similar reflections. Having simultaneously contended with condensed summer courses, Diana regretted the resultant time constraints and pressure which she felt prevented her from fully adopting and applying the new strategies. Though not enrolled in summer courses, Jessica expressed a similar sentiment. She felt that the strategies learned were “all good. […] I just need more practice to apply.”

As the instructor-researcher, I, too, felt that some of the participants would have benefited from additional time to practice and truly master the strategies taught. As indicated in Chapter 3,
when I conceived of this study I intended to introduce two or at most three strategy sets—a vocabulary building strategy and a research process strategy to begin, and an additional strategy for paragraph structure or revision only if all students appeared to master the first two strategies and if time permitted. My goal had been to prioritize the reinforcement and mastery of a small number of strategies. During the course of the intervention, however, I became aware that a modification to the plan would be required to sustain the interest of students who sought to proceed at a faster pace, either because their writing practices were comparatively advanced or because they simply desired greater breadth of content. Consequently, to facilitate their continued engagement, I chose to compromise some of the program’s depth for breadth. I am aware that this decision was not a perfect solution, since some students would have required more time and practice to fully master and demonstrate the fruit of SRSD instruction. If I were to repeat a study of this kind in the future, I might group students of similar abilities together and limit the number of strategies to one of two sets at most to ensure thorough treatment of the topic and ample opportunities for practice.

Effects of the Intervention on Writers’ Sense of Self-Efficacy and Attitudes Towards Writing

The final section of this chapter addresses findings related to the third research question: How does instruction in SRSD influence postsecondary ELLs’ sense of self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing? If the influence of the intervention on writing performance was subtle, its effect on participants’ sense of self-efficacy towards writing in English was more pronounced. Revealed through the follow-up survey and interview (Appendices 2.10 and 2.11), changes in participants’ sense of self-efficacy were numerous and encouraging. Individual reports were presented in Chapter 5. For the purposes of this discussion, the following outcomes will be highlighted: elevated confidence, increased comfort and assurance of having a framework, lowered anxiety and stress, greater enjoyment, and greater patience and understanding of writing development as a process. The remainder of this chapter will discuss these outcomes in greater detail.

Elevated Confidence.

In direct response to the third research question, almost all participants demonstrated increased confidence in their capabilities as writers of English. I had hoped for this outcome for
participants and was encouraged by their reports. With the exception of Peter, who (as mentioned in Chapter 5) displayed a more confident and optimistic view of himself from the beginning of the study, participants at the outset lacked self-assurance as writers of English. The students described themselves using words such as “failure,” “no confidence,” and “not a good writer.” Feelings of embarrassment, discouragement, and hindrance were common to these writers. The effect of the study in this regard was more powerful than I had anticipated. All participants, even Peter, noted an increase in confidence. Participants’ post-intervention reflections showed evidence of elevated confidence and encouragement which were indisputable. Some students (Peter, Susan, and Gabriela) reported feeling better about their writing by 20% or even 40% in the follow-up survey. Others felt their “confidence building up,” as Diana expressed. These reports seem significant given that most of the students had reported intensely negative feelings about their English writing proficiency—beyond discomfort and frustration, some had grappled with feelings of guilt.

The increase in confidence for participants seemed to result from various aspects of the intervention. For Gabriela, confidence came from having acquired a set of personalized writing strategies that facilitated a sense of agency. For other students, like Peter, confidence grew from being better “equipped” with the resources required to accomplish writing tasks. For Rachel, who had already been using several of the featured strategies, confidence rose through the affirmation that she was “not doing something wrong” and that many of her writing practices could be considered “normal” and even effective. Other SRSD studies have noted an increase in writers’ self-confidence (Berry & Mason, 2010; Graham, Harris, & Troia, 2000; MacArthur & Philippakos, 2013), although in these studies, it would appear that newly acquired strategies are the main contributor to increased confidence. To my knowledge, no other studies have reported a case in which SRSD augmented confidence by validating a student’s existing writing practices.

Whatever the exact cause, increased confidence is an important outcome because of its connection to several factors, including emotional health and writing motivation. In a study by Qashoa (2014), both ELLs and their instructors at Emirati universities indicated that bolstering the confidence of ELL writers (through general instruction and through writing classes in particular) helps to minimize students’ anxiety and fear. Huerta, Goodson, Beigi, and Chlup’s (2017) findings support the belief that university students’ sense of self-efficacy is negatively correlated with writing anxiety. Conversely, heightened self-confidence is positively correlated
with motivation. As Boscolo and Hidi (2006) noted, “The ‘will’ (or lack of will) to write is closely connected to a writer’s self-perception of ability” (p. 2). Consistent with these findings, writing studies involving older students have suggested that self-efficacy may be a strong predictor of writing performance, self-regulatory activity, and intrinsic motivation for writing (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985; Meier, McCarthy, & Schmeck, 1984; Pajares & Johnson, 1994).

**Increased Comfort and Assurance of Having a Framework.**

Along with an increase in confidence, participants benefited from the added comfort and assurance of having what they called a “framework” or “checkpoint” to guide their writing process and assist them in monitoring their progress. Rachel noted that the conscious study of writing strategies provided her with “the framework to put things in place.” Peter explained that learning writing strategies helped him to know what to look for in his writing while editing, for instance. The imagery shared by Diana was perhaps most powerful: Explicit strategy instruction provided her with a map, illuminating the darkness of the writing journey. The presence of this kind of map to guide and track one’s progress can also have an unintended negative effect, however. For students like Diana, having a means of measuring one’s progress can also cause some discouragement, but with positive reframing, this effect can be curbed. Overall, the impact of increased attention to self-monitoring appears to be positive. This finding supports the claims of Graham & Harris (1989, 1997) and others (Zimmerman and Risemberg, 1997a, 1997b, for instance) that instruction in self-monitoring and other forms of self-regulation contribute to a learner’s sense of self-efficacy.

**Lowered Anxiety and Stress.**

The reported increase in students’ confidence and comfort was accompanied by a decrease in feelings of stress and anxiety. Having effective strategies in hand made the writing process feel easier and more manageable for participants. Susan and Gabriela observed a decrease in their anxiety during the very act of writing. Peter, Jessica, and Rachel all spoke of feeling less stressed or worried in general, and Diana felt that with the writing strategies she had acquired, she could “handle it” (the writing task) with greater ease. Given the detrimental effects that excess anxiety can have on students’ emotional and physical health and the way in which
anxiety and stress can negatively impact writing motivation and performance, this outcome is significant.

Granted, the relationship between anxiety and performance is not simple, and anxiety itself has been recognized as a multi-faceted construct (Dornyei [2005] discusses at length the nuances of this complex matter). While it is not within the scope of this study to confirm the type of anxiety experienced by participants, it may suffice to note that in most contexts anxiety has been recognized as a hindrance to students’ learning and performance (Dornyei, 2005; Oxford, 1999). If we consider what participants had previously experienced as quite possibly language anxiety—the “worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language” (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 27)—then this is a type of anxiety that as educators we would want to limit in students, as the overall negative effect of language anxiety on L2 performance has been well established (Dornyei, 2005; MacIntyre, 1999; Oxford, 1999). Even if we classify participants’ anxiety as writing anxiety, the conclusion is similar: Other studies have shown that high writing anxiety negatively impacts writing quality (Onwuegbuzi, 1997). For ELLs, lowering writing anxiety is particularly critical because, as studies such as that by Huerta et al. (2017) have shown, these learners tend to exhibit higher writing anxiety than students whose first language is English. Lowering levels of anxiety among ELLs through SRSD instruction can have powerful, far-reaching effects.

Greater Enjoyment.

Another positive effect of the SRSD intervention was that some participants experienced increased enjoyment in the writing process. Gabriela, for instance, indicated that because the new strategies facilitated a smoother writing process, she felt released from the preoccupation with writing and was able instead to focus on and enjoy the content of her research. In fact, Gabriela, Susan, and Jessica all reported greater enjoyment in writing at the end of the study (with increases of 40%, 40%, and 20% respectively). While this effect may require consistent use of strategies in order to manifest more noticeably in other participants, it would seem to coincide logically with the other benefits gleaned through this study. After all, one of Graham and Harris’s original goals was to offer struggling writers a means of regulating their negative feelings towards writing (Berry & Mason, 2010).
The concepts of “enjoyment” and “flow” as proposed by psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (2009) may aid in further interpreting the exceptionally positive experience of participants such as Gabriela. Csikszentmihalyi claimed that enjoyment is frequently rooted in a sense of accomplishment of the unexpected. Closely connected with enjoyment is the experience of flow—“the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter” (p. 4). Csikszentmihalyi further described flow as an optimal experience characterized by the following:

- a sense that one’s skills are adequate to cope with the challenges
- an intense, goal-directed, rule-bound action system that provides clear clues as to how well one is performing. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant, or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted.
- An activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake [...] even when it is difficult. (p. 71)

While it may be bold to assert that the intervention produced the conditions necessary for participants to experience a state of flow, some of the reported experiences, such as increased enjoyment and lowered anxiety in the very act of writing, parallel Csikszentmihalyi’s concept. Perhaps even momentarily, students were able to experience this phenomenon. Csikszentmihalyi did note that people who set and monitor goals are more likely to experience flow on a regular basis. Thus, it may be that the self-regulatory components of SRSD instruction contributed to students’ experience of this positive state.

**Greater Patience and Understanding of Writing Development as a Process.**

Finally, an unanticipated but equally beneficial effect of the SRSD intervention for participants was increased patience with one’s writing progress because of the ability to perceive writing development as an ongoing process. Perhaps this outcome is also related to the increased awareness that comes with self-monitoring: By exercising self-monitoring skills, writers can locate themselves on a continuum and recognize their progress. Previously burdened with guilt, in her follow-up interview Susan expressed increased comfort with making mistakes as part of “the learning process.” She recognized the role of persistence in honing writing skills. Gabriela spoke, too, about the “process” of becoming a better writer in her follow-up interview, and
Rachel identified with an “apprentice who continues to learn.” All three students spoke of having acquired this understanding through their participation in the study. As Harris and Graham (2016) maintain, SRSD has been shown to foster persistence, a trait that characterizes successful writers. By recognizing that the refinement of their writing skills requires ongoing effort, students are able to accept their current abilities and persevere in their attempts to improve.

Having discussed the pertinent themes of the research and the significance of the findings, the study will conclude in the final chapter with a summary of the research, the pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.
Chapter 7:
Conclusion

To conclude the study, I present in this chapter a summary of the research followed by the pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

Summary of Research

This case study explored the effects on postsecondary English language learners (ELLs) of a writing intervention that implemented the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD; Graham & Harris, 1996) model to teach strategies for planning, drafting, and revising research papers. Six participants attended 12 instructional sessions during a six-week period for a total of 36 hours of instruction. Data was collected through a mixed methods design to answer three research questions, the results of which are summarized as follows:

(1) Which strategies are postsecondary English language learners (ELLs) using to accomplish writing tasks?

Through an initial survey and interview, participants reported type and frequency of use for a variety of planning, drafting, and revising strategies, along with strategies for vocabulary building. The findings aligned with the expectation that these ELLs, enrolled at an advanced level of study, would have already adopted several writing strategies as part of their practice. Prewriting strategies, including both task-based activities (e.g., reading model papers) and self-regulatory activities (e.g., noticing and then lowering one’s level of anxiety) were used with considerable frequency among participants. For these strategies, most students reported a frequency of no less than 3 (“sometimes”) and as much as 5 (“always”). Reported use of drafting strategies was less consistent. Most popular in this category were two compensatory strategies: pausing mid-draft to locate a word in the dictionary and rephrasing a thought when the original wording was inaccessible in English. Revision strategies were used by this group with greater frequency than either prewriting and drafting strategies. Almost all participants reported never submitting their writing without reviewing it first, and most edited for both macro- and micro-level concerns. As for vocabulary building strategies, only some participants reported using any
strategies. Those who did so mentioned reading often and rehearsing vocabulary from that reading, as well as copying new vocabulary into a personal word bank.

In addition to identifying the types of strategies already in use among participants, a few key observations were noted in the discussion. When surveyed at the outset of the study, almost none of the students felt that they possessed good writing strategies; yet with further prompting most participants described behaviours that could be considered strategic. This incongruence raised two important points in the discussion. First, students may have been engaging in writing activities without knowing how to leverage them; this is clear in the case of at least one participant. Second, students may have hitherto lacked awareness of their writing behaviours and thus had not considered them as strategies. The latter scenario raised a philosophical question as to whether a behaviour can be classified as a strategy if the student is not conscious of the actions he or she is undertaking. Agreeing with scholars such as Griffiths (2008), Santangelo et al. (2008), and Alexander et al. (1998), I posited that awareness is an essential component and that the construct of strategy cannot be understood apart from it.

(2) How does instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) affect the writing performance of postsecondary ELLs?

The study reported modest effects on writing performance, with improvements in overall writing quality as high as 10%. The three most significant gains (increases of 4% for Susan and 10% for Diana and Jessica) were found among participants with lower baseline scores. This correlation seems to support Graham et al.’s (2013) findings that SRSD instruction has had a greater effect on students with weaker writing, although average writers have also responded positively to SRSD. While moderate, the overall gains demonstrated in this study contribute to the small but growing body of literature that is confirming the effectiveness of SRSD instruction among postsecondary ELLs.

Alongside overall scores, results were analyzed according to each measure of writing quality. Gains of at least 10% for almost all participants were evident in essay introductions, thesis statements, and style. The first two elements were taught explicitly as part of the intervention while the third appears to be a byproduct of increased writing practice and tailored support. Some participants exhibited lowered scores in certain categories. These lower scores may have resulted from a shift in students’ focus (i.e., while focusing on improving one aspect of
writing they may have inadvertently neglected another). The apparent decrease in some categories might also be related to differences in the complexity of the pre- and post-intervention papers. A third possibility is that particularly difficult aspects of writing for some participants may necessitate a longer treatment time than this study was able to accommodate.

(3) How does instruction in SRSD influence postsecondary ELLs’ sense of self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing?

The findings of the study revealed significant and encouraging transformations in participants’ sense of self-efficacy. Changes manifested most noticeably in the following ways: elevated confidence, increased comfort and assurance of having a framework, lowered anxiety and stress, greater enjoyment, and greater patience and understanding of writing development as a process. Dramatic conversions were seen in several of the participants, who initially confessed to feeling embarrassed, discouraged, and hindered as writers of English. The increase in students’ confidence appears to be rooted in one or more outcomes of the intervention: a newfound sense of agency through the adoption of a set of personalized writing strategies, as in Gabriela’s case; a general feeling of better equipped through the strategy instruction to accomplish writing tasks; and, in Rachel's case especially, affirmation of existing writing practices which resembled strategies featured in the instruction. These changes in affect bear great significance because of their impact on emotional and physical health, writing motivation, and performance. These findings align with other SRSD studies that have noted an increase in writers’ self-confidence (Berry & Mason, 2010; Graham, Harris, & Troia, 2000; MacArthur & Philippakos, 2013). However, it would appear that in those studies, the increase in confidence was due only to the acquisition of new strategies, whereas in the case of at least one participant, confidence was also augmented through validation of the student’s existing writing practices.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings from this study raise some important implications for teaching. These implications are as follows: the necessity of providing explicit writing strategy instruction to postsecondary ELLs as a guiding framework; the value in using writing strategy instruction not only to teach new strategies but also to raise learners’ awareness of their existing strategies, encourage the fine-tuning of these strategies, and facilitate the transfer of writing skills between language systems; and the need as educators to actively contribute to alleviating the anxiety and
other negative emotions carried by postsecondary ELLs. Each of these implications will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

As discussed in the preceding chapter, several participants spoke of the assurance and comfort that they experienced as a result of receiving, through the SRSD instruction, a guiding framework for their writing process. Some students indicated that explicit instruction would have been especially helpful at the beginning of their graduate studies, as they felt they had been left at the outset to navigate the challenges of writing in a second language (L2) entirely on their own. Such explicit instruction as that which is offered through SRSD enables more effective self-monitoring, because it can give students clear models and standards against which to check their progress. As instructors in higher education, we should not assume that postsecondary students, particularly ELLs, who may be less familiar with the expectations and norms of English academic writing, will know how to set and monitor appropriate and achievable goals for their writing. Rather than take this knowledge for granted, we need to offer explicit training to help students navigate this unfamiliar territory.

Second, the findings point to the usefulness of writing strategy instruction that goes beyond simply teaching new strategies. Such instruction has additional value because of its capacity to raise students’ awareness of strategies that they are already using and may benefit from refining. This added value can be particularly useful for ELLs who may be viewed as somewhat advanced writers. As educators, we should refrain from making assumptions about strategies that students appear to know, since, without explicit training, students themselves may not have sufficient knowledge to assess the effectiveness of their strategies. By becoming more aware of their writing behaviours and discovering ways to fine-tune these practices, ELLs may experience increased performance and confidence in their writing skills. Moreover, for ELLs who struggle to bridge gaps between their native language (L1) and second language (L2) writing practices, explicit strategy instruction can facilitate this important transfer.

Finally, this study underscores the need for educators to practically and purposefully contribute to alleviating the anxiety and other negative emotions experienced by postsecondary ELLs. As seen in the study, the anxiety levels of ELLs are considerably high. These learners tend to exhibit higher writing anxiety than students whose first language is English (Huerta et al., 2017), and the heightened writing demands of postsecondary studies may further exacerbate this
trend. Added to this intense emotion, the ELLs in this study reported strong feelings of shame, embarrassment, guilt, and limitation. If we hope for ELLs to excel at postsecondary, enjoy better health, and experience increased enjoyment in the process of learning and writing, then as educators we must contribute to building their sense of self-efficacy. Offering explicit strategy instruction is one recognized means of facilitating this goal, although it may not be the only one.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

While suggesting several pedagogical implications, this research has some limitations that must be noted. The limitations pertain to time, the nature of self-reported data, and the size and composition of the participant group. These limitations will be further articulated in this section.

As mentioned in the discussion, the main limitation of this study appears to be time. Graham and Harris (1996) intended for SRSD to be criterion- rather than time-based. In an ideal scenario, students would be allowed as much time as necessary to progress through the six stages of SRSD, and each student would be able to advance at his or her own pace. However, due to practical time constraints and the need to involve a minimum number of students to corroborate the findings, individual and indefinite timelines were not feasible. As a suitable compromise, I sought to “teach to the middle” and move the group through each stage based on the progress of the majority, offering extra reinforcement to anyone who required it during the individual feedback portion of the classes. Of course, a longer timeframe would have allowed for further opportunities to practice and solidify strategies. Alternatively, to better deal with the time constraints, fewer strategies might have been introduced within the same time frame. With a longer treatment time and/or a more restricted focus, the effects on students’ writing performance and sense of self-efficacy may have been more pronounced.

A second limitation that must be noted is the self-reported nature of some of the data. In particular, students’ sense of self-efficacy was measured through their own reports in surveys and interviews. This means of gathering data seemed most appropriate for this research question because I was interested in students’ own reflections and not my perceptions of these attitudes. I did not want to superimpose my assumptions about what I was observing over top of their experiences, most of which transpired internally. Having said this, I recognize the concerns that
some may have with self-reported material (over-reporting is an obvious one), and yet for the reasons mentioned I feel that this form of data collection was well suited to its purpose.

A third limitation arises from the size and nature of the participant group. As noted, this was a case study that involved 6 participants. Participants self-selected based on the criteria, which were relatively inclusive. I did not control for variables such as linguistic background, length of postsecondary study, or level of English language proficiency. As explained in the discussion, working with a somewhat heterogeneous group of ELLs in a group setting meant that the pace and content of SRSD instruction might not be perfectly suited to every participant. Having a diverse group of participants also does not exclude the possibility that some variation in results might be attributed to one or more of the variables among this group. On a positive note, the fact that results were favourable for all participants speaks to the beneficial nature of SRSD instruction for postsecondary ELLs of different linguistic and educational backgrounds. I am mindful, however, that a group of 6 participants prohibits broad generalization of the findings, and that the study would need to be replicated with a larger group in order to substantiate the results.

The limitations of the study generate several suggestions for future research. As indicated, time was a significant restriction. Future research might extend the length of the SRSD treatment to examine whether additional writing instruction and practice time would produce more pronounced effects on students’ writing performance along with their sense of self-efficacy. Similar results might be generated by repeating the study within the same amount of time as the current study (36 instructional hours), but with a more restricted focus on mastering one or two strategy sets.

To better address the needs of a heterogeneous participant group, a similar study might be conducted by subdividing a larger group of ELLs into at least two smaller groups on the basis of English writing proficiency (measured through baseline assessments). If feasible, organizing participants in this fashion might help to ensure that SRSD instruction is best tailored to students’ needs, expectations, and interest levels.

Finally, future studies might explore the effects of SRSD instruction on postsecondary ELLs with learning disabilities (LDs), as I had originally intended. As Geva and Herbert (2012) noted, "English Language Learners (ELLs) with LD represent a vulnerable group of students,
whose difficulties are frequently misunderstood, misattributed, or simply missed" (p. 272). These students remain among the most vulnerable within the postsecondary system, and, based on the encouraging results of the present study and others that have preceded it, the likelihood seems high that SRSD instruction will produce powerful effects for these students, too.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1:
Teaching Materials
## Appendix 1.1

### Class Schedule and Lesson Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class and Date</th>
<th>Lesson Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1: June 4      | **Introduction and welcome to the study**  
|                |  - Outlined goals and guidelines  
|                |  - Explained the class structure and stages of SRSD  
|                | **Implemented Stage 1 of SRSD: Developing background knowledge**  
|                |  - Reflected on and recast negative thoughts and feelings about writing (e.g., I have no idea what I’m supposed to do! I’m completely lost./ I’m not familiar with this kind of assignment, but I can talk to the professor for more guidance and find out if she has model papers that I can use as a guide.)  
|                |  - Learned relevant vocabulary (e.g., signal phrase, transition words, synthesize/synthesis)  
|                |  - Read and critiqued model research papers (using a chart to note strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities)  
|                | **Homework**  
|                | Review at least one more paper outside of class (exemplars provided) |
| 2: June 6      | **Continued Stage 1: Developing background knowledge**  
|                |  - As a class reviewed and discussed another model paper  
|                |  - Summarized the features of a good research paper  
|                | **Initiated Stage 2: Discussing current writing strategies and performance (and identifying target writing strategies)**  
|                |  - As a group discussed the meaning and value of strategy  
|                |  - Individually, students reflected on the strategies they use for planning, drafting, and revision  
|                |  - Students discussed these strategies with two other members of the group, then shared reflections with the class |
Continued Stage 2: Identifying target writing strategies

- Explained importance of memorizing target strategies
- Reported on the aspects of writing that participants were most interested to learn
- Introduced first target writing strategy:
  **DIRT** for building vocabulary
  - Tip to remember acronym: *Like trees planted in fertile soil (dirt), solid writing is rooted in rich vocabulary building strategies.*
    - Develop a bank of common academic words and phrases (in a vocabulary notebook or electronic chart—may include the part of speech, collocations, L1 translation, visual if needed)
    - Include specialized vocabulary, keywords and technical terms from course readings and research (especially those that surface repeatedly)
    - Replace repetitive and vague words (especially verbs such as “writes” or “says,” or common words such as “idea”)
    - Tie it to something you know (use mnemonics, the keyword method, or something meaningful to you)
  - Discussed the benefits of the DIRT strategy and when to use it
  - Explained and modeled the strategy
  - Set and evaluated aloud the achievement of strategy goals
  - Introduced students to several vocabulary building tools and resources to complement the strategy (e.g., Coxhead’s [2000] *Academic Word List*, University of Manchester’s *Academic Phrasebank* [http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/])
  - Shared an electronic vocabulary journal template for students to personalize
  - Allowed students to write and record their own personalized steps

**Class Activities and Homework**

- Review Coxhead’s (2000) list and add unknown words to vocabulary journal
- Review course reading and add at least 3 technical terms to vocabulary journal
- Examine a paper you have written for overused words and list suitable replacements in your vocabulary journal
- Take a new word from course readings and tie it to something familiar
Began class with a practice quiz on DIRT

**Continued Stage 2: Identifying target writing strategies**

- Introduced the **STBARTS** research strategy and **MAD** sub-strategy for evaluating research questions and thesis statements:
  - Tip to remember **STBARTS** acronym: *Have you ever heard of a place known St. Bart’s? It can be found on a map, but you may need to research to verify that.*
    - Make Sense of the task and set a schedule (What is my audience, purpose, scope? What are the parts of this assignment that I need to plan for?)
    - Choose a Topic
    - Brainstorm/do preliminary reading (journalist questions, free write)
    - Ask a good research question (using the MAD sub-strategy)
    - Read relevant, reliable sources (skim abstracts and summaries for relevance, read backwards, keep the research question in sight)
    - Take good notes (annotate directly on the book or on sticky notes, use a chart to organize sources)
    - Synthesize, and interpret (examine the way in which information is represented and look for connections and contrasts between sources)
  - Tip to remember **MAD** sub-strategy: *Coming up with a thesis statement or research question can sometimes drive students mad, but the process doesn’t have to.*
    - Manageable
    - Arguable
    - Defensible

- Discussed benefits of these strategies and when to use them
  - Modeled practice of these strategies using “mental health,” a topic suggested by one of the participants
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5: June 18 | Reviewed STBARTS, focusing especially on “T” and “S” steps (taking good notes and synthesizing sources)  
Students practiced STBARTS and MAD |
| 6: June 20 | Students practiced and personalized STBARTS and MAD  
Introduced students to **TEST** strategy for essay (and paragraph) structure:  
  - How to remember: *Always test your paragraphs and essays for the essential components.*  
    - Thesis statement (and introduction)  
    - Evidence/Explanatory paragraphs  
    - Summary paragraph  
    - Transitions between paragraphs  
Modeled use of TEST for essays using the topic of “mental health”  
Completed the steps of the strategy using an outline template |
| 7: June 25 | Taught students how to **TEST** strategy for paragraph structure:  
  - Topic sentence (a mini-thesis)  
  - Evidence, examples, explanations  
  - Summary sentence (optional)  
  - Transitions  
Modeled use of TEST for paragraphs with the topic of “mental health”  
Modeled use of TEST for essays and paragraphs with the topic of “the family dinner” |
| 8: June 27 | Students practiced and personalized the TEST strategy, receiving feedback from peers and instructor regarding essay plans and practice paragraphs |
| 9: July 4  | Students applied **DIRT, STBARTS, MAD** and **TEST** strategies to final research paper, receiving individualized scaffolding and feedback |
| 10: July 9 | Students applied strategies to work on final research paper  
Taught students **UP3C** strategy for paraphrasing:  
  - Understand the passage  
  - Put away the source  
  - Change the wording and sentence structure  
  - Compare with the original  
  - Credit the source |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11: July 11</td>
<td>Students applied strategies to work on final research paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taught students optional strategy for editing, <strong>STAR:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Substitute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Take away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Add</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Rearrange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12: July 16</td>
<td>Students applied strategies to work on final research paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1.2

**Exemplar Analysis Chart**

Title of Paper: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Opportunities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Weaknesses</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Keep doing these things)</td>
<td>(Start doing these things)</td>
<td>(Stop doing these things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., Great links between paragraphs (“This ideal,” “Furthermore”)</td>
<td>e.g., Could make connection between quotation and argument clearer in paragraph 4</td>
<td>e.g., Needless grammatical errors (“understand” instead of “understanding”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 1.3

**Electronic Vocabulary Journal (DIRT)**

**Developing a Bank of Common Academic Words**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Synonyms or Related Words</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Context/Word in a Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyze (v.)</td>
<td>To examine methodically and in detail, typically for purposes of explanation and interpretation</td>
<td>Examine, scrutinize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derive (v.)</td>
<td>To obtain something from</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maple syrup is derived from the sap of maple trees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Including Technical/Discipline-Specific Vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Context/Word in a Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diaspora (n.)</td>
<td>The scattering of the Jews from Israel into foreign countries; the Jews forced to live outside of Israel in other parts of the Roman Empire; also called the <em>dispersion</em>. Later in the New Testament, <em>diaspora</em> is used to refer to Christians, both Jew and Gentile, who were scattered throughout the world.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumatology (n.)</td>
<td>The branch of theology that investigates what scripture teaches about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maple syrup is derived from the sap of maple trees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Replacing Repetitive Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Synonyms or Related Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idea (n.)</td>
<td>Concept, Notion, Thought, Hypothesis, Theory, View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important (adj.)</td>
<td>Significant, Meaningful, Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggest (v.)</td>
<td>Imply, Intimate, Indicate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1.4

Assignment Task Words (STBARTS)

Knowing these key verbs or task words will help you to understand what you need to accomplish in your paper. Use this list as a general guide and ask your instructor for clarity if in doubt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Account (for)</td>
<td>Explain, clarify, or give reasons for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Break a subject into smaller parts and show how those parts relate to one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
<td>Defend a claim by using reason and proof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess</td>
<td>Consider the value or importance of something, noting the positive, negative and disputable aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classify</td>
<td>Divide a large group into distinguishable sub-groups or categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment (on)</td>
<td>May require clarification from the instructor, but usually involves analysis or assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Describe the similarities (and differences) between two or more things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Show the differences between two or more things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticize</td>
<td>Weigh the value or truthfulness of something, citing the criteria upon which you base your judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Provide a clear, detailed explanation; identify the essential elements or meaning of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Show in detail; explain the main aspects of an idea or a sequence of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Examine key points and possible interpretations; investigate an idea, giving reasons for and against. Draw a conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Weigh the truthfulness or worth of something (similar to assess or criticize)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine</td>
<td>Inspect closely and investigate the implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Make something understandable or give reasons for the cause(s) of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Select the key features of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrate</td>
<td>Demonstrate or explain by using specific examples or statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret</td>
<td>Explain the meaning of something in your own words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justify</td>
<td>Express valid reasons for accepting a particular interpretation or conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Indicate the main features of a topic or sequence of events and show how they interrelate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prove</td>
<td>Establish the truth or validity of something by presenting irrefutable evidence or a logical sequence of statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect (on)</td>
<td>Share your thoughts on a subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relate</td>
<td>Explain a cause and effect sequence or the connection between two things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Survey a topic; critically examine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Restate the main ideas in your own words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesize</td>
<td>Connect ideas to create something new; combine elements or parts to create a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trace</td>
<td>Describe or portray in detail; carefully outline or explain step by step</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1.5

Brainstorming Tip Sheet (STBARTS)

Generating Ideas: Brainstorming Techniques

Freewriting

Practice freewriting for a timed period (e.g., 15 minutes). Write whatever comes to mind. If the thought comes to you that you do not know what to write, then write that down, too. Don’t worry about fragments and grammatical errors. The idea is to simply keep words flowing onto the page.

You can also try looping your freewriting. Review what you have written and extract any thoughts or phrases that stand out. Copy and use them as springboards for new freewrites. This can be a helpful early brainstorming exercise if you make your topic the focus of your freewrite. It can also help to get creative juices flowing at any point in the process if you are experiencing writer’s block.

Journalist Questions

The purpose of this brainstorming approach is to generate a list of questions about the topic. You can write your topic at the top of a page and list the subheadings of who, what, where, when, why and how, or you can use a more visual approach called starbursting. To try starbursting, draw a six-pointed star in the middle of your page and write your topic in the centre. On the inside of each star tip, jot the question categories. Next, generate questions and record them on the corresponding tips.

As you engage in this exercise, try not to find the answers as you go along. Instead, concentrate on producing as many questions as you can. A comprehensive list of questions will lead you to a more complete understanding of the topic and a better sense of the aspects that your paper should address.

Here is another example. Suppose that your instructor has asked to write about political conflict in the Middle East. You could begin by asking yourself the following questions:
• **Who** is involved in the conflict?
• **What** issues most clearly divide those engaged in this dispute?
• **When** did the troubles in the Middle East begin, and how have they developed over time?
• **Where** does the conflict seem most heated or violent?
• **Why** have those living in this area found it so difficult to resolve the situation?
• **How** might this conflict be resolved?

**Mind Mapping (also referred to as Clustering or Webbing)**

A simple way to mind map is to write your topic in the middle of your page and circle it. As you think about and research the topic, jot subtopics around your central theme and draw lines to show connections between words and ideas. Mind maps can also be colourful and visual, as in the example below.

Mind maps can help to summarize information, draw connections between ideas, and organize thoughts. Many free sources online can provide you with examples and tips on how to get the most out of this technique.

Appendix 1.6

Reading Tips (STBARTS)

Try working backwards.

1. Go to the questions at the end of the text. Read and answer to the best of your ability, and then begin reading with those questions in mind.

2. Next, read the summary of the chapter or article. This will provide a background as to the big ideas in the text.

3. Preview headings, bold and italicized words, and illustrations to get a sense of the main ideas and organization.

4. Read the chapter or article introduction.

5. Now read the chapter from front to back. Work to connect the ideas found in the chapter.

Try the SQ4R Method for retaining information – Survey, Question, Read, Record, Recite, and Review.

- Surveying helps you to grasp the big picture, direct your thoughts, and get started. Browse the text and see what stands out.

- Questioning helps you to think actively and remain objective. Acting as a journalist, pose questions about the text in the margins or on a separate sheet.

- Reading actively (using your senses to imagine what you are reading about, looking up unfamiliar concepts, etc.) helps you to make connections.

- Recording details, especially if you are a kinesthetic learner, helps to solidify knowledge. It also generates a copy of information to review later. Jot down main ideas on flashcards, or write a summary to test your understanding.

- Reciting consists of dictating or restating the main points (to yourself or a friend).
• **Reviewing** within 24 hours after reading will help to transfer knowledge from short-term to long-term memory. Strive to rehearse the information regularly, not just before a test.

**Pace yourself** and read in 30-50 minute segments at most.

**Make connections** between what you are reading and your own knowledge and interests. Compare your current reading to other texts you’ve read.

**Read for big ideas**, then key supporting details. Don’t try to grasp and retain everything.

**Annotate** the text, using some of the following techniques:

- Mark the text directly (if you own it), or else use sticky notes
- Underline main points and star the most crucial ones
- Draw arrows between related concepts
- Jot questions and summarize ideas in the margins
- Use numbers to mark a sequence of ideas
- Avoid using highlighters for this activity as they are a more passive means of interacting with material. A better strategy would be to use a multi-colour method to link related ideas or to distinguish main ideas from supporting details.

**Visualize** the concepts concretely. Draw diagrams or webs to depict associations.

**Read aloud**, taking turns with a friend if possible. Try the text-to-speech function on electronic documents, especially if you are an auditory learner.

**Outline** the text by summarizing the main idea of each paragraph in a few words.
Appendix 1.7

Notetaking Template (STBARTS)

Working Thesis Statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Idea/Point 1:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 3:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 4:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 5:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Idea/Point 2:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 3:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 4:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 5:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme/Idea/Point 3:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 3:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 4:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 5:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Idea/Point 4:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source 1:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 2:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 3:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 4:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source 5:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1.8

**Essay Outline Template (TEST)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Thesis Statement (and Introduction)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Point/Theme # 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Point/Theme # 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Point/Theme # 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Point/Theme # 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Point/Theme # 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Evidence/Explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary/Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**T- Transitions**—remember to build these in later
Appendix 1.9

**Transitions List (TEST)**

Have you ever received comments on an assignment such as “choppy” or “How is this connected?” If so, your writing may need some transitional words or phrases to keep your reader moving forward without stumbling on a thought, sentence, or paragraph that seems out of place. In writing, **transitions** act as road signs by alerting readers to additions and changes in discourse. Transitions can also bridge gaps by establishing connections between two or more ideas. Ultimately, these handy words and phrases function as glue between thoughts, sentences and paragraphs, thereby improving the cohesion of your piece.

To use the list below, determine what type of signal you want to make. Then, search the appropriate grouping for a transition that best suits your purpose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addition</th>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Generalization</th>
<th>Sequence/Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>again</td>
<td>by contrast</td>
<td>as a rule</td>
<td>afterwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also</td>
<td>contrarily</td>
<td>for the most part</td>
<td>at first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>conversely</td>
<td>generally</td>
<td>at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as well as</td>
<td>even so</td>
<td>in general</td>
<td>currently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>besides</td>
<td>however</td>
<td>ordinarily</td>
<td>during</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coupled with</td>
<td>instead</td>
<td>usually</td>
<td>earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>further</td>
<td>nevertheless</td>
<td></td>
<td>finally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>furthermore</td>
<td>on the other hand</td>
<td></td>
<td>for now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in addition</td>
<td>otherwise</td>
<td></td>
<td>for the time being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moreover</td>
<td>rather</td>
<td></td>
<td>in time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>together with</td>
<td>still</td>
<td></td>
<td>later (on)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>too</td>
<td>yet</td>
<td></td>
<td>meanwhile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Emphasis</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comparatively</td>
<td>above all</td>
<td>above</td>
<td>in brief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in comparison</td>
<td>chiefly</td>
<td>adjacent</td>
<td>in conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the same way</td>
<td>especially</td>
<td>behind</td>
<td>in short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>likewise</td>
<td>indeed</td>
<td>below</td>
<td>in sum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>similarly</td>
<td>in fact</td>
<td>beside</td>
<td>on the whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>particularly</td>
<td>beyond</td>
<td>to conclude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>singularly</td>
<td>here</td>
<td>to summarize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>truly</td>
<td>nearby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with attention to</td>
<td>there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Restatement</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accordingly</td>
<td>in essence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a result</td>
<td>in other words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consequently</td>
<td>namely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hence</td>
<td>that is (to say)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>therefore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1.10

Editing Checklist (STAR)

**Substitute**
- words that are weak and vague with words that are strong, clear and specific
- colloquial/informal words with words that are appropriate for formal academic writing
- weak verbs with stronger, more precise and accurate verbs
- vague pronouns (such as “it”) with clear references (such as “this concept”)
- weaker/less convincing arguments with stronger examples and evidence
- passive voice with active voice (in most cases)
- unsuitable verb tenses for more appropriate ones

**Take Out**
- opinions that cannot be supported
- disconnected or irrelevant information
- unnecessary repetitions
- unnecessary punctuation
- any sentences or paragraphs that do not help to accomplish your purpose or prove your thesis

**Add**
- supportive detail/evidence to strengthen points
- clarification of meanings and key terms
- interpretation of direct quotations, statistics, and other pieces of support
- transition words and phrases to improve cohesion
- missing articles (a, an, the)
- missing plurals
- missing punctuation and conjunctions (e.g., and, but) to fix run-ons and fragments
- sentence variety

**Rearrange**
- the sequence of paragraphs to produce a more logical or effective order
- sentences if needed to create a more logical progression within paragraphs
- sentence structure to create variety, improve clarity, or change the emphasis
Appendix 1.11

Checklist for the Writing Process

☐ **Vocabulary Building: DIRT** (ongoing while reading and writing)
  - Vocabulary Journal
  - Academic Word List
  - Useful Phrases for Academic Writing
  - Academic Phrasebank

☐ **Research: St. Barts**
  - MAD criteria
  - Research Planning Chart
  - Research Note Taking Template

☐ **Essay Outline: TEST**
  - Essay Outline Template

☐ **Paragraph Structure: TEST**
  - UP3C Paraphrasing Strategy

☐ **Revision: STAR**
Appendix 2:
Data Collection and Analysis Instruments
Appendix 2.1

Demographic Questionnaire

First save safe in a locked cabinet. Although the information here may be used in the study, your identity will be protected and your real name will not appear in any of the reporting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Information</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last Name:</td>
<td>First Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Birth:</td>
<td>Gender (circle one): M F Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have, or were you ever diagnosed with a learning disability? (Circle one)</td>
<td>YES NO Not Sure Prefer Not to Say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If YES, please explain:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Studies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which postsecondary program are you currently enrolled in? (Check one)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Undergraduate (List program)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Graduate (List program)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of credits completed: Number of credits remaining:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What education did you complete before coming to this school? (You may check more than one)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Some high school ☐ High school ☐ Professional training ☐ Some college ☐ College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever taken a course in English writing? (circle one) YES NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, please explain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Geographic Background</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth (City, Country):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years you have lived in Canada:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries you have lived in (List all of them):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on the next page
Your Language Background

English score of one of the following tests you completed when you applied to this school: (List your score beside the test you took)

TOEFL ________
IELTS ________
Other (list the name of the test and your score) __________________________________

List all of the languages you know and answer the questions about that language in each column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>When did you begin learning this language? (You can give either a year or your age when you started learning)</th>
<th>Where do you use this language? (school, home, church, public, etc.)</th>
<th>Which skills do you use in this language?</th>
<th>What level of proficiency do you think you have in this language?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.g., Italian</td>
<td>At 8 yrs. old</td>
<td>At home; summer vacations in Italy</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!
Appendix 2.2

Initial Writing Survey

The contents of this form are confidential. This survey, once complete, will be kept safe in a locked cabinet. Although the information here may be used in the study, your identity will be protected and your real name will not appear in any of the reporting.

Date: ____________
Name: ________________

Part I: Writing Experience

1. What types of writing do you do in English? (You may check more than one)
   - [ ] Emails  [ ] Notes  [ ] Letters  [ ] Essays  [ ] Creative Writing  [ ] Sermons
   - [ ] Other (please explain): ________________________________

2. What types of writing have you done in your native language? (You may check more than one)
   - [ ] Emails  [ ] Notes  [ ] Letters  [ ] Essays  [ ] Creative Writing  [ ] Sermons
   - [ ] Other (please explain): ________________________________

In Parts II and III, you will find statements about writing. Please read each statement and circle the number beside it that shows how often the statement is true for you.

   1. Never or Almost Never
   2. Rarely (Less than half of the time)
   3. Sometimes (About half of the time)
   4. Usually (More than half of the time)
   5. Always or Almost Always

Example:
I look for opportunities to practice English speaking with other people.  1  2  3  4  5
If you don’t usually look for opportunities to practice speaking in English, circle 2.

Do not answer how you think you should be, but how you really are. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Make sure you understand the statement, but do not think too hard about the answer. Your first feeling about the statement is usually most accurate.

Part II: Habits and Feelings about Writing

(Circle the appropriate number)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I try to choose essay topics that I will learn more from even if they require more work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I try to practice my English writing skills as much as possible.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I try to avoid writing in English whenever possible.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. I enjoy writing in English. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I dislike writing in English. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel calm when I write in English. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I feel anxious or stressed when I write in English. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I think I am a good English writer. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I think I am a poor English writer. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I feel confident about sharing my English writing with others. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I might face challenges during the writing process, but I feel good about my work when it is finished. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I think I have good strategies that I can use to help me complete writing assignments. 1 2 3 4 5
13. Even when I am not happy with my grade on a paper, I try to learn from my mistakes. 1 2 3 4 5

**Part III: Writing Strategies**

(Circle the appropriate number)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before I start to write an essay in English…</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I make a schedule for my writing process.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I do a brainstorming activity (e.g., mind map).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I notice if I am feeling overwhelmed or nervous about writing and I try to relax.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I look at a good paper written by a native speaker or other skilled writer.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I form a research question about my topic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I start writing without a plan or outline.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I write a plan or outline for my essay in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I write a plan or outline for my essay in my native language.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I develop a plan for writing in my mind, but I don’t put it on paper.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I talk to other people about my topic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I talk to my professor or a writing consultant to make sure I understand what I need to do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I make sure I am in a good environment to write (comfortable and without distractions).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I reflect on what I already know about the topic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I think about my reader audience and plan with that in my mind.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I write an essay in English…</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I write everything in my native language first and then translate into English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I stop to read and check each sentence before I write the next one.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I stop and check my writing after I finish an idea or a whole paragraph.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. If I don’t know a word in English, I write it in my native language and then try to find an English word for it later. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
5. I ask someone for help (e.g., instructor, writing consultant) if I have difficulty while I am writing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
6. If I don’t know the words for what I want to say in English, I try to describe it in a different way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
7. When I don’t know the word in English, I stop writing to look it up in a dictionary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
8. I refer to my outline or plan and make changes to it if I need to. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
9. I stick to my outline or plan no matter what. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
10. I take a break from writing when it feels difficult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

| When I revise an essay in English… | Never 1 | Rarely 2 | Sometimes 3 | Usually 4 | Always 5 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
1. I read my work out loud or silently. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
2. I put away my work for a day or two so I can come back to it with a new perspective. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
3. I share my work with someone for feedback. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
4. I check the vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
5. I check grammar and spelling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
6. I check the structure of the paper. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
7. I check the ideas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
8. I use a dictionary or grammar guide. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
9. I hand in my paper without reading it through. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
10. I check the assignment instructions to make sure I have accomplished the task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6
11. When I get feedback on my work, I try to use that information to help me write better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
12. I celebrate or give myself a reward for finishing my writing task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Do you use any other writing strategies that were not mentioned? Please list them:

Which 3 aspects of English writing would be most interesting or useful for you to learn more about?

(Choose only three. Using the lines next to the items, rank them by putting a 1 beside the topic that is most important to you, a 2 beside the next most important, and 3 beside your third choice. Use the “other” option if you would like to learn about something that is not on the list.)

_____ Planning a writing project and managing my time
_____ Forming research questions and doing research
_____ Organizing my ideas
_____ Expanding my writing vocabulary
_____ Citing my sources properly and using them to support my ideas
_____ Revising my writing
_____ Other (explain): __________________________________________________________

Thank you for completing this survey!
Appendix 2.3

Initial Interview Questions

Script: I would like to ask you some questions to learn more about things such as your feelings about writing in English, which strategies (methods, techniques) you use when you write, what you want to improve, and how you experience our small group writing classes. Sometimes I will take notes as you talk so that I can remember what you said later on. Please remember that anything you say in these interviews will not be attached to your real name in my study. If at any time you do not feel comfortable answering a question you can choose to skip it, and if you do not want to continue the interview you can ask to stop. You can also ask me to repeat a question or rephrase it at any time. Are you ready? Let’s begin.

1. Tell me a little bit about your studies at this school. Why did you decide to come here? What has been your experience so far in the program?

2. Why are you interested in improving your English writing skills?

3. If I asked you to describe yourself as an English writer, what words would you use?

4. What do you find most challenging about writing in English?

5. How do the challenges of writing in English compare with writing in your native language? What is the same, and what is different for you?

6. Which strategies do you use to help you face those challenges?

7. What things do you do to prepare to write an essay? (What do you do after you receive assignment instructions from your professor?)

8. Which strategies do you use to build your English vocabulary?

9. How do you revise and edit your paper when your draft is completed?

10. Is there anything else you want me to know before we begin our writing classes together?
Appendix 2.4

Curriculum-Based Measurement Story Starter

Name:__________________

Riding into the city on the bus, I saw the enormous buildings and…

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
Appendix 2.5

Alphabet Writing Fluency Test

Name: ____________

Instructions:

Do not begin until you are told to do so. When you are told to start, you will have 30 seconds to try to write the letters of the alphabet from A to Z (uppercase or lowercase, it doesn’t matter) as fast as you can. If you get through the whole alphabet and have any time left, start over again from A and go through the alphabet as many times as possible before the time is done. You must stop writing as soon as you hear “stop.”

When the timer starts, use the space below to write the letters of the alphabet.
## Appendix 2.6

### Scoring Rubric for Research Papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4 Excellent</th>
<th>3 Effective</th>
<th>2 Adequate</th>
<th>1 Inadequate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Excellent introduction that secures interest of reader, states topic clearly, and previews structure of the paper.</td>
<td>Introduction that is interesting, states topic, and previews structure of the paper.</td>
<td>Basic introduction that states the main topic in general terms only partially anticipating the structure of the paper.</td>
<td>Introductions of main topic is weak and structure of paper is missing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>Thesis is clear, specific, interesting, and arguable. Thesis indicates a clear structure for the argument.</td>
<td>Thesis is clear, sufficiently specific, and arguable. It suggests some structure for the argument.</td>
<td>Thesis is somewhat clear and arguable in spite of not suggesting a structure for the argument.</td>
<td>The focus and purpose of the paper is unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content/Evidence</td>
<td>Paper is thoroughly researched, detailed, and logical. Information clearly relates to the thesis. Excellent critical, relevant and consistent connections made between evidence and thesis.</td>
<td>Paper is well-researched and logical. Information relates to the thesis. Consistent connections made between evidence and thesis.</td>
<td>Paper shows an effort to use some sources with details and examples to support the argument. Information relates to main topic. Some connections made between evidence and thesis.</td>
<td>Paper is not sufficiently researched or supported with detail and examples. Limited or no connections made between evidence and thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning</td>
<td>Exhibits depth, fullness, and complexity of thought. Excellent analysis of the topic.</td>
<td>Exhibits some depth of thought. Reasoning is consistently convincing. Good analysis of the topic.</td>
<td>Reasoning may be simplistic or repetitive; however, it shows a level of analysis of the topic.</td>
<td>Lacks depth and complexity of thought. Reasoning is overly simplistic or contradictory, which has a negative impact on analysis of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Clear and logical order that thoroughly supports thesis development. Excellent transitions between and within paragraphs. Paragraph structure is clear and effective throughout.</td>
<td>Clear and logical order that supports thesis development. Good transitions between and within paragraphs. Paragraph structure is evident and effective on the whole.</td>
<td>Demonstrates an effort to ensure logical order for thesis development and transitions between and within paragraphs, even though they are sometimes ineffective.</td>
<td>Order of ideas is unclear and illogical. Paragraph structure and transitions between and within paragraphs negatively affect the flow of the arguments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Excellent summary of argument with concluding thoughts that impact reader. Thesis reiterated in fresh, effective language. Introduces no extraneous information.</td>
<td>Good summary of topic with clear concluding ideas. Thesis reiterated in sufficiently new language. Introduces no extraneous information.</td>
<td>Basic summary of topic with some final concluding ideas, even though conclusion can be too close to the introduction. May introduce new information that is misplaced in the conclusion.</td>
<td>Lack of summary of topic. Conclusion is incomplete and/or unfocused, with simple repetition of the thesis statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics (grammar, spelling, punctuation)</td>
<td>Almost entirely free of punctuation, spelling, and grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Contains a few errors in punctuation, spelling and grammar.</td>
<td>Contains many errors in punctuation, spelling, and grammar which however do not obstruct clarity.</td>
<td>Numerous and distracting errors in punctuation, spelling, and grammar, such that they obstruct understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Word choice is specific, purposeful, dynamic and varied. Disciplinary-specific terminology is used appropriately and effectively.</td>
<td>Word choice is for the most part specific, purposeful, and varied throughout. The writer often goes beyond a generic word to find one that is effective and precise.</td>
<td>Vocabulary conveys the meaning, in spite of choice of words which may be generic, redundant, and cliché. Some words are used inappropriately.</td>
<td>Word choice is excessively redundant, cliché, and unspecific. Many words are used inappropriately, confusing the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection and integration of sources</td>
<td>Exceptional use of high-quality sources to support points. Sources are strategically and seamlessly woven into the paper, and their purpose in supporting the argument is unquestioned.</td>
<td>Good use of reliable, reputable sources to support points. Sources are well-integrated into the paper, and their connections to the writer’s ideas are made clear.</td>
<td>Inconsistent use of quality sources to support points. An effort to attribute sources is visible; however, many statements seem unsubstantiated. Sources are not smoothly integrated.</td>
<td>Sources are questionable or insufficient to support points. Stronger evidence needed to substantiate statements. Sources, when included, are choppy and seemingly unconnected to the argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Style and voice are not only appropriate to the given audience and purpose, but also show originality. Sentences are clear, active, concise, and varied.</td>
<td>Style and voice are appropriate to the given audience and purpose. Sentences are mostly clear, active, concise, and somewhat varied.</td>
<td>Style and voice are somewhat appropriate to given audience and purpose in spite of some unclear, wordy, and/or repetitive sentences, and/or overuse of the passive voice.</td>
<td>Style and voice are inappropriate or do not address the given audience and purpose. Sentences are unclear, verbose, and unvaried.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Inspired by research paper rubrics published at Cornell University\(^1\) and the University of Colorado Denver.\(^2\)]

Note: The four levels in this rubric correspond to percentages as follows: 1 corresponds to 40%, 2 to 60%, 3 to 80%, and 4 to 100%. Level 1 represents performance that, while falling short of the minimum expectations, still exhibits recognizable effort and as such has been equated with a grade of 40%. This level represents work that is clearly below the standard but has not been deemed a complete loss. Level 2 represents adequate performance, where the basic requirements have been reached but the writer cannot yet be seen as skilled in that capacity, hence the equivalent grade of 60%. At level 2, the writer is closer to 100 than 0, but still a distance from 100. Level 3 represents an effective demonstration of the writing skill in question, earning the writer 80%, and 4 is reserved for a demonstration of true excellence, which would earn the writer 100% for the category in question.

---


Appendix 2.7

Journal Entry Guidelines

Please follow the guidelines below:

• You will be encouraged to write for 15 minutes in your journal after each writing class.
• This is an opportunity to reflect on and review what you are learning in the writing classes and to think about what you can apply to your own studies.
• Aim for 1 page double-spaced per entry.
• By the end of the study, your journal should have 12 entries, one per class.
• Please email your journal entry before midnight the next day (Tuesday for Monday’s class, Thursday for Wednesday’s class) to [email address].
• If you are going to write in one continuous file, please remember to include the date when you start a new entry.

Only Lina Balsamo and her thesis supervisor, Dr. Enrica Piccardo will be able to read your journal. If you have any questions, contact Ms. Balsamo by email at [email address]. Your journal entries will be treated confidentially; that is, your name will not be identified.

The following guiding questions may help you write your entry. **You do not have to answer all or even any of these questions, if there is something else about today’s lesson that you want to write about.**

• What did you enjoy or appreciate most about the lesson today?
• What did you find challenging in the lesson today?
• What part of the lesson today (if any) do you think will be most useful for your university studies? Why?
• Did anything in the lesson today remind you of something that you have read or heard before?
• How did you feel during this lesson?
• What questions do you still have about the lesson today?
• How can you apply today’s lesson to your own writing?
• What is the one thing you want to take and remember from today’s class?
Appendix 2.8

Vocabulary Strategy Review

1. Do you remember the four parts of the vocabulary strategy we discussed last class? What is the acronym and what does it stand for?

2. What is a mnemonic and what is the advantage of using a mnemonic?

3. If you had the following words to remember in your vocabulary list, what kind of mnemonic could you use to help you remember and later retrieve these words? Try as many as you can.

   a. Pneumatology – the study of the Holy Spirit

   b. Circumspect – suspicious

   c. Anthropomorphism – the attribution of human characteristics or to a god, animal, or object

   d. Sublime – of great moral, intellectual, or spiritual worth; supreme, awe-inspiring, impressive

   e. Hermeneutics – the study of methods and principles of interpreting biblical text
Appendix 2.9

Halfway Point Questions

1. What have been the most helpful or useful aspects of the classes so far?

2. If you could change something about the writing classes, what would it be?

3. What are some topics you still want to learn about in the next few weeks?

4. Is there anything else you want to share as we continue our writing classes together?
Appendix 2.10

Follow-Up Survey

Date: _____________

Name: ______________

Part I: Reflecting on the Writing Classes

1. What were the most useful skills or lessons you gained from the writing classes? Which strategies do you think you will use the most?

2. Are there any strategies that you might not use? Why do you think you might not use them?

3. Have your thoughts and feelings about English writing changed in any way since the writing classes started?

4. If I asked you to describe yourself as an English writer, what words would you use? Has anything changed?

Continued on the next page
Similar to the survey you completed at the beginning of the study, you will find statements about writing in the next two parts. Please read each statement and circle the number beside it that shows how often the statement is true for you.

1. Never or Almost Never
2. Rarely (less than half of the time)
3. Sometimes (About half of the time)
4. Usually (More than half of the time)
5. Always or Almost Always

Example:
I look for opportunities to practice English speaking with other people. 1 2 3 4 5

*If you look for opportunities to practice speaking in English less than half of the time, circle 2.*

Do not answer how you think you *should* be, but how you really are. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Make sure you understand the statement, but do not think too hard about the answer. Your first feeling about the statement is usually most accurate.

**Part II: Feelings About Writing**

(Circle the appropriate number)

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I enjoy writing in English.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I dislike writing in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel calm when I write in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel anxious or stressed when I write in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I think I am a good English writer.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I think I am a poor English writer.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I might face challenges during the writing process, but I feel good about my work when it is finished.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I think I have good strategies that I can use to help me complete writing assignments.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part III: Writing Strategies**

(Circle the appropriate number)

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do you think you will use the following strategies when you write?</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The DIRT strategy for vocabulary building.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The ST.BARTS strategy for research.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The MAD mini-strategy for research questions and thesis statements.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The TEST strategy for essays and paragraphs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The UP3C mini-strategy for paraphrasing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The STAR strategy for revision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Reviewing papers written by skilled writers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Noticing if I am feeling overwhelmed or nervous about writing and finding a way to relieve or reduce those feelings (by breaking the task down into smaller steps, doing a free write, taking a break, etc.).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Encouraging myself while I write.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Thank you for completing this survey!*
Appendix 2.11

Follow-Up Interview

Script: I would like to ask you some questions about your experience of these classes. Please remember that anything you say in these interviews will not be attached to your real name in my study. If at any time you do not feel comfortable answering a question you can choose to skip it, and if you do not want to continue the interview you can ask to stop. You can also ask me to repeat a question or rephrase it at any time. Are you ready? Let’s begin.

1. Tell me about your experience in these writing classes.

2. I’m going to ask you some questions that you may recognize from the survey you filled out, just to give you the opportunity to explain and say more if you wish. What were the most useful skills or lessons you gained from these classes? Which strategies do you think you will use the most?

3. Are there any strategies that you might not use? Why do you think you might not use them?

4. Can you tell me about your process in writing this final paper? Did you use any of the strategies we covered in class? Which ones? Did you default to any of your own/older strategies? Which ones? Why?

5. How did you feel while you were writing this final paper (stressed, empowered, etc.)? Is this in any way different than you have felt when you have written other papers in the past?

6. Have your thoughts and feelings about English writing changed in any way since starting these classes?

7. If I asked you to describe yourself again as an English writer, what words would you use? Has anything changed?

8. Is there anything else you want me to know about your experience in these writing classes?
Appendix 3

Consent Form

May 1, 2018

Dear Student,

My name is Lina Balsamo. You may know me through my role as [title] at [name of institution]. However, I am also a graduate student in the Language and Literacies Education program in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at OISE/UofT. I am writing to see if you would be interested in participating in a research project related to improving university-level writing skills. This project is expected to run for about two months, from the beginning of May until the end of June. After reading the detailed information below, if you wish to participate in the research study, please complete and return the consent form attached at the bottom of the letter to me. Thank you.

Title of Research Project: Effects of Self-Regulated Strategy Development on the Writing Performance and Self-Perceptions of Postsecondary English Language Learners with and without Learning Disabilities

Principal Investigator: Lina Balsamo, M.A. Candidate, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Purpose of the Study: My study will use a teaching model called Self-Regulated Strategy Development to further develop your English writing skills. I want to see how this way of teaching makes a difference for your writing and how it affects the way you see yourself as a writer. I also want to see if this teaching method has the same results for English language learners whether or not they have a learning disability.

Ultimately, I want to help strengthen your writing skills and support your studies. I want to contribute to a better understanding of how universities can promote writing success and confidence in students whose first language is not English.

Please be aware that participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose to be involved or you can decide not to participate. Whatever you decide, your decision will not affect your course grades or your opportunities to use our writing and tutoring services. None of your professors, staff members, or other students will be informed if you participate in the study, and all of your information will be kept private. (You can read more about this below under “Participants’ Rights.”)
Participants: I am looking for undergraduate and/or graduate students who first language is not English to volunteer to participate in the study. I would like to find approximately 8 students. In order to participate in this study, you must:

1. Be at least 18 years old
2. Have a first language that is not English
3. Be willing to complete a short questionnaire about yourself (your studies, geographic background, language background, etc.)
4. Be willing to complete two surveys about your writing practices and beliefs—one at the beginning of the study and one at the end of the study
5. Be willing to speak with me in a short (10-minute) interview at the beginning, middle, and end of the study
6. Be willing to complete 3 assessments at the beginning of the study which can help me to know if any participants have significant challenges with their writing
7. Attend small-group teaching sessions or classes that will focus on strengthening your writing skills (12 sessions, 3 hours each)
8. Write 12 journal entries (1 for each session) about your thoughts on what you are learning
9. Complete 3 essay assignments during the classes (4-6 pages each)

Please note that you do not have to have a learning disability to participate, and that if you do have a learning disability, you do not have to share that information if you do not want to. Part of the questionnaire at the beginning of the study will ask about learning disabilities. You will have the choice to skip this question if you do not want to answer. If you feel comfortable sharing it, this information will help me to find out if this teaching method works in the same way for English language learners who have a learning disability and those who do not. This information, just like any other information about you that is collected in this study, will not be attached to your real name when my research is presented or published.

Benefits:

1) You will have many opportunities during the study to practice and improve your English writing and speaking skills. You will be able to practice your English speaking during interviews with me and during the class discussions with me and the other participants. You will practice and improve your writing when you complete questionnaires, journals, and writing tasks for the study.

2) By participating in the study you will be part of a small group that receives 12 lessons on writing, and you will get more attention from me as your instructor in this small group. You will get regular feedback on your writing throughout the study, an opportunity that is not usually available at other times in your university studies. This support and the skills you gain may help you to feel less anxious about writing assignments and more confident about your writing.

3) As a symbol of appreciation for your involvement in the study, you will receive an honorarium of grocery gift cards. At the end of the third week of the study, you will
receive a $25 grocery gift card. At the end of the study after the final interview, you will receive another $25 grocery gift card.

4) You will also receive snacks and beverages during each writing class you attend.

What participants will do during the project:

In May 2018, you will be asked to complete a short (10-minute) questionnaire about yourself (your studies, geographic background, language background, etc.). Then you will be asked to complete a survey about your writing practices and beliefs. This should take about 15 minutes to complete. After that you will be asked to do 3 assessments that will help me know more about your writing abilities and challenges. The first will be a standard writing test that takes 60-90 minutes at the most to complete. The other two tests are much more brief—one will have you complete a story that has been started for you, and the other will test your alphabet writing speed. These two tests together will not take more than 15 minutes.

After completing these initial assessments, you will be asked to meet with me for a short (10-minute) interview so I can learn more about your writing goals. I may ask questions about your responses in the writing survey.

Once this background information is gathered, we will begin our writing classes together. You will be asked to attend 12 classes, 3 hours each. These classes will run twice a week for 6 weeks in May and June. Throughout these classes you will be asked to keep a journal and write in it after every class. You will be given some suggestions of things to write about.

During the sixth class, you will be asked again to speak with me in a 10-minute interview. The purpose of this interview is to hear about your experience with the study so far and decide if anything should be changed or added to our writing classes.

Throughout the classes you will have 3 bigger writing tasks, source-based (research) essays of about 4-6 pages each. These will be completed in week 1, 3, and 6 of the writing classes. You will be given clear instructions and plenty of practice in the classes to write these papers.

At the end of the writing classes in June, you will be asked to complete another survey about your writing beliefs and practices, and you will be invited to a final 10-minute interview.

If you agree, I will use your information from this study in academic publications and/or presentations. However, I will keep your identity private.

What will happen after the project:
When the project is complete, the participants will be invited to a presentation of the results. The presentation will not include any information that would make it possible to identify anyone’s individual results. You will be welcomed to follow up with any further questions and schedule an appointment if you want to discuss the results privately and in more detail.
The results of this study will be included in my master’s thesis which will be available online at the University of Toronto’s research website. I might also make public presentations of the research at professional conferences, or publish the results of the study in academic journals. If you ask, you can receive a copy of my master’s thesis, any presentations I give on this study, and any articles I publish about this research. In any case where this research is shared, you will not be personally identified in any way.

Participants’ Rights

- **To Confidentiality:** I will not use your real name when I analyze and report your information in my study. I will use a fake name for your written work and any information about you including notes from the classes and our interviews. Only my supervisor, Dr. Enrica Piccardo, and I will know who the fake names represent. I will keep your electronic information on a password protected external hard drive in my home in a locked drawer, and I will erase your data after 5 years. Any printed data will also be stored in that locked drawer, and shredded after 5 years. No other students, staff members, or instructors at your school will be able to observe your performance in the study, and your involvement in this research will have no effect on your grades or your access to academic support at the school.

Please note that the confidential information in this research study could be selected for review by the University of Toronto to make sure that procedures and guidelines to protect participants are followed. If chosen, (a) representative(s) of the Human Research Ethics Program (HREP) may access data and/or consent materials for the review. Any information accessed by the HREP will be kept to the same level of confidentiality that Dr. Piccardo and I have pledged to you.

- **To Ask Questions about the Research:** If you would like to ask questions about this research project, you may do so at any time. You may contact me (Lina Balsamo) at [email address], or you may speak to me directly. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Enrica Piccardo, regarding questions at [phone number and email address]. If you want more information about your rights as a research participant, or if you want to verify the authenticity of this research, you can contact one or both of these offices: The Office of Research Ethics at the University of Toronto at [phone number and email address], or the [research ethics board at the students’ institution] at [email address]. Both of these boards have reviewed and approved this study.

- **To Withdraw at Any Time:** You may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me, and you do not have to give a reason if you decide to withdraw. To withdraw from the study, please let me know by phone or email, and I will erase all of your data immediately. **However, once my research findings are reported or published, you CANNOT withdraw.** If you withdraw before the study is completed, you will still be entitled to the first $25 gift card, and you will not have to give it back if you have already received it. If you decide to withdraw after the study is completed but before it has been reported or published, you will still receive the second $25 gift card.

You will be welcome to receive snacks and refreshments at each writing class you attend.
Also, if you decide to withdraw from the study, this will not affect your grades or access to academic support at the school.

**Risks:** You may feel shy or uncomfortable when speaking in class discussions if you do not feel confident in your English communication. However, all of the participants in the study will be English language learners, the teaching will be suited to you, and you may pass on answering questions in the classes if you wish. Also, in the interviews, you may be asked to reflect on writing challenges and experiences which may cause you to feel upset if your feelings about them have been negative. However, you will have the choice to skip any questions you do not want to answer.

Please read and sign the attached consent form if you would like to participate in this study. When my study is complete, you may also ask for a report of my research results by contacting me. This report will explain the effects of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development teaching on participants’ writing skills and the way they see themselves as writers.

Sincerely,

Lina Balsamo  
OISE/UT

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS LETTER FOR YOUR RECORDS

******************************************************************************

I have read Lina Balsamo’s letter about the research project and I understand that my participation will involve the following activities and conditions.

**Activities**

I will:
1. Complete a questionnaire about myself at the beginning of the study
2. Complete a survey about my writing practices and beliefs at the beginning and at the end of the study.
3. Speak with Ms. Balsamo in a short interview at the beginning, middle, and end of the study
4. Complete 3 assessments which will help Ms. Balsamo to know if there are significant challenges with my writing
5. Attend small-group teaching sessions or classes that will focus on strengthening my writing skills (12 sessions, 3 hours each)
6. Write 12 journal entries (1 for each class) about my thoughts on what I am learning
7. Complete 3 essay assignments (approximately 4-6 pages each)
Conditions

- Ms. Balsamo may use my information in academic publications and/or presentations. However, my identity will be kept private.

- Ms. Balsamo will keep my information private from everyone, including my professors, staff members, and other students who study at my school. Only Ms. Balsamo and her supervisor, Dr. Piccardo, will have access to my information. If chosen, this confidential information may also be reviewed by a member of the Human Research Ethics Program at the University of Toronto, to make sure that participants are being protected.

- I can receive a copy of the research report summarizing the findings of the study if I ask Ms. Balsamo for a copy.

- I may leave the study at any time with no problems; this will not affect my grades or access to academic support at the school. I will still be able to receive one $25 grocery gift card if I withdraw before the end of the study. If I withdraw after the study is complete, I will also be able to keep the second $25 gift card. I will also still receive snacks and beverages at any writing classes I attend. I may withdraw before the study is reported or published at any time with no penalty. However, once the study is reported or published, I may NOT withdraw.

- I may ask questions about this study at any time in the future.

_______ YES, I agree to participate in the research. My signature on this form means that I understand what I am being invited to do and that I am choosing freely to participate.

Name (Print): ____________________________
Date: _________________________________
Signature: ___________________________
Email: _______________________________