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KEY TERMS

Cognitive demand

How much mental effort is required for a task or activity

WHAT EVIDENCE IS SUMMARISED?

26 studies

HOW CAN I USE THE FINDINGS IN MY TEACHING?

- Working knowledge is limited, so giving your students time to plan their writing will help lower cognitive demand.
- Scaffold your activities to help your students succeed.
- Giving students plenty of time during pre-task planning could help them increase the complexity, fluency, and accuracy of their writing.
- Include pre-task planning which focuses on how to communicate ideas and the language features that may be required, like tasks that focus on lexis, grammar, and how to communicate to a particular audience.

WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM THIS SECONDARY RESEARCH?

How to use pre-tasks to help your students improve their writing.

WHAT DOES IT FIND?

- Planning helps ease the attentional and complexity demands required by writing. This gives the students more brain power to focus on production.
- Meaning-focused and language-focused pre-tasks, like looking at lexis, grammar, and audience, resulted in better complexity and fluency in writing than did pre-tasks that focused on specific planning subprocesses, like idea generation, organisation, and goal setting.
- The challenges of oral and written production are different. Writing tasks allow for more planning time.
- There were better results for pre-task planning than online planning, where planning and production showed more overlap.

