Writing Instruction in English for Academic Purposes Classrooms During the COVID–19 Pandemic:
A Review of Current Evidence

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The shift from face-to-face to online/blended teaching forced by the COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to studies of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction during the pandemic, but few have explored EAP writing instruction. This chapter aims to synthesize the current evidence on EAP writing instruction in higher education during the pandemic and to identify the challenges and opportunities presented by such instruction. A total of 189 papers were identified in the literature search. After screening, 13 studies were included in the review. Their results indicated that, in general, writing instruction was conducted satisfactorily during the pandemic, and writing instruction was delivered more effectively than speaking and listening instruction in EAP classes. The opportunities and challenges of writing instruction were similar to those experienced before the pandemic. Planning, activity design, and the provision of feedback will remain key factors in EAP instruction after the pandemic and require continual improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a major part of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and an important skill that students need to develop for success in higher education. A language teacher must be able to teach writing effectively (Hyland, 2021). EAP teachers and scholars have worked on various aspects of writing pedagogy to satisfy students' needs and enhance their academic writing skills. Some have investigated different approaches to teaching writing, such as genre-based writing (Hsu & Liu, 2019; Nagao, 2018; Worden, 2018) and source-based writing (Ansas & Sukyadi, 2019; Doolan, 2021; Phillips Galloway et al., 2020; Wette, 2019 & 2020). Others have studied the integration of corpora and data-driven learning in writing instruction (Ãdel, 2010; Anthony, 2019; Charles & Frankenberg-Garcia, 2021; Flowerdew, 2010).

Universities worldwide were forced to shift their usual teaching and learning practices from face-to-face to remote and online, or blended, delivery amid the COVID-19 crisis that began in 2019. This abrupt change complicated pedagogical processes and posed challenges to EAP writing teachers, as previous writing instruction mainly involved engaging students in intensive disciplinary literacy practices (Fang, 2020; Schleppegrell, 2013) and providing prompt in-class and continuous feedback (Koh, 2017). While research studies of EAP writing instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic are emerging—such as those of Sheppard (2021) and Xu (2021)—they lack review and evaluation components. This chapter aims to synthesize existing evidence to systematically explore the challenges and opportunities presented by EAP writing instruction during the ongoing pandemic. Two research questions were formulated as data-collection guidelines to ensure the relevance of the studies to this review.

The research questions are:

(1) What types of data were gathered about EAP writing instruction in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic?
(2) What challenges and opportunities in EAP writing instruction in higher education were brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic?

This study significantly contributes to the field as there is a real need to consolidate lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve writing instruction. A review is an effective method of consolidating previous study results. This study could facilitate a discussion beyond the topic of computer-assisted learning and help university administrators, course designers, and teachers determine how EAP writing courses can be offered after the pandemic ends.

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