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# The Relationship between English Speaking and Writing Proficiency and Its Implications for Instruction

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**The Relationship between English Speaking and Writing Proficiency and  
Its Implications for Instruction**

by

Pamela Rausch

A Thesis

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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### **Abstract**

As educators and researchers pursue greater understanding of the best strategies for teaching English learners, the two productive language domains—speaking and writing—have traditionally been addressed separately. With the increasing emphasis of Common Core standards and their emphasis on all students gaining more advanced and academic writing skills, this study endeavors to explore the potential relationship between speaking and listening skills for English learners. In addition to the analysis of standardized test results in these domains, pre- and post-test results and student surveys are examined to determine the effect of instruction in argumentative speaking on students' ability to write argumentatively.

Findings included:

1. English learners would be best served by purposeful design of speaking instruction which uses scaffolding and analysis of exemplars to teach standard academic language models and heuristics.
2. Such purposeful instruction of speaking appears to be transferable, also benefiting English learners' writing skills. However, while students are able to transfer skills relating to critical analysis and organization, they will need additional instruction on skills, such as spelling and other conventions, which are exclusive to writing.
3. Teaching rhetoric through the use of the speaking domain also presents the advantage of emphasizing the need for good planning. The time-bound nature of speaking, which doesn't allow for significant pausing or revision, forces learners to adopt good planning habits that, when transferred to writing, become highly beneficial.

Therefore, it is essential to recognize the association between spoken and written language and the strategic way it can be utilized to benefit instruction.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

English learners have an expressed need for quality instruction in academic English in order to develop the language skills necessary to attain the high levels of literacy required for full participation in and access to education that is required for academic success and subsequently future societal and economic opportunity.

Research into writing instruction for both native-English speakers and English learners have identified several quality methods of instruction, including using example texts to explicitly teach the heuristics of academic writing through the process writing method. However, as Calderón, Slavin, and Sánchez (2011) found, research into writing instruction specifically for English learners is limited. Similarly, very little research has been done exploring the influence of oral language proficiency on English learner writing skills. These related circumstances lead to the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between English speaking proficiency and English writing proficiency for students who are learning English?
2. What is the effect of explicit instruction designed to develop and improve argumentative speaking on argumentative writing skills?

Consistent with these questions, the study involved two components. The first component attempted to utilize analysis of language proficiency test results to discover what relationship exists between language proficiency in speaking and writing.

The second component of this study asked whether instruction designed to improve speaking consequently improved writing as well. Rhetoric applies to both spoken and written language, and is described by *Classical rhetoric for the modern student* as consisting of the



strategies and tactics by which discourses are effectively presented and organized (Corbett, 1971). With the ongoing adoption of Common Core standards and their emphasis on argumentative reading and writing, this aspect of language competence is coming to the forefront for educators nationwide (Newell et al., 2011). Consequently, this study utilized instruction in argumentation heuristics as its method for determining whether instruction in one productive domain of English would affect another.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

In the four decades since federal Supreme Court ruling mandated language learners receive instruction specially designed to meet their needs, research and ESL teaching practice has endeavored to understand and address exactly what these learners need to thrive. Understanding has shifted to the importance of direct and explicit instruction of academic literacy. Yet, less attention has been given to English learners' academic writing, best practice for instruction, and its link to oral language proficiency.

### **The State of English Learners in U.S. Education**

English learners comprise the fastest growing segment of students in public schools today. During 2007-2008, there were 5.3 million of them in U.S. schools, comprising 10.6 percent of student enrollment (Calderón et al., 2011, p. 103). The National Center for Education Statistics estimates a little higher with a total of 9.9 million children in U.S. schools who spoke a language other than English. This is effectively 19% of the school population, 6.1 million more than in 1979 (Mays, 2008, p. 415) and 105 percent more than 1991 (Booth Olson & Land, 2007, p. 272).

These students are known by many names: English Language Learners, L2 learners, Limited English Proficient students, and English learners. Whereas they were once strictly thought of as students born outside of the United States whose native language is not English, a greater portion of today's English learners are second generation immigrants born in the U.S. Although these students are native-born U.S. citizens, they are often surrounded by homes and communities that speak a language other than English (Calderón et al., 2011, p. 104).

In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Lau v. Nichols* and required school districts to “take affirmative steps to help students overcome language barriers so they can participate meaningfully in school programs.” Since this time districts across the country have developed widely varying programs and policies with the goal of educational parity and academic success for students who speak English as a second language. Despite this effort, these students consistently perform at lower rates than native English-speaking white students (Calderón et al., 2011, p. 104). In the 2005 National Assessment for Educational Progress, only 29% of eighth grade English learners scored at or above the basic reading level comparing to 73% of non-English learners (Perez & Holmes, 2010, p. 32). In an age when higher levels of education equate with greater economic opportunity, 31% of English learners who speak English, and 51% who speak English with difficulty, fail to graduate from high school. In comparison, just 10% of students who speak English at home fail to graduate (August & Shanahan, 2006, p. 1). Sadly this trend in disparity has been found to persist through the second and even third-generation for some immigrant groups (Calderón et al., 2011, p. 106).

While many English learners achieve fluency in everyday language, “they struggle with advanced reading and writing.” Everyday language fluency does not provide learners the necessary knowledge of vocabulary and syntax required to successfully complete academic tasks such as inferencing, analyzing, hypothesizing, and summarizing. Subsequently, this lack of academic language proficiency serves as a barrier to academic achievement (Dutro, Levy, & Moore, 2011, p. 339). Mays goes as far as to say that this

divide has led to an “endemic number of minority children” being labeled as ‘at-risk’ of academic failure (2008, p. 415).

### **Academic Literacy**

In 1984, Saville-Troike published an article entitled “What Really Matters in Second Language Learning for Academic Achievement?” The author stated clearly that “academic achievement in reading and in the content areas—not just the learning of English—has clear priority in our curricula.” A year of careful case study led Saville-Troike to the belief that neither grammatical accuracy, nor communicative competence in social interaction, nor even the strong performance on contemporary language proficiency tests guaranteed academic success (pp. 199-200).

At the time Cummins had only recently introduced the idea of BICS, the communicative competence in social language Saville-Troike observed, and CALP, the more elusive “competence in using and understanding language in context-reduced situations.”

Discussing Cummins theory led Saville-Troike (1984) wrote:

Too often we in ESL have forgotten that teaching English is not an end in itself but only a means to an end; the critical outcome for those of us teaching children is how well we equip them to succeed in school...If in teaching ESL we fail to teach the language needed to succeed in the regular classroom, we have failed in our first responsibility—which is to our students. (pp. 216-217)

In the almost thirty years that have passed since Saville-Troike’s article, research has shown CALP, or academic language as it’s known today, to be a key factor for academic success.

Mays refers to the concept of Discourse, referring to the divide it causes between the language of English learners’ homes and communities and their schools. Mays borrows Gee’s definition, defining Discourse as a way “of combining and coordinating words, deeds,

thoughts, and values...so as to enact and recognize the specific socially situated identities and activities.” Mays (2008) goes on to point out that the Discourse of public education is that of the mainstream, white, middle-class population thereby allowing the mainstream to “fluidly navigate” the system while serving as a barrier to those outside of it (pp. 415-416).

Scarcella begins her 2003 conceptual framework of academic English by clearly stating, “Learning academic English is probably one of the surest, most reliable ways of attaining socio-economic success in the United States today.” She explains that certain varieties of English are more effective and valued than others in specific situations and communities. Academic English, which she defines as the “English used in professional books and characterized by the specific linguistic features associated with academic disciplines,” is highly valued in the United States as the language of the educated and those in power in business and government. The necessity of acquiring academic English becomes clear when considering that individuals lacking proficiency in academic English are blocked from involvement in educated society (2003, pp. 7-9).

While other researchers word their definitions differently, the essence of academic English is constant. Researchers at the Center for Applied Linguistics state that academic literacy

includes reading, writing, and oral discourse in school; varies from subject to subject; requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes of text use, and text media; is influenced by students’ literacies in contexts outside of school; and is influenced by students’ personal, social, and cultural experiences. (Perez & Holmes, 2010, p. 33)

Lea and Street build their academic literacies model around the concern for making meaning, identity, power, and authority (Lea & Street, p. 369). Calderón et al. (2011) concur with this critical pedagogy writing, “Schools that serve English learners and other language-minority

children, especially in regions where most families are struggling economically, provide children their best and perhaps only chance to achieve economic security” (p. 109).

Research shows competence in academic English often requires more than 7 years to develop, although some learners never acquire it. Collier (1995) emphasizes that while English learners being taught solely in their second language do relatively well throughout the primary grades, they struggle with the rapidly increasing academic and cognitive demands found throughout middle and high school. Since “the goal of proficiency equal to a native speaker is a moving target,” which advances as students mature, Collier indicates it takes even the most advantaged students up to 12 years to reach the deep levels of academic proficiency needed to compete (pp. 8-11).

While some theorists believe academic English cannot be taught, Scarcella (2003) disagrees, believing academic English can be taught because it contains “regular features...that are well defined and teachable.” According to Scarcella, linguistic components of academic English include “phonological, lexical, grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse.” However, she clarifies that academic English is more than “simple linguistic code,” as it also requires specific social practices to accomplish its communicative goals (pp. 6-29).

Although literacy has been traditionally defined as the decoding and encoding needed to read and write, researchers today realize that in addition to these mechanics, literacy requires higher order thinking including conceptualizing, inferring, inventing, and testing. Besides employing schema to connect students' experiences and the knowledge gained through their reading, learners must also think critically in order to “determine how the claims

and evidence can be accounted for in different ways... and distinguished fact from skewed opinion." Academic English requires a partnership between the advanced literacy skills, in the traditional sense, and the advanced metacognitive skills needed to effectively interact in spoken and written communication (Scarcella, 2003, pp. 10-23).

Scarcella stresses that, beginning in elementary school, the academic problems many English learners experience derive more from their deficiencies in academic English than their ability to decode words. Despite her belief that schools must emphasize academic English instruction, if the goal is for learners to “acquire sophisticated use of English,” Scarcella states that teachers have failed to make the language needed to complete school tasks explicit for students and thereby have failed to give learners the tools necessary to develop academic English (Scarcella, 2003, pp. 3-8).

Although instructors may not be specifically teaching these academic skills, they are expecting students to produce them. A 2003 survey by ACT Inc. found both high school teachers and college professors agree on the academic skills important for students—namely organized, analytic, and logical writing and critical reading (Patterson & Duer, 2006, p. 82). However, even in cases where learners believe they have achieved quality academic discourse, instructors are often unimpressed (DeVere Wolsey, Lapp, & Fisher, 2012).

### **Specific Challenges of Academic Writing**

“Writing proficiency exists on several different planes independently” (Kroll, 1990, p. 40). This conception of writing correlates with the fact that the skill is generally the last language domain to develop for both native-English and English learners (Saville-Troike, 1984, p. 219). In their analysis of essays using the automated tool, Coh-Metrix, McNamara,

Crossley, and McCarthy found higher-quality essays displayed greater difficulty of text and sophistication of language, specifically “complex syntax, greater lexical diversity, and less frequent words” (2011, p. 63). Another analysis found writers must manage advanced syntax and linguistic features, like those found by Coh-Metrix, while also operating “within a complex system of discourse and rhetorical rules.” The demand of operating within the intricate linguistic system that is English, while meeting the demands of academic rhetoric, often result in essays that vary widely in their strengths and weaknesses, ranging from what Kroll termed weak rhetoric weak syntax, weak rhetoric strong syntax, strong rhetoric weak syntax, or strong rhetoric strong syntax (1990, pp. 41-44). Researchers have found that many well-meaning learners may just pretend to use academic discourse by focusing on surface elements like formatting, spelling, and conventions (DeVere Wolsey et al., 2012, p. 716).

Despite the challenge of writing, it is of utmost importance that learners achieve competence in this area. “Writing provides the ability to articulate ideas, argue opinions, and synthesize multiple perspectives [making it] essential to communicating persuasively with others, including teachers, peers, colleagues, coworkers, and the community.” As mentioned earlier, language choices regarding syntax and word selection serve to reflect sophistication of linguistic skills, the writer’s competence, and even socioeconomic status (McNamara, Crossley, & McCarthy, 2011, p. 63).

McNamara et al. provide the example of the opening sentence of President Barack Obama’s 2008 victory speech:

‘If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our fathers is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.’



This 45-word sentence features 32 different word-types, eight clauses, a 41-word if-clause, and a main verb arriving after the sentence is 95 percent complete, a combination unlikely to facilitate working memory resources during comprehension. However, once said, the reaction of the nearly quarter-million people present was elated approval. (McNamara et al., 2011, p. 63)

In addition to the respect and socio-economic status that sophisticated language demands, writing skills are one of the best predictors of high school seniors' success in college coursework. Yet only 21% of all twelfth graders scored proficient or higher on the 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress (McNamara et al., 2011, p. 58).

The value of academic, particularly analytic, writing is evident through the assignments assigned across disciplines. Considered a central aspect of western education, analytic writing makes up a vital aspect of writing assignments assigned to students and serves to elicit demonstration of competence in both writing and content (Cowhurst, 1990; Durst, 1987). Analytic writing consists of “generalization and classification concerning a situation, problem, or theme, with logical or hierarchical relations among points.” When compared to summary writing, another task commonly assigned to students, analytic writing has been found to require more varied and complex cognitive operations. In fact, analytic writing both encourages and requires the kinds of critical thinking crucial for academic success. Paradoxically, although analytic writing is based on critical thinking, learners capable of thinking critically are not necessarily successful with analytic writing (Durst, 1987, pp. 356-373). This occurrence is more reasonable given research that shows effective analytic writing requires content and linguistic expertise in addition to cognitive skill. Accordingly, research has found that teacher intervention and instruction regarding this genre leads to greater learner success (Cowhurst, 1990, pp. 355-357).

A meta-analysis of studies comparing L1 and L2 writing found distinct differences between the two. While composing patterns were similar, L2 writers had more difficulty and were less effective. L2 writers generally planned less. Some studies reported L2 writers reread and reflected less on their writing than L1 writers, however other studies indicated L2 writers revised more. As would be expected, L2 writers were less able to revise “by ear,” based on what “sounds” good, and had to resort to focus on grammar and spelling. Despite their best efforts L2 writers made more errors overall than L1 writers. Furthermore, studies of general textual patterns found that written thought patterns tended to be culturally influenced, leading to the conclusion that to match native-English speakers linear thought patterns, these must be explicitly taught to English learners (Silva, 1993, pp. 661-668).

After reviewing this evidence, the author questioned the “reasonableness of the expectation that L2 writers (even those with advanced levels of L2 proficiency) will perform as well as L1 writers on writing tests” (Silva, 1993, p. 670). Yet the reality is that, when it comes to the highest-stake assessments, English learners in the U.S. are measured by the same standards as native-English speakers (Booth Olson & Land, 2007, p. 272).

### **L2 Writing and Oral Language Proficiency**

The importance of early literacy, including child-adult conversation experience, has been well-documented to affect later educational success in L1 learners (Lawhon & Cobb, 2002, p. 117). Although the research conducted by Booth et al. built upon the relationship between writing and reading, research in English learner writing is often done in isolation of the other language domains. Peter Elbow describes the phenomena, writing that “educators and scholars have done a masterful job of Balkanizing themselves so that the fluidity of these

communication processes are all but lost in our teaching and research” (Hoermann & Enos, 2014, p. 164).

Research has consistently shown links positive correlation between oral language proficiency and reading comprehension for elementary English learners (Geva, 2006, p. 10; Helman & Burns, 2008, pp. 15-16). To be more precise, while oral proficiency is not a strong predictor of word-level skills, it does correlate text-level skills. “These findings help explain why many language-minority students can keep pace with their native English-speaking peers when the instruction focus in on word-level skills, but lag behind when the instructional focus turns to reading comprehension and writing” (August & Shanahan, 2006, p. 4). Much less research has been done studying the relationship between oral language proficiency and writing. “Nevertheless, the available research suggests that well-developed oral language skills in English are associated with better writing skills in English” (Geva, 2006, p. 14). The 2006 National Literacy Panel report, “Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners” also acknowledges the association between well-developed oral language proficiency in English and writing (August & Shanahan, 2006, p. 4).

### **Quality ESL Instruction**

In tandem with content instruction, English learners require “systematic instruction in the conventions of standard English, along with explicit instruction in the discipline-specific language of core content areas.” This need continues through advanced proficiency in order to reveal unseen skills surrounding sophisticated content-specific language. Dutro, Levy, and Moore (2011) go on to explain using the analogy of bricks and mortar to describe academic language. Specific vocabulary serve as the bricks of content, but to effectively link these

bricks learners must be competent with the mortar: functional academic language and grammatical structures. The answer, according to Mays (2008), is that schools must acknowledge the distinction between these two Discourses and work to assist English learners in linking them together. Specific instructional strategies are required to assist English learners “not only juggle the cognitive demands of content-area curriculum, but also simultaneously acquire literacy skills, academic vocabulary, and English language structures” (Perez & Holmes, 2010, p. 33).

After a meta-analysis of recent studies regarding English learners, Calderón et al. found the most crucial aspect contributing to EL academic success was quality instruction (2011, p. 103). Dutro and Levy concur, logically stating that with the same amount of time to complete college-readiness curriculum as native-speakers, English learners “require an accelerated approach to instruction—one that emphasizes the complex language of abstract and higher order academic thinking” (2011, p. 339).

Despite clearly documented need and legal mandate for specific support, many states design English learner instruction and curriculum based on content standards that vary little from standards designed for native English speakers. Calderon et al. predict that without specific change and direction in the newly written Common Core Standards, populations of long-term English learners “will likely double or triple” (Calderón et al., 2011, p. 112).

Perez and Holmes identify several instructional guidelines in best serving English learners. They suggest beginning by scaffolding with the first language, providing comprehensible input using visuals and appropriate speech, and giving opportunities for repeated and meaningful practice. However, they also advise integrating cognitive strategies,

such as building on prior knowledge, summarizing, self-monitoring of learning, and cooperative learning, to help English learners manipulate information (Perez & Holmes, 2010).

Calderon et al. (2011) discuss elements of effective practice relating to school structure and leadership, professional development, parent and family support, and tutoring in addition to suggestions for instruction. In developing language and literacy, the authors first stress the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction, particularly including multi-syllabic and technical terms. They advocate the integration of multiple skills in reading instruction, including the traditional focus on “phonological processing, word-level skills (decoding, spelling), and text level skills” (scanning , skimming, summarizing, and making inferences) as well as oral language proficiency. Surprising, given its value as an academic skill (McNamara et al., 2011, p. 58), research on writing instruction and interventions for English learners is limited, and according to the authors, more research must be done (Calderón et al., 2011, pp. 110-111).

### **Effective L2 Writing Instruction**

Nearly 30 years ago Saville-Troike wrote that the language skill most likely to develop competence in academic language—writing—was the one allocated the least amount of time and attention in most ESL classes (1984, p. 217). Unfortunately with the influence high-stakes reading tests have on instruction, this is still the case today. Given the difficulty and importance of academic writing, it is imperative that English learners receive quality writing instruction (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 446).

Considering the competing demands of syntax and rhetoric, and the difficulty English learners have with both, Kroll suggests focusing on only one of these concerns at a time. Her analysis led her to advise that rhetoric be the first priority as she felt English learners cannot “benefit from a syntax course unless they have control over rhetoric first so that the course can present syntax as a tool for controlling written language rather than as an object of study.” Once learners achieve competence in rhetoric, Kroll recommends adapted approaches in teaching grammar that applies instruction to the learners’ own work (1990, p. 51).

Scarcella echoed the importance of rhetoric, stating that academic writing requires organization and a clear direction to the writing (2003, p. 20). McNamara et al. recommend instructing learners in writing strategies that effectively scaffold the writing process thereby guiding them in developing sophistication in their writing (2011, p. 76). Similarly, DeVere Wolsey et al. advocate that teachers need to present learners with multiple “oral, visual, and written models of academic discourse” and explicit instruction in discipline-based skills in order to provide the kind of explicit instruction that will nurture growth from a focusing on small, “local” operations, such as spelling and formatting, to the mature academic writing they expect, (2012, p. 722).

Explicit writing instruction is also recommended by Graham and Perin, (2007) who conducted a meta-analysis of 123 studies on quality instruction for adolescent writers. Their findings “show that it is advantageous to explicitly and systematically teach adolescents the processes and strategies involved in writing (including planning, sentence construction, summarizing, and revising).” Process strategies were found to have a strong effect on writing, particularly for students who found writing a particular challenge. Other methods that

produced strong effect included collaboration among students, making product goals, and studying writing exemplars (pp. 464-468).

Analysis of exemplars was also an integral part of a case study regarding the English for Specific Purposes approach. The college-level English learners were able to develop insights into academic writing that they were reminded to use as a set of guiding heuristics for future writing. This type of study was found to support the learner in gradually developing control over the genre of academic writing. The learner featured in the case study reported he gained understanding of the many possibilities for appropriately writing in the genre (Cheng, 2008, pp. 55-56). Another study of adolescent English learners with learning disabilities designed instruction that included three components: modelling text, joint construction of text, and independent construction of text. The researchers found modeling, demonstrating, and promoting quality writing, along with the use of direct instructional language, were successful in moving learners' focus beyond sentence-level to text-level organization (Firkins, Forey, & Sengupta, 2007, pp. 348-350). A study of cultural minority middle-school students compared the effect of implicit versus explicit instruction of heuristics for argumentative writing. Explicit teaching of heuristics resulted in significant "gains in support and voice of essays written by minority students" (Yeh, 1998, p. 77).

As mentioned by Graham and Perin (2007), process writing has also proved an effective method of writing instruction. A study comparing the technique with free writing with fifth grade English learners referred to it as structured, rather than process writing, and found it outperformed free writing in four different measurements including holistic quality rating and productivity (Gomez, Jr., Parker, Lara-Alecio, & Gomez, 1996, pp. 224-225).

Likewise, Jiménez (1993, pp. 174-175) experimented with process writing with college-age English learners in Costa Rica. She found the great benefit of this method was that teacher feedback regarding the process was more helpful in developing written content than was the typical feedback on surface-level features that students receive as a part of product-centered instruction. Whereas learners often did not understand the written comments given after product-centered writing and forgot them before the next assignment, process-centered writing guided teachers and learners to work together to improve the piece.

The Pathway Project may be one of the largest studies of English learner writing in recent years. The study, conducted by members of the California Writing Project, was held over an 8-year period and involved approximately 2,000 students, with 93% speaking English as a second language and 69 designated Limited English Proficient. At the center of the project were cognitive strategies and the effect they have on critical reading and writing. The researchers recognized that few secondary teachers expect, and therefore teach, English learners to effectively read strategically or write analytically. Nevertheless, these same learners are held to these standards on high-stakes high school exit exams. States across the nation employ these types of tests, requiring learners to perform complex tasks including:

using linguistic cues to interpret and infer the writer's intentions and messages; assessing the writer's use of language for rhetorical and aesthetic purposes; evaluating evidence and arguments presented in texts and critiquing the logic of arguments made by them; and composing and writing extended, reasoned texts that are well-developed and supported with evidence and details. (Booth Olson & Land, 2007, p. 272)

In addition to explicit instruction of cognitive strategies, the study also designed carefully scaffolded units that included exemplar, or "training," texts and cooperative learning (Booth Olson, Land, Anselmi, & AuBuchon, 2010, p. 248). The study found a balanced curriculum



of basic and higher-order skills, high expectations for all students, exposure to challenging texts, and explicit scaffolded instruction in cognitive learning strategies to be highly effective (Booth Olson & Land, 2007, p. 297).

### Chapter 3: Method

Both prior research and current academic standards emphasize the need for English learners to acquire and utilize academic language to achieve meaningful participation in both academics and society. Language acquisition research has investigated relationships between oral proficiency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension and academic success, but little research has been undertaken to understand the relationship between the two productive language domains—speaking and writing. Hence, this study endeavored to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between English speaking proficiency and English writing proficiency for students who are learning English?
2. What is the effect of explicit instruction designed to develop and improve argumentative speaking on argumentative writing skills?

Pre- and Posttest argumentative essays and argumentative speaking samples as well as standardized language assessment results were collected from all students for analysis. This data allowed for study of the natural relationship between speaking and writing proficiency as well as the effect instruction in argumentative speaking affected on students' speaking and writing performance. Students were also asked to reflect upon their writing to give greater insight into their individual thoughts on process, organization, and development.

#### Participants

Participants included eight students in grades 9-11: two 9<sup>th</sup> graders, four 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and two 11<sup>th</sup> graders. Most, if not all, of these students qualified for free/reduced price lunch and were enrolled in a mid-sized rural high school in a district some of them have attended

since kindergarten. Five of these students were second-generation Mexican immigrants and would be classified as long-term English learners. These students ranged from high intermediate to advanced levels of English proficiency. The remaining students were Pacific Islander, Chinese, or Mexican immigrants with four to five years of English exposure. These students were generally at an intermediate or high intermediate level of English proficiency.

### **Materials**

Materials included the Common Core state standards writing rubric for Argument for grades 11-12 (iParadigms, 2012) (Appendix A). This rubric was used to score both pre- and posttest writing and speaking samples. Each sample received a score between 5 and 25 depending on the quality of its claim, development, audience focus, cohesion, and style/conventions. The Claim dimension measured the degree to which the claim was clear and arguable and was supported by reasons and evidence. The Development dimension assessed whether “the text provides sufficient data and evidence,” addressed the counterclaim, and provided a conclusion. The Audience component gauged how well the text anticipated “the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.” Cohesion considered whether the relationship between different segments of the text was clear and organized. Finally, the Conventions dimension evaluated the tone and grammatical correctness of the text.

A graphic organizer was used to support student planning (Appendix B). This visual heuristic was introduced to students as a way to outline the structure and components of argumentation. It required learners to make a claim or thesis statement and explain its significance first while also planning a hook to draw in audience attention. The graphic

organizer went on to walk students through the process of identifying and disputing the counterclaim before requiring them to identify and support with evidence three reasons which prove their claim. Supports were also included for the concluding section as well as transitions to promote cohesion.

### **Procedure**

The treatment was designed to provide learners explicit instruction in argumentative speaking so that it could be observed whether this instruction would impact the complementary productive domain of writing.

#### **Pre-tests to establish students' baseline skills in argumentation—**

1. The students, who had been randomly divided into two subgroups, read *Opposing Viewpoints* articles which presented the contrasting arguments regarding one of two topics. Group 1 read about Topic A: Reinstating the Military Draft while Group 2 read about Topic B: Legalizing Euthanasia. These topics were later reversed in the post-test when Group 1 read about Topic B and Group 2 read about Topic A. The background information was read together. Students were asked to discuss and highlight “important information.”
2. Students were provided with an index card and asked to individually plan a short 3-5 minute speech supporting the viewpoint with which they most agreed. Students were allowed time for planning but were not allowed to write more than short phrases. This speech was audio-recorded for later analysis.
3. Students were then asked to write three to six paragraphs describing their viewpoint on the issue.

## Instruction in argumentation.

### *Lesson 1*

<p><b><i>Instructional Objective:</i></b></p> <p>Students will identify and reproduce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ an argumentative claim</li> <li>▪ an explanation of the claim’s significance</li> <li>▪ evidence to back the claim</li> <li>▪ reasoning to clearly tie evidence to the claim</li> </ul>	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-12.1</u></p> <p>Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</p>
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### *Instructional Materials:*

- Misener, J. (2011). Social networking improves human relationships. In L. Friedman, *Web 2.0* (pp. 12-18). Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press.
- graphic organizer
- mp3 audio recorder
- listening checklist

### *Instructional Activities:*

- Introduce students to key terms:
  - claim—a statement giving the author’s belief about a topic, issue, event, or idea (compare to familiar concept of a thesis)
  - significance—explanation of why something is important
  - evidence—facts and data that support the claim
  - reasoning—description of how the evidence supports the claim

- Guide students in using a graphic organizer to identify these key components in a mentor text

*Formative Assessment:*

Students will:

- use a graphic organizer to record a 1-2 minute argumentative speech that summarizes the argument from the mentor text including its significance, evidence, and reasoning
- use a checklist to analyze a partner's speech to determine if the components were included

*Lesson 2*

<p><b><i>Instructional Objective:</i></b></p> <p>Students will consistently identify and reproduce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ an argumentative claim</li> <li>▪ an explanation of the claim's significance</li> <li>▪ evidence to back the claim</li> <li>▪ reasoning to clearly tie evidence to the claim</li> </ul>	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-12.1.A</u></p> <p>Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.</p>
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*Instructional Materials:*

- Bernstein, E. (2011). Social networking threatens human relationships. In L. Friedman, *Web 2.0* (pp. 19-26). Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press.
- graphic organizer
- mp3 audio recorder
- listening checklist

*Instructional Activities:*

- Review key terms from previous lesson.
- Guide students in using a graphic organizer to identify these key components in a mentor text which presents the opposing view as the previous lesson.

*Formative Assessment:*

Students will:

- use a graphic organizer to record a 1-2 minute argumentative speech that summarizes the argument from the mentor text including its significance, evidence, and reasoning.
- use a checklist to analyze a partner's speech to determine if the components were included.

*Lesson 3*

<p><b><i>Instructional Objective:</i></b></p> <p>Students will begin to identify and reproduce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a counterclaim</li> <li>▪ a rebuttal to counterclaim</li> </ul> <p>Students will consistently identify and reproduce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ an argumentative claim</li> <li>▪ an explanation of the claim's significance</li> <li>▪ evidence to back the claim</li> <li>▪ reasoning to clearly tie evidence to the claim</li> </ul>	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.B</u></p> <p>Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.</p>
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*Instructional Materials:*

- Bernstein, E. (2011). Social networking threatens human relationships. In L. Friedman, *Web 2.0* (pp. 19-26). Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press.
- Misener, J. (2011). Social networking improves human relationships. In L. Friedman, *Web 2.0* (pp. 12-18). Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press.
- graphic organizer
- mp3 audio recorder
- listening checklist

*Instructional Activities:*

- Quiz students on key terms from the previous two lessons
- Introduce students to key terms:
  - counterclaim—a reasonable argument that disagrees with the claim
  - refute—to argue against a position and prove it false
  - rebuttal—an organized response to a counterclaim that refutes it
- Guide students in using a graphic organizer to identify the counterclaim and rebuttal in the mentor text from Lesson 1.

*Formative Assessment:*

Students will

- use a graphic organizer to independently identify the counterclaim and rebuttal in the mentor text from Lesson 2.
- Choose one of the two mentor texts and use a graphic organizer to record a 2-3 minute argumentative speech to a partner that summarizes the argument from the



mentor text including its significance, evidence, and reasoning as well as the counterclaim and rebuttal.

- use a checklist to analyze a partner’s speech to determine if the components were included.

#### *Lesson 4*

<p><b><i>Instructional Objective:</i></b></p> <p>Students will begin to identify and reproduce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ an introductory and concluding section that creates cohesion while supporting the argument</li> </ul> <p>Students will consistently identify and reproduce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ an argumentative claim</li> <li>▪ an explanation of the claim’s significance</li> <li>▪ evidence to back the claim</li> <li>▪ reasoning to clearly tie evidence to the claim</li> <li>▪ a counterclaim</li> <li>▪ a rebuttal to counterclaim</li> </ul>	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.C</u></p> <p>Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.E</u></p> <p>Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.</p>
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#### *Instructional Materials:*

- Bernstein, E. (2011). Social networking threatens human relationships. In L. Friedman, *Web 2.0* (pp. 19-26). Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press.
- Misener, J. (2011). Social networking improves human relationships. In L. Friedman, *Web 2.0* (pp. 12-18). Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press.
- graphic organizer

- mp3 audio recorder
- listening checklist

*Instructional Activities:*

- Review key terms from previous lessons.
- Introduce students to key terms:
  - hook or attention getter
  - introduction
  - conclusion
- Guide students in using a graphic organizer to analyze the introduction and conclusion in the mentor text from Lesson 1.

*Formative Assessment:*

Students will:

- use a graphic organizer to independently analyze the introduction and conclusion in the mentor text from Lesson 2
- Choose one of the two mentor texts and use a graphic organizer to give a 3-5 minute argumentative speech to a partner that begins with an introduction and ends with a conclusion and summarizes the argument from the mentor text including its significance, evidence, and reasoning as well as the counterclaim and rebuttal
- use a checklist to analyze a partner's speech to determine if the components were included

*Lesson 5*

<p><b><i>Instructional Objective:</i></b></p> <p>Students will utilize research information to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ form an argumentative claim</li> <li>▪ form an explanation of the claim's significance</li> <li>▪ provide evidence to back the claim</li> <li>▪ provide reasoning that clearly ties evidence back to the claim</li> </ul>	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A</u></p> <p>Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.</p>
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*Instructional Materials:*

- *Pros and cons of controversial issues.* (2015) Retrieved from ProCon.org:  
<http://www.procon.org>
- graphic organizer
- mp3 audio recorder
- listening checklist

*Instructional Activities:*

- Introduce Debate project. Students will have two days to prepare a 3-5 minute argumentative speech that includes the components covered in previous lessons. Students will be assigned an issue based on an interest survey they took at the beginning of the unit. Relevant research will be provided from the website [procon.org](http://www.procon.org).
- Review key terms from previous lessons including: claim, significance, evidence, and reasoning

- Teacher will monitor and assist as students analyze research and utilize a graphic organizer to record their claim, explanation of significance, evidence, and reasoning.

*Formative Assessment:*

Students will:

- use a graphic organizer to audio-record a 1-2 minute argumentative speech that provides their claim including its significance, evidence, and reasoning
- use a checklist to listen to and analyze their own recording to determine if the components were included

*Lesson 6*

<p><b><i>Instructional Objective:</i></b> Students will utilize research information to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ verbalize a logical counterclaim</li> <li>▪ form a rebuttal to the counterclaim</li> <li>▪ create an introductory section</li> <li>▪ formulate a concluding section</li> </ul>	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.B</u> Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.C</u> Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.E</u> Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.</p>
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*Instructional Materials:*

- *Pros and cons of controversial issues.* (2015) Retrieved from ProCon.org:  
<http://www.procon.org>
- graphic organizer
- mp3 audio recorder
- listening checklist

*Instructional Activities:*

- Review key terms from previous lessons including: counterclaim, rebuttal, introduction, and conclusion
- Teacher will monitor and assist as students continue to analyze research and utilize a graphic organizer to record a logical counterclaim, introduction, and conclusion

*Formative Assessment:*

Students will:

- use a graphic organizer to audio-record a 2-3 minute argumentative speech that begins with an introduction; provides their claim including its significance, evidence, and reasoning; describes and refutes a counterargument, and ends with a concluding section.
- use a checklist to listen to and analyze their own recording to determine if the components were included

## Lesson 7

<p><b><i>Instructional Objective:</i></b></p> <p>Students will deliver an argumentative speech that utilizes research information to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ create an introductory section</li> <li>▪ form an argumentative claim</li> <li>▪ form an explanation of the claim’s significance</li> <li>▪ provide evidence to back the claim</li> <li>▪ provide reasoning that clearly ties evidence back to the claim</li> <li>▪ verbalize a logical counterclaim</li> <li>▪ form a rebuttal to the counterclaim</li> <li>▪ formulate a concluding section</li> </ul>	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A</u></p> <p>Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.B</u></p> <p>Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.C</u></p> <p>Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.E</u></p> <p>Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.</p>
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*Instructional Materials:*

- *Pros and cons of controversial issues.* (2015) Retrieved from ProCon.org:  
<http://www.procon.org>
- graphic organizer

*Instructional Activities:*

- Students will listen to one another's argumentative speeches.

*Summative Assessment:*

Students will:

- use a graphic organizer to deliver a 2-3 minute argumentative speech that begins with an introduction; provides their claim including its significance, evidence, and reasoning; describes and refutes a counterargument, and ends with a concluding section.
- listen to classmates' speeches and list two specific components that strengthened the argument of each

**Post-tests to measure growth due to instruction.**

*The post-test were conducted identically to the pre-test. The only difference was that the groups will switch topics with Group 1 reading Topic B and Group 2 reading Topic A.*

1. Again, the classes read Opposing Viewpoints articles presenting contrasting arguments. Information was read together with students discussing and highlighting what they considered "important information."

2. Students received an index card and time to plan a short 3-5 minute speech supporting the viewpoint with which they most agreed. They were only allowed to outline short phrases. This speech was again be audio-recorded.
3. Students were directed to write a three to six paragraph essay describing their opinion on the issue.
4. Finally, in an effort to fully engage students in the study, the students were surveyed regarding the thought processes and steps they take when creating written arguments. Specifically, students were asked the following:
  - a. What do you do before writing?
  - b. How do you plan (make graphic organizer, etc.)?
  - c. What is needed to make a strong argument?
  - d. What steps did you follow?



## Chapter 4: Results

Four sets of data were collected for analysis: results of the 2014 ACCESS test, post-treatment student reflections, checklist of argumentative components included in the written and spoken pre- and posttest samples, as well as pre- and post-test scores based on the Common Core rubric for scoring argument found in Appendix A. In the case of the component checklist and rubric scores, gains were calculated by subtracting pre-test from post-test scores.

ACCESS scores served as part of a baseline comparison of the students speaking and writing skills. The relationship between speaking and writing proficiency levels was determined by simply subtracting the students speaking scores from their writing scores. These individual differences were then used to calculate the average differences for this group of students. Similar calculations were done using pre- and posttest speaking and writing scores. The process used to tabulate these scores is described below.

Although the data included handwritten essays and spoken recordings, it was converted into typed electronic form before scoring. This meticulous process required significant input time as well as time to check for accuracy. However, scoring data with uniform and standard appearance prevented differences in neatness, handwriting, pronunciation, or inflection from affecting the score.

Identifying information was removed from the data and samples were randomized to ensure order of scoring did not affect consistency. To avoid bias or inaccuracy in scoring an experienced ESL teacher, who was uninvolved with the study and unacquainted with the students, acted as an independent rater and completed the scoring of the data. Coder training

involved defining the basic terms used to describe and teach argumentation, analysis and break-down of the rubric, as well as practice scoring using student writing samples from the previous year until both researcher and independent scorer consistently and reliably agreed on scoring decisions. After scoring, growth was calculated by subtracting the pre-test scores from the post test scores. These growth scores were then used to find the average growth between pre- and posttest scores.

Finally, student survey responses were compiled by categorizing the information students offered regarding how they plan argumentative essays into concepts relating to specific terms and skills that were focused on during instruction. The concepts fall into two categories: 1) writing process, which includes researching, planning, drafting, and revising, and 2) writing product, which includes claim, support, counterargument, and introduction/conclusion.

### **Relationship between Speaking and Writing Proficiency**

Table 1 gives data relating to students' scores in speaking and listening in three separate assessments: the ACCESS for ELLs standardized test given two months before the study, the pre-test given prior to the instruction in argumentative speaking, and the posttest given at the end of the study. Although there is variation amongst specific students, on average they scored 0.1 proficiency level higher on the ACCESS writing test than the ACCESS speaking test (with the maximum level being 6.0), 3.4 points higher on the writing pre-test than the speaking pre-test (with a total possible score of 25), and 0.6 points higher on the writing posttest than the speaking post-test (again with a total possible score of 25). When each of these differences are presented as a percentage of the total possible score they

calculate as follows: 1.7% higher on ACCESS writing than speaking, 13.6% higher on Pre-Test writing than speaking, and 2.4% higher on Post-Test writing than speaking.

Table 1

*Difference in Speaking and Writing Skills*

Student	ACCESS Speaking	ACCESS Writing	ACCESS Difference	Pre-Test Speaking	Pre-Test Writing	Pre-Test Difference	Post-Test Speaking	Post-Test Writing	Post-Test Difference
A	4.2	3.6	-0.6	7.0	9.5	+2.5	13.5	13.0	-0.5
B	5.7	4.9	-0.8	10.0	16.0	+6.0	18.5	21.0	+2.5
C	3.7	4.7	+1.0	8.5	16.0	+7.5	13.5	15.0	+1.5
D	4.9	5.2	+0.3	9.0	14.5	+5.5	12.0	12.0	0.0
E	4.6	4.2	-0.4	9.0	11.0	+2.0	8.5	12.0	+3.5
F	3.9	.6	+0.7	10.5	8.5	-2.0	15.5	14.0	-1.5
G	3.4	4.5	+1.1	9.0	12.0	+3.0	13.0	11.0	-2.0
H	4.3	3.9	-0.4	11.0	14.0	+3.0	16.5	17.5	+1.0
Average			+0.1			+3.4			+0.6
Average as percent of total			+1.7%			+13.6%			+2.4%

**Effect of Speaking Instruction on Writing**

Table 2 gives data relating to students' rubric scores in the pre- and posttests described above, including growth rates for individual students in each language domain as well as averages for the group as a whole. Seven of the eight students showed growth in speaking scores between the pre- and posttests with an average growth of 4.6 points (18.4% of the 25 possible points on the rubric). In comparison, 5 of the 8 students showed improvement in their writing scores with an average growth of 1.8 points (7.2% of the 25 points possible on the rubric).

Table 2

*Relationship between Speaking and Writing Skills before and after Instruction*

Student	Speaking Rubric Score			Writing Rubric Score		
	Pre	Post	Growth	Pre	Post	Growth
A	7.0	13.5	+6.5	9.5	13.0	+3.5
B	10.0	18.5	+8.5	16.0	21.0	+5.0
C	8.5	13.5	+5.0	16.0	15.0	-1.0
D	9.0	12.0	+3.0	14.5	12.0	-2.5
E	9.0	8.5	-0.5	11.0	12.0	+1.0
F	10.5	15.5	+5.0	8.5	14.5	+6.0
G	9.0	13.0	+4.0	12.0	11.0	-1.0
H	11.0	16.5	+5.5	14.0	17.5	+3.5
Average	9.3	13.6	+4.6	12.7	14.5	+1.8

Table 3 gives greater detail regarding the change in the specific components of argumentation that students included in their pre- and post-writing tests. Six of the eight students showed growth in the post-tests with an average growth of +2.1. Most growth was seen in addressing the counterclaim, providing a rebuttal, including a conclusion, and tying that conclusion to the hook.

Table 3

*Inclusion of Components of Argumentation in Writing before and after Speaking Instruction*

Student	Test	Hook	Claim	Counterclaim	Rebuttal	Evidence #1	Reasoning	Evidence#2	Reasoning	Evidence #3	Reasoning	Conclusion	Conclusion ties to hook	Total	Growth
A	Pre	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	
	Post	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	8.0	+3.0
B	Pre	0.5	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	7.5	
	Post	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	12.0	+4.5
C	Pre	0.5	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	7.5	
	Post	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	11.0	+3.5
D	Pre	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	8.0	
	Post	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	-5.5
E	Pre	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	7.5	
	Post	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	9.0	+1.5
F	Pre	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.0	
	Post	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	11.5	+5.5
G	Pre	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	5.5	
	Post	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	3.0	-2.5
H	Pre	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.5	
	Post	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	10.5	+7.0
Total Growth Average		+0.5	-0.5	+5.0	+4.0	-1.5	-1.0	-1.0	0.0	+0.5	-0.5	+2.5	+3.0	+17	+2.1

*Note:*

*A score of 0.0 indicates the component was not present, 1.0 indicates presence, and 0.5 indicates partial attempt at including the component.*

Table 4 delineates the scores students received using the common core rubric for argument and the change seen between pre and post testing. Five of the eight students showed growth in post-testing, with an average growth of +1.75. Most growth was seen in the areas of Development (+0.6875), Audience (+0.5), and Cohesion (+0.4375). The smallest change was seen in the category of Style and Conventions (+0.0625).

Table 4

*Rubric Writing Scores before and after Speaking Instruction*

Student	Test	Claim	Development	Audience	Cohesion	Style & Conventions	Total	Growth
A	Pre	3.0	1.5	2.0	1.0	2.0	9.5	
	Post	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.0	2.5	13.0	+3.5
B	Pre	4.0	2.5	4.0	3.0	2.5	16.0	
	Post	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	21.0	+5.0
C	Pre	3.0	3.0	4.0	2.0	4.0	16.0	
	Post	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	15.0	-1.0
D	Pre	4.0	2.0	3.0	2.5	3.0	14.5	
	Post	2.0	1.0	5.0	2.0	2.0	12.0	-2.5
E	Pre	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	11.0	
	Post	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	4.0	12.0	+1.0
F	Pre	2.5	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	8.5	
	Post	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	14.0	+5.5
G	Pre	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	12.0	
	Post	2.0	2.0	3.0	1.0	3.0	11.0	-1.0
H	Pre	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	14.0	
	Post	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.5	17.5	+3.5
Total								
Growth		+1.0	+5.5	+4.0	+3.5	+0.5		+14.0
Average		+0.125	+0.6875	+0.5	+0.4375	+0.0625		+1.75

*Note: Each component of the rubric had a potential score of 5 points giving a possible overall total of 25 points.*

Table 5 organizes student responses about planning argumentative essays. All of the students described planning in some way, whether it be brainstorming, making notes, creating an outline, or completing a graphic organizer. The majority of the students also references purposefully including claim, support, and an introduction and conclusion. Only two students mentioned addressing the counterargument, and only one student discussed researching, drafting, and revising as part of the writing process.

Table 5

*Student Survey Responses Regarding Argumentative Writing*

Student	Question Responses Referencing PROCESS				Question Responses Referencing PRODUCT			
	research	plan with outline, etc.	draft	revise	claim	support	counter- argument	intro/conc lusion
A	Q1,Q4	Q1,Q2	Q4	Q4		Q2,Q3		
B		Q1			Q4	Q3,Q4	Q4	Q4
C		Q1,Q2			Q2	Q2,Q3	Q2,Q3	Q2
D		Q1,Q2,Q4				Q2,Q3,Q4		
E	Q2	Q1,Q2			Q3			Q3
F		Q1			Q1,Q4	Q3,Q4		Q4
G		Q1,Q2						Q4
H		Q1,Q2					Q3	
Total	3	15	1	1	5	11	4	5

*Note: Q1 represents response to question #1 relating to the specified category: research, planning, drafting, revising, claim, support, counter-argument, introduction/conclusion*

*Q1) What do you do before writing.*

*Q2) How do you plan?*

*Q3) What is needed to make a strong argument*

*Q4) What steps did you follow?*

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Relationship between Speaking and Writing Proficiency

In addressing the first research question—*What is the relationship between speaking proficiency and writing proficiency for students who are learning English?*—the results collected with this particular group of students is unclear. The literature suggests that while English learners often master everyday conversational language, they struggle to master the vocabulary and syntax required for academic tasks, such as argumentation (Dutro et al., 2011, p. 339). With this information, it would be expected that assessments of speaking and writing skills would yield similar results—if a learner has the skills to produce academic language in one productive domain, these skills would be transferable to the other. This expectation proves true when comparing the study participants' ACCESS scores as well as their post-test scores. In both cases students demonstrate similar scores in the speaking and writing domains, with slightly higher scores (less than 3%) in writing. This pattern does not hold in the analysis of pre-test scores where learners scored an average of 13.6% higher in writing than in speaking.

When considering the reason for this disparity, two theories occur. First, it is possible that the pre-test task itself, which asked students to use a recording device to document their opinion on a topic, may be to blame. Since this is not a commonly assigned task for high school students, it may have caused some anxiety thereby producing lower scores. By the time students were asked to repeat the task for the post-test they had completed several similar recordings during the seven days of instruction and likely felt greater ease with the task.



The second potential cause for the inconsistency is related to the first in that it also recognizes that high school students are not often asked to produce extended, academic “speeches.” Although argumentative writing is taught in high school English class, students are seldom asked to open their mouths to speak argumentatively. Lack of opportunity for practice may lead students to struggle with the transfer of these skills between productive domains. Referring again to the Center for Applied Linguistics assertion that academic literacy “includes reading, writing, and oral discourse in school” (Perez & Holmes, 2010, p. 33), and recognizing Gee’s definition of Discourse as a way “of combining and coordinating words, deeds, thoughts, and values” as needed in the “specific socially situated...activity” (Mays, 2008, pp. 415-416), it may be a disservice to students to not ensure they are equally as confident in speaking academically as they are writing academically.

### **Speaking Instruction and Writing Performance**

The results of the pre- and post-instruction tests described above, which attempted to answer the question—*What is the effect of explicit instruction designed to develop and improve argumentative speaking on argumentative writing skills?*—seem to agree with August and Shanahan’s assertion regarding the association between skilled writing and well-developed oral language proficiency (2006, p. 4). The instruction designed as part of the current study was calculated to cultivate argumentative speaking skills. As students gained an average of 4.6 points between pre- and posttest speaking assessments, the instruction appears to have been successful. Despite the fact that instruction did not give any attention or opportunities for practice of argumentative writing, those scores rose an average of 1.8 points between pre- and posttest assessments. Although a smaller gain was seen in writing skills

than in speaking skills, it should be noted that initial pre-test speaking skills were also significantly lower than initial pre-test writing skills. Notwithstanding the smaller gain overall, when analyzing specific components of argumentation, there were large gains in the inclusion and quality of counterclaim, providing a rebuttal, including a conclusion, and tying that conclusion to the hook.

In survey results collected after post-testing, students indicated that they place great importance on planning and preparation. This contrasts with the results of Silva's meta-analysis which indicated that L2 writers typically plan less than L1 writers (1993, pp. 661-668). Observations of student behavior would suggest this commitment to planning developed throughout the instruction period. For both pre- and posttesting, students were encouraged to plan before recording their speeches. They were provided with a half sheet of paper for this purpose on the pre-test, and the plans that resulted covered on average a little more than a quarter of the space. When the routine was repeated for posttesting, students devoted much more attention to planning and wrote slightly over a page of notes on average, with three students actually taking advantage of both sides of the paper. Although these notes were to prepare for the recorded speech, the students' added emphasis on planning certainly affected both the length and quality of their post-test written samples as both of these areas increased as well.

In contrast to writing, speaking requires people to be prepared to verbalize their thoughts rather quickly, without the latitude for pausing, thought-gathering, and revision available throughout the writing process. It may be possible that, having become used to tasks which required them to present information through speaking in a smooth and fluent

manner, students came to value the necessity of preparation more than they might have had instructional tasks only required writing. When it came time to list important steps in writing, planning was certainly at the forefront of students' minds.

Ironically, given that more planning may have occurred with the instructional speaking tasks than might have had they been replaced with written tasks, the time commitment for instruction was not unmanageable. After quickly gaining confidence with the audio recording process, students began to consider it an easy task. While writing tasks were typically accompanied by questions about expected length, grammar, and spelling, the spoken tasks facilitated focus on the rhetorical skills of argumentation. With researchers like Saville-Troike (1984, p. 217) lamenting the lack of classroom time allocated for writing instruction, units such as the one in this study, that facilitate the tandem development of speaking and writing skills, may be advantageous. Separating cognitive demands of spelling and punctuation from those of analysis and rhetoric also correspond with McNamara et al. (2011, p. 76) and Kroll's (1990, p. 51) recommendations to scaffold writing instruction by focusing on one element at a time. As Kroll states, "writing proficiency exists on several different planes independently" (1990, p. 40), so there is logic in breaking things down for instruction. However, while the skills of argumentation taught through the domain of speaking generally transferred to the writing domain, this instruction was not successful in significantly improving scores in the rubric area of style and conventions. Following Kroll's suggestion, improvement to these areas of writing requires instruction independent from instruction on rhetoric.

It might also be recognized that the scaffolding recommended above for writing instruction, as well as the analysis of exemplar texts by Cheng (2008, pp. 55-56) and the teaching of heuristics suggested by Yeh (1998, p. 77), appear to be just as beneficial for speaking instruction as writing instruction. Certainly these instructional strategies improved pre- to post- test writing scores in the current study. The reason may be associated with Graham and Perin's finding that instruction in structured, process writing was more successful than simply encouraging students practice free writing (Graham & Perin, 2007). As high schools are typically centered around the needs of their L1 students, speaking opportunities are often free tasks controlled by speakers needs without much guidance from instruction. It follows that L2 learners' development of academic and analytic speaking skills, like argumentation, would greatly benefit from purposeful, organized, and scaffolded direct instruction in rhetoric (Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2013).

### **Limitations of Study and Suggestions for Further Research**

Given the above interpretations, it is necessary to recognize that neither research question posed here can be answered definitively by this study. This work was undertaken in only one classroom with just eight students, was made up of mostly intermediate and advanced English learners who were almost all from one language background, and was conducted over a time period of just 2 weeks with no control group.

There is need for a great deal more study regarding the relationship between L2 speaking and writing skills, particularly with larger and more diverse sample groups over longer periods of time. While the scope of this study focusing on argumentation,

investigations relating to other academic writing skills, such as critical analysis, technical writing, and research, are needed.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

It is the legal and ethical responsibility of educators to pursue the most effective teaching strategies possible. With the increasing emphasis the adoption of Common Core standards has put on all students gaining more advanced and academic writing skills, the original purpose of this study was to investigate potential instructional strategies through an examination of the relationship between the productive domains of speaking and writing for English learners. Specifically, would students demonstrate similar levels of proficiency in each area and would instruction to one of these areas influence the other? Review of the literature and collection of observations and data relating to the impact of instruction in argumentative speaking have led to the beliefs that:

1. Instruction designed for mainstream L1 populations does not afford L2 learners with enough structure and opportunity to develop strength in academic speaking. English learners would be best served by purposeful design of speaking instruction which uses scaffolding and analysis of exemplars to teach standard academic language models and heuristics.
2. Such purposeful instruction of speaking appears to be transferable, also benefiting English learners' writing skills. However, while students are able to transfer skills relating to critical analysis and organization, they will need additional instruction on skills, such as spelling and other conventions, that are exclusive to writing.
3. Teaching rhetoric through the use of the speaking domain also presents the advantage of emphasizing the need for good planning. The time-bound nature of speaking, which doesn't allow for significant pausing or revision, forces learners

to adopt good planning habits that, when transferred to writing, become highly beneficial.

Given the challenges faced by English learners and the great importance of ensuring they develop the academic language skills for success both within and outside of school, it is essential to recognize the association between spoken and written language and the strategic way it can be utilized to benefit instruction.

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## Appendix A: Common Core Rubric for Scoring Argument

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS WRITING RUBRICS (GRADES 11-12)		ARGUMENT			
ARGUMENT					
Description	5 Exceptional	4 Skilled	3 Proficient	2 Developing	1 Inadequate
<p><b>Claim:</b> The text introduces a clear, arguable claim that can be supported by reasons and evidence.</p> <p><b>Development:</b> The text provides sufficient data and evidence to back up the claim while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both the claim and counterclaim. The text provides a conclusion that supports the argument.</p> <p><b>Audience:</b> The text anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases about the claim. The text addresses the specific needs of the audience.</p> <p><b>Cohesion:</b> The text uses words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, creates cohesion and clarifies the relationship between the claim and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claims and counterclaims.</p> <p><b>Style and Conventions:</b> The text presents a formal, objective tone that demonstrates standard English conventions of usage and mechanics while attending to the norms of the discipline (i.e. MLA, APA, etc.).</p>	<p>The text introduces a compelling claim that is clearly arguable and takes a purposeful position on an issue. The text has a structure and organization that is carefully crafted to support the claim.</p> <p>The text provides convincing and relevant data and evidence to back up the claim and skillfully addresses counterclaims. The conclusion effectively strengthens the claim and evidence.</p> <p>The text consistently addresses the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases about the claim. The text addresses the specific needs of the audience.</p> <p>The text strategically uses words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text. The text explains the relationships between the claim and reasons as well as the evidence. The text strategically links the counterclaims to the claim.</p> <p>The text presents an engaging, formal and objective tone. The text intentionally uses standard English conventions of usage and mechanics while attending to the norms of the discipline (i.e. MLA, APA, etc.).</p>	<p>The text introduces a precise claim that is clearly arguable and takes an identifiable position on an issue. The text has an effective structure and organization that is aligned with the claim.</p> <p>The text provides sufficient and relevant data and evidence to back up the claim and fairly addresses counterclaims. The conclusion effectively reinforces the claim and evidence.</p> <p>The text anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases about the claim. The text addresses the specific needs of the audience.</p> <p>The text skillfully uses words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text. The text identifies the relationship between the claim and reasons as well as the evidence. The text effectively links the counterclaims to the claim.</p> <p>The text presents a formal, objective tone. The text demonstrates standard English conventions of usage and mechanics while attending to the norms of the discipline (i.e. MLA, APA, etc.).</p>	<p>The text introduces a claim that is arguable and takes a position. The text has a structure and organization that is aligned with the claim.</p> <p>The text provides data and evidence to back up the claim and addresses counterclaims. The conclusion ties to the claim and evidence.</p> <p>The text considers the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases about the claim. The text addresses the needs of the audience.</p> <p>The text uses words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text. The text connects the claim and reasons. The text links the counterclaims to the claim.</p> <p>The text presents a formal tone. The text demonstrates standard English conventions of usage and mechanics while attending to the norms of the discipline (i.e. MLA, APA, etc.).</p>	<p>The text contains an unclear or emerging claim that suggests a vague position. The text attempts a structure and organization to support the position.</p> <p>The text provides data and evidence that attempt to back up the claim and unclearly addresses counterclaims or lacks counterclaims. The conclusion merely restates the position.</p> <p>The text illustrates an inconsistent awareness of the audience's knowledge level and needs.</p> <p>The text contains limited words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text. The text attempts to connect the claim and reasons.</p> <p>The text illustrates a limited awareness of formal tone. The text demonstrates some accuracy in standard English conventions of usage and mechanics.</p>	<p>The text contains an unidentifiable claim or vague position. The text has limited structure and organization.</p> <p>The text contains limited data and evidence related to the claim and counterclaims or lacks counterclaims. The text may fail to conclude the argument or position.</p> <p>The text lacks an awareness of the audience's knowledge level and needs.</p> <p>The text contains few, if any, words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text. The text does not connect the claims and reasons.</p> <p>The text illustrates a limited awareness or inconsistent tone. The text demonstrates inaccuracy in standard English conventions of usage and mechanics.</p>



## Appendix B: Argument Graphic Organizer

**INTRODUCTION**

options:  brief story  surprising fact/statistic  historical perspective  description of a scene/situation  quote  question

HOOK

SIGNIFICANCE CLAIM

types of evidence:  $\rightarrow$  fact  $\rightarrow$  statistic  $\rightarrow$  expert opinion  $\rightarrow$  example  $\rightarrow$  appeal to reason  $\rightarrow$  appeal to emotion  $\rightarrow$  bandwagon

COUNTERCLAIM	REASON #1	REASON #2	REASON #3
DISPUTING EVIDENCE	EVIDENCE	EVIDENCE	EVIDENCE
REBUTTAL'S TIE TO CLAIM	REASONING'S TIE TO CLAIM	REASONING'S TIE TO CLAIM	REASONING'S TIE TO CLAIM

**TRANSITIONS**

*linking similar things together*

- and
- also
- next...
- likewise...
- in a similar way, ...
- similarly, ...
- moreover, ...
- in addition, ...
- furthermore, ...

*contrasting differences*

- but
- yet, ...
- rather
- although
- except
- instead
- alternatively, ...
- conversely, ...
- even so, ...
- however, ...
- nevertheless, ...
- on the contrary, ...

*showing cause and effect*

- so
- since, ...
- due to, ...
- therefore, ...
- as a result, ...
- consequently, ...
- subsequently, ...

*to conclude*

- in conclusion, ...
- in summary, ...
- to summarize, ...
- as can be seen, ...
- given these points, ...
- in the final analysis, ...

**CONCLUSION**

SHORT SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

SIGNIFICANCE CLAIM

TIE-IN TO HOOK