

From Awareness to Application: Examining the Effectiveness of Usage-Based Grammar Instruction on Adverbials

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of explicit, usage-based grammar instruction on adult learners' metalinguistic awareness and functional deployment of adverbials in an American college writing course (ENG-145). Fifty-one native English-speaking students participated in a pre–post instructional design targeting explicit understanding and application of adverbials grounded in usage-based linguistic theory. Metalinguistic knowledge was assessed using a 26-point pre- and posttest that measured definitional precision and categorical understanding. Results indicated improved conceptual clarity following instruction. To evaluate changes in production, adverbial frequency and distribution were analyzed in pre- and post-instruction writing samples. A paired-samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant increase in adverbial deployment from pre-instruction to post-instruction with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 3.29$). Readability analysis further demonstrated qualitative shifts in adverbial integration, indicating greater rhetorical appropriateness and syntactic flexibility rather than frequency gains alone. In addition, overall writing proficiency improved, with a higher proportion of students producing texts at elevated grade-level benchmarks following instruction. These findings provide quantitative evidence supporting the pedagogical value of explicit, usage-based grammar instruction in enhancing both grammatical awareness and meaningful application in college-level writing.

KEYWORDS

usage-based grammar instruction; explicit grammar teaching; adverbials, metalinguistic awareness; academic writing; pre–post instructional design; writing development

Debates over grammar instruction in U.S. education have persisted for more than half a century, oscillating between prescriptive formalism and communicative minimalism. Following influential claims that traditional grammar instruction does not improve writing quality (Clark, 2010; Pullum, 2012; Vakili, 2023; Wyse, 2001), explicit grammar teaching was progressively marginalized in many K–12 contexts. As Locke (2010) notes, grammar has remained one of the most ideologically charged and pedagogically unstable domains of English education. The cumulative effect of this shift is a cohort of native English-speaking adults who demonstrate fluent linguistic performance yet often possess limited explicit knowledge of grammatical structure or metalanguage.

This tension reflects a deeper theoretical divide within linguistics and applied linguistics. Generativist models sharply distinguish between competence and performance, conceptualizing grammatical knowledge as an abstract, internalized system that develops largely independently of instruction. In contrast, usage-based approaches (Ellis, 2009, 2010) reconceptualize grammar as emergent from language use: constructions arise through frequency effects, distributional learning,

entrenchment, and analogy. Within this framework, grammar is not a pre-specified formal system but a dynamic inventory of form–meaning pairings shaped by experience.

Crucially, however, the pedagogical implications of usage-based theory have often been simplified. While it is true that grammatical regularities can be acquired implicitly through exposure, usage-based models do not entail that explicit instruction is redundant. On the contrary, explicit attention to constructions may facilitate noticing, strengthen associative links between form and discourse function, and accelerate entrenchment processes. In adult learners, whose cognitive resources allow for analytic reflection, metalinguistic awareness may serve as a mechanism of mediating between implicit pattern recognition and deliberate rhetorical control. Yet empirical investigations of explicit instruction grounded explicitly in usage-based principles remain limited, particularly with native English-speaking adults.

This gap becomes especially salient in relation to adverbs and adverbials. Despite their high frequency and structural heterogeneity (Quirk et al., 1985), adverbials occupy a marginal position in most pedagogical grammar. Jackendoff (1972) characterized them as “the least studied and most maligned,” a description that remains strikingly apt. Adverbials are not merely optional modifiers; they encode temporality, aspectual framing, epistemic stance, causation, evaluation, and textual cohesion. In academic discourse, such functions are central to argument construction and reader positioning. Mastery of adverbials thus entails more than syntactic identification; it requires sensitivity to distributional patterns, scope relations, and discourse-pragmatic effects.

Moreover, prior research has predominantly focused on second- and foreign-language learners (Hinkel, 2004), often framing adverbial development as a matter of L2 complexity or transfer. Far less attention has been directed toward native speakers, for whom grammatical competence is assumed but metalinguistic control is rarely examined. This assumption warrants scrutiny. If grammar is conceptualized as a network of constructions emergent from use, then explicit conceptual knowledge of those constructions, particularly their functional variability, cannot be presumed, even among proficient native writers.

Although usage-based linguistics emphasizes the emergence of grammar from frequency-driven exposure and distributional learning, it does not entail that explicit instruction is incompatible with constructional development. On the contrary, explicit attention to grammatical patterns may increase perceptual salience, promote noticing, and facilitate abstraction of schematic representations from input (Bybee, 2006; Tomasello, 2003). For adult learners whose cognitive capacities support analytic reflection, metalinguistic explanation can function as a catalyst for pattern detection rather than a substitute for usage. In this framework, instruction operates as structured attention to recurring form–function mappings, accelerating entrenchment processes and strengthening associations between syntactic position and discourse effect. The present study, therefore, treats explicit grammar instruction as a usage-informed pedagogical intervention designed to enhance learners’ awareness of constructional regularities within authentic writing contexts.

This study addresses the theoretical and pedagogical gap by investigating whether explicit instruction grounded in a usage-based grammar framework can enhance adult native English speakers’ understanding and deployment of adverbials in academic writing. Specifically, the study first examines the extent of participants’ baseline metalinguistic knowledge of adverbs and adverbials, thereby interrogating the assumption that native competence entails explicit conceptual clarity. It then evaluates whether targeted instruction, designed to foreground constructional patterns, frequency effects, and discourse functions, produces measurable gains in (a) participants’

conceptual understanding of adverbials and (b) their written use of adverbials, operationalized in terms of frequency, functional range, and rhetorical integration within academic texts.

By empirically testing the pedagogical efficacy of theory-driven explicit instruction within a usage-based framework, this study intervenes in longstanding debates about the role of grammar teaching in advanced literacy development. It reframes explicit grammar instruction not as a return to prescriptive formalism, but as a cognitively and theoretically grounded mechanism for expanding writers' control over constructional resources central to academic discourse. This paper is founded on two main research questions (RQ):

RQ 1: How does explicit grammar instruction influence adult learners' use of adverbials in academic writing?

RQ 2: To what extent does usage-based explicit instruction facilitate the integration of adverbials into authentic writing tasks?

The first research question will also examine two related dimensions: (1) students' metalinguistic knowledge of adverbs and adverbials, and (2) their deployment of adverbials in authentic writing following explicit instruction. Additionally, the second research question will seek the answers to two related aspects: (1) how students integrated adverbs and adverbials in their writing tasks, and (2) how this deployment altered their writing tasks.

By examining both learners' conceptual-grammatical knowledge and their use of adverbial constructions in writing, this study provides classroom-based evidence on how usage-informed, explicit grammar instruction can support the development of grammatical resources.

Literature Review

Theoretical Positioning: From Structuralist and Generative Models to Usage-Based Linguistics

Debates surrounding grammar instruction and language acquisition reflect broader theoretical assumptions about the nature of grammar and its development. Early behaviorist perspectives conceptualized language learning as stimulus-response associations reinforced through repetition (Skinner, 1957), treating grammar as observable behavior shaped by environmental conditioning rather than as an internal cognitive system.

Generative grammar proposed an alternative account grounded in innate linguistic structure. Chomsky (1965) argued that linguistic competence derives from an internalized system of abstract rules supported by a biologically determined Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Although generative theory profoundly influenced linguistic research, it has been criticized for underemphasizing usage patterns, variability, and cognitive learning mechanisms.

Constructivist and usage-based approaches challenge both behaviorist and strict nativist accounts by treating grammar as emerging from linguistic experience. Within this perspective, grammatical knowledge develops through interaction, exposure to frequency, and pattern abstraction (Bybee, 2006; Langacker, 1987; Tomasello, 2003). Grammar is therefore conceptualized as a dynamic network of constructions shaped by recurring form–function mappings.

The present study adopts a usage-based framework to conceptualize grammar as emergent from recurring form-function constructions. It aims at providing the theoretical basis for instruction that emphasizes pattern recognition, frequency awareness, and constructional comparison rather than rule memorization alone.

Usage-Based Mechanisms Underlying Grammar Development

Pattern Finding, Categorization, and Construction Learning. Usage-based linguistics assumes that learners detect recurring patterns in input and gradually abstract schematic representations from linguistic instances. Tomasello (2003) describes this process as pattern finding, whereby learners identify distributional regularities across utterances.

Categorization plays a central role in construction formation, as learners group linguistic elements based on shared functional properties and analogical relationships. Empirical research demonstrates that learners build abstract schemas from exemplars rather than acquiring fully specified rules in isolation (Ambridge et al., 2012; Diessel, 2017).

Experimental and corpus-based evidence further demonstrates that learners abstract constructional generalizations from patterned input and rely on constructional cues as predictors of event meaning (Goldberg et al., 2004; Goldberg, 2006). These findings suggest that instructional approaches emphasizing structured exposure and guided pattern identification may facilitate abstraction of constructional relationships more effectively than rule memorization alone. In the present study, this insight informs instructional activities in which participants analyze recurring adverbial constructions across texts.

Frequency Effects, Entrenchment, and Productivity. Frequency constitutes a central explanatory mechanism in usage-based theory. Type frequency contributes to constructional productivity, whereas token frequency contributes to entrenchment and accessibility (Bybee, 2006). Repeated exposure strengthens cognitive representations and facilitates implicit learning across lexical and morphosyntactic domains (Ellis, 2002, 2009).

Corpus-based research similarly shows that the frequency distribution of constructions predicts developmental trajectories and supports segmentation and category formation (Diessel, 2013; Lieven, 2010). Experimental classroom research confirms these effects in second language contexts, demonstrating that structured exposure to frequent constructions enhances learners' sensitivity to distributional patterns (Kartal & Sarigul, 2017; Nguyen, 2024; Vakili & Mohammed, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). Collectively, these findings indicate that frequency-based exposure can be operationalized pedagogically to support grammatical development.

Entrenchment and Chunking. Entrenchment refers to the strengthening of mental representations through repeated usage (Bybee & Beckner, 2010; Langacker, 1987). Closely related is chunking, whereby frequently co-occurring linguistic sequences are stored and retrieved as holistic units.

Research shows that exposure to recurrent lexical bundles supports the emergence of chunked representations, facilitating grammatical development and efficient language use (Ellis et al., 2015; O'Donnell et al., 2013). Classroom-based studies further demonstrate that instruction targeting lexical chunks improves fluency, coherence, and structural accuracy in writing (Albaqami, 2022; AlHassan & Wood, 2015; Tang, 2012). These findings support instructional approaches that highlight constructional chunks and recurrent syntactic frames in authentic language use.

Empirical Research on Grammar Instruction in Post-Secondary Contexts

Effectiveness of Explicit Grammar Instruction. Meta-analytic research provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction. Norris and Ortega (2000) report substantial gains in grammatical knowledge following explicit instructional treatments,

particularly when metalinguistic explanation is included. Similarly, Spada and Tomita (2010) demonstrate positive effects across grammatical structures and learner populations. Together, these meta-analyses establish explicit instruction as a well-supported pedagogical approach grounded in cumulative empirical evidence.

Intervention research in a tertiary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context corroborates these findings. Studies show that explicit instruction targeting cohesive devices improves writing quality, textual coherence, and grammatical accuracy (Alawerdy & Alalwi, 2019; Vakili & Mohammed, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). These studies demonstrate that focused grammar instruction can produce statistically significant improvements, particularly when learners engage in rule explanation followed by structured practice and feedback.

However, much of this research focuses on second-language learners, leaving relatively limited evidence regarding explicit grammar instruction for native-speaking undergraduates.

Grammar Instruction for Native-Speaking University Students. While grammar instruction has been widely studied in L2 contexts, fewer empirical investigations address its impact on native-speaking undergraduates. Composition research nevertheless indicates persistent difficulties with sentence structure, clarity, and grammatical control among first-year writers (Eckstein & Chang, 2022; Vakili, 2023; Vakili & Mohammed, 2021).

Grammar-in-context approaches, therefore, integrate sentence-level instruction within authentic writing tasks to enhance rhetorical awareness and syntactic flexibility (Lancaster & Olinger, 2014). Rather than treating grammar as isolated rule memorization, this line of research situates grammatical knowledge within meaning-making processes, supporting the view that native-speaking undergraduates benefit from targeted, contextually embedded language instruction.

Writing-center intervention research further demonstrates measurable improvements in writing quality following structured feedback addressing organization, clarity, and language use (Tiruchittampalam et al., 2018). Together, these findings support the value of explicit, contextually embedded instruction for L1 writers in post-secondary settings, although experimental research targeting specific grammatical categories such as adverbials remains limited.

Instructional Techniques Employed in the Present Study. The instructional design of the present study incorporates three usage-based components:

1. Explicit rule explanation
2. Frequency-based analysis
3. Constructional comparison

Research shows that explicit attention to form is most effective when integrated with meaningful practice and communicative analysis (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Corpus-informed pedagogy further enhances learners' sensitivity to frequency patterns and usage constraints (Rodríguez-Fuentes & Swatek, 2022; Schmidt, 2023), while construction-informed genre pedagogy supports the analysis of grammar as networks of recurrent form–meaning pairings embedded in discourse (Wang & Lu, 2024). These components operationalize usage-based principles within an experimental framework examining changes in adverbial awareness and constructional accuracy among native-speaking undergraduates.

Adverbials and Academic Writing

Linguistic Characteristics of Adverbials. Adverbials constitute a functionally diverse grammatical category encoding temporal, causal, modal, evaluative, and discourse-organizing meanings (Quirk et al., 1985). They contribute to clause modification, stance expression, and textual cohesion but have historically received limited systematic attention in linguistic research (Jackendoff, 1972).

Descriptive grammar research documents their multifunctionality and syntactic mobility across registers (Biber, 1999), while Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) conceptualizes adverbials as realizations of circumstantial meanings that contribute to the experiential and interpersonal metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Generative analyses further demonstrate that adverbial ordering reflects hierarchical structural constraints rather than free variation (Cinque, 1999; Haumann, 2007). Complementary corpus-based research shows systematic positional tendencies linked to discourse function and register variation (Biber & Conrad, 1999; Römer & Wulff, 2010). From a usage-based perspective, these findings support the view that adverbial constructions represent entrenched form–function pairings shaped by recurrent exposure (Diessel, 2019; Goldberg, 2006). In general, these perspectives position adverbials as structurally constrained yet usage-sensitive elements whose acquisition and deployment can be examined through frequency analysis, positional comparison, and constructional patterning, making them particularly suitable for experimental investigation in instructional contexts.

Empirical Research on Adverbial Use in Writing. Corpus-based studies consistently show restricted use of complex adverbial constructions in student writing. Learner–expert comparisons reveal category imbalance and limited repertoire diversity relative to professional academic writing (Lei, 2012). Similar patterns of overuse and underuse across semantic subtypes have been reported in cross-linguistic learner corpora (Appel & Szeib, 2018; Ha, 2016). Collectively, these findings indicate that adverbial distribution in learner writing diverges from expert norms in both frequency and category diversity, highlighting the relevance of frequency-informed instruction.

Beyond frequency imbalance, empirical L2 writing research also identifies patterns of misuse, contextual inappropriateness, and overreliance on a limited set of adverbials. For instance, studies published in the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* show that forms such as *besides* and *actually* were not only overused but also misapplied in context, suggesting functional misunderstanding rather than purely frequency-driven divergence. Learner corpus research similarly demonstrates that different L1 groups display systematic preferences for particular linking devices, often repeating high-frequency forms while neglecting structurally or semantically appropriate alternatives. Research also documents contextual misuse and overreliance on high-frequency linking devices, suggesting functional rather than purely frequency-based divergence. These findings support instructional interventions that target the expansion of adverbial repertoires and improved form-function mapping in academic writing.

Pedagogical Research on Teaching Adverbials. Despite their importance in discourse, relatively few intervention studies explicitly target adverbial development. Meta-analytic evidence nevertheless confirms that explicit instruction that combines metalinguistic explanation with guided practice yields stronger gains than exposure alone (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010). Classroom-based investigations further show that structured attention to cohesive

devices improves textual cohesion and rhetorical organization (Biber et al., 2011; Norris & Ortega, 2009).

Corpus-informed instructional approaches provide more direct support. Data-driven learning interventions enhance learners' awareness of frequency distributions, collocational patterns, and syntactic positioning of discourse-organizing devices (Boulton & Cobb, 2017; Cotos, 2014). Systematic reviews similarly report consistent positive effects on grammatical development across contexts (Lee et al., 2019; Lusta et al., 2023), while longitudinal classroom research shows increased diversity and appropriateness of transitional expressions following sustained instruction (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014). Taken together, the limited scope of research explicitly targeting adverbials highlights a clear gap in experimental studies examining whether explicit usage-based instruction enhances native-speaking undergraduates' deployment of adverbials in academic writing.

Method

Research Design

This study employs a classroom-based, mixed-methods design to examine the impact of explicit instruction on undergraduate students' knowledge and use of adverbials in academic writing. The design integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture measurable changes in grammatical knowledge alongside functional shifts in written production. Rather than claiming causal generalization beyond the instructional context, the study evaluates pre- and post-instruction differences within a defined cohort to assess whether targeted pedagogical intervention is associated with observable changes in adverbial awareness and deployment.

Participants and Context

The study included 51 undergraduate students enrolled in three sections of ENG 145 (Academic Writing) at a Midwestern university during Fall 2023 and Spring 2024. Participation was voluntary. The sample represented diverse academic majors, with psychology and business administration as the most frequent disciplines and included students across academic levels. A retrospective self-report questionnaire indicated that 26 participants reported no prior formal grammar instruction, eight reported grammar exposure limited to literature-focused courses, and 17 reported prior formal grammar instruction. Approximately two-thirds of the participants reported minimal prior exposure to explicit grammar teaching, providing a relevant baseline for examining instructional effects.

Instructional Treatment

Instruction focused explicitly on adverbial categories, semantic functions, positional variation, frequency patterns, and constructional comparison within academic writing. The intervention was delivered through synchronous and asynchronous online instruction, including Zoom sessions and recorded lectures supplemented with guided textual analysis and PowerPoint-based explanations. Students engaged in explicit rule discussion, identification of adverbial constructions in authentic texts, comparative analysis of alternative constructions, and revision exercises. Writing assignments included autobiographical and genre-based essays, formal and informal letters, and a personal statement. Three writing tasks were completed prior to instruction and served as baseline measures, while subsequent writing tasks were completed after instruction to allow comparison.

The instructional treatment was designed to operationalize usage-based principles within an explicit pedagogical framework. Rather than presenting decontextualized rules, instruction emphasized repeated exposure to authentic adverbial constructions, guided identification of distributional patterns, and comparative analysis of alternative syntactic realizations. Explicit explanation was employed to increase attentional focus on form–meaning pairings and positional variability, thereby enhancing noticing and facilitating abstraction. Writing tasks immediately following instruction provided opportunities for meaningful reinforcement, supporting entrenchment through application rather than isolated drill. In this sense, the intervention sought to align with usage-based mechanisms, frequency, categorization, and constructional mapping, while leveraging adult learners’ metalinguistic capacities to accelerate pattern recognition.

Instruction was not limited to identifying forms but also emphasized how adverbial structures function rhetorically in academic writing. It is worth noting that students were not instructed to include specific numbers or types of adverbials in their writing tasks. Rather, they were directed to notice how these structures signal relationships such as causality, contrast, and condition, and were encouraged to incorporate them into their own writing in ways that supported clarity and argument development.

Instruments and Analytical Procedures

Knowledge of adverbs and adverbials was assessed through a pretest and a posttest consisting of twenty multiple-choice items and four open-ended questions (see Appendix A and B). Additionally, students wrote a total of seven papers in response to the provided prompts (see Appendix C). The multiple-choice items measured recognition and application of adverbial concepts, while the open-ended questions captured:

- a. definitional understanding,
- b. attitudes toward grammar instruction, and
- c. self-reported usage practices.

To minimize memorization effects, multiple-choice items retained structural equivalence across administrations but were rephrased in the posttest. Open-ended questions remained unchanged to allow for qualitative comparison.

The analysis of written production followed a systematic, iterative coding procedure informed by the instructional focus on adverbial structures and relevant usage-based frameworks. Initial coding categories were developed deductively and subsequently refined through repeated readings of the data to capture patterns in frequency, accuracy, and functional deployment. In addition to deductive category development, an initial phase of open coding was conducted on a subset of the data to identify emergent patterns in students’ use of adverbials without imposing predetermined constraints. These inductive insights informed the refinement of the coding framework, resulting in the development of a codebook that specified category definitions, inclusion criteria, and illustrative examples. The finalized codebook was then systematically applied to the full dataset, ensuring consistency in the identification and classification of adverbial forms and functions across all writing samples. This combined inductive-deductive approach aligns with established qualitative analysis procedures (e.g., Vanover et al., 2021). This approach ensured both analytical consistency and sensitivity to variation in student writing.

The researcher manually coded all writing samples. Adverbials were identified and classified based on their syntactic position and functional role within the clause. Adopting a

functional perspective, the analysis extended beyond lexical adverbs to include phrases and clauses performing adverbial functions. The coding process focused on the range of adverbial types employed, their frequency, and their contribution to sentence meaning and overall textual coherence.

To ensure consistency, a systematic coding protocol was implemented in which adverbials were defined in terms of grammatical function rather than lexical form. The coding framework drew on established functional grammar models (e.g., Quirk et al., 1985), distinguishing among major functional categories (e.g., adjuncts) and their semantic subtypes (e.g., temporal, spatial, and process-related meanings). Each essay was analyzed through multiple readings, during which adverbial elements were annotated with attention to both clause-level syntax and discourse-level function.

In cases of functional ambiguity, classifications were determined based on the broader sentential context. Ambiguous instances were revisited during a second round of coding to ensure internal consistency. To enhance reliability, a randomly selected subset (20%) of the essays was independently coded by a second reviewer with training in functional grammar. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960), yielding a coefficient of $\kappa = .85$, indicating strong agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Given the study's primary aim of identifying general distributional patterns, the coding scheme prioritized functionally defined categories over fine-grained distinctions among closely related subtypes.

Written production was analyzed through frequency counts of adverbials, examination of positional distribution, and semantic categorization across pre- and post-instruction essays. As an additional quantitative indicator of structural change, the Flesch Reading Ease (Flesch, 1948) and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (Kincaid et al., 1975) metrics were applied to student texts. These measures were treated as proxy indicators of syntactic complexity rather than direct measures of adverbial development and were interpreted cautiously in conjunction with qualitative findings. In other words, these measures were used not as indicators of writing quality in isolation, but as tools for identifying shifts in syntactic complexity and readability. Increases in grade level, for example, were interpreted in relation to students' use of more complex sentence structures, including multi-clause constructions.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis compared pre- and post-instruction measures using paired-sample t-tests to examine changes in test scores, adverbial frequency, and readability indices. The use of paired comparisons is appropriate because the same participants were measured at two time points. Where assumptions of normality were not met, non-parametric alternatives were considered. Effect sizes were calculated to assess practical significance beyond statistical differences.

Qualitative analysis followed an iterative coding process informed by established approaches to thematic and discourse-oriented analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vanover et al., 2021). Analysis proceeded through multiple cycles, beginning with open coding to capture emergent patterns, followed by focused coding using the developed codebook. Written data were coded for accuracy, functional expansion, positional variation, and instances of misuse or overgeneralization. Codes were applied systematically across datasets, with ongoing refinement through constant comparison. To strengthen reliability and analytic rigor, coding was conducted iteratively with cross-checking and revisiting of ambiguous cases to reduce interpretive bias.

Teaching Approach and Instructional Implementation

The instructional design of this study was grounded in a usage-based linguistics framework, which conceptualizes language acquisition as emerging from repeated exposure, pattern detection, and form–meaning mapping rather than isolated rule memorization. Within this perspective, adverbial instruction emphasized meaningful chunks, frequency awareness, categorization of functional types, and constructional comparison to strengthen learners’ internalization of grammatical patterns. Tomasello’s (2007) grammar dimension informed the pedagogical design, particularly the principles of frequency, chunking, analogy, distributional analysis, categorization, and entrenchment. These principles guided classroom activities that required students to identify adverbials in authentic texts, analyze positional and semantic variation, and produce original sentences using the same structures to reinforce pattern recognition and application. More specifically, instruction was delivered over multiple sessions and followed a structured sequence as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Usage-Based Explicit Instructional Sequence for Adverbials in Academic Writing

Instructional Step	Description
1. Introduction of Target Structure	Students were introduced to specific grammatical forms (e.g., concessive, conditional, and causal adverbials) through authentic academic texts.
2. Guided Analysis	Students analyzed how these structures functioned rhetorically in context, focusing on meaning, cohesion, and argument development.
3. Explicit Explanation	The instructor provided direct explanations of form, function, and variation, highlighting patterns of usage rather than prescriptive rules.
4. Controlled Practice	Students completed targeted exercises requiring them to manipulate and produce the structures.
5. Open-Ended Application	Students incorporated these structures into their own writing through guided prompts.

This instructional sequence followed a structured timeline aligned with data collection. Students completed a pretest in the second week of the semester. During the subsequent three weeks, they produced three writing assignments: an autobiography, a memoir, and a genre analysis, of which the first two served as baseline writing samples for pre-instruction analysis. Explicit instruction on adverbials was delivered during weeks six through eight and covered major semantic and functional categories, including spatial, temporal, process-oriented, and adjunctive adverbials. Instruction combined direct explanation with guided exercises, homework tasks requiring identification and production of adverbials, and synchronous group discussions via Zoom.

A post-test was administered at the end of week eight following completion of the instructional module. In the subsequent two weeks, students produced two additional writing tasks, a set of formal and informal letters and a personal statement, to measure post-instruction changes in adverbial use. The writing prompts in both pre- and post-writing assignments were designed to encourage the use of target grammatical structures within meaningful rhetorical contexts. For

example, students were asked to develop arguments that incorporated cause-and-effect relationships or to respond to counterarguments, both of which naturally elicited the use of adverbial clauses. Pre- and post-instruction writing samples were compared to evaluate shifts in adverbial knowledge, frequency, and application within academic writing.

Although instructional activities explicitly emphasized the identification, analysis, and rhetorical use of adverbials, students were not required to include a fixed number of adverbials, nor were they given prescriptive constraints regarding positional placement in their writing. Instead, prompts were designed to naturally elicit adverbial constructions (e.g., cause-effect reasoning, conditional argumentation, contrastive positioning), allowing for observation of authentic uptake and functional deployment. This approach ensured that any observed changes in adverbial usage reflected learners' developing control and awareness rather than compliance with imposed structural requirements.

Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability of Analysis

To enhance trustworthiness, this study employed multiple strategies consistent with qualitative and mixed-methods research standards (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Data triangulation was achieved through the integration of multiple sources, including pre- and posttests, open-ended responses, and longitudinal writing samples, allowing for convergence of findings across data types. The use of authentic classroom writing contributes to ecological validity by reflecting naturally occurring language use rather than decontextualized performance.

Credibility was supported through iterative coding procedures, codebook development, and inter-rater reliability checks. A subset of the data (20%) was independently coded, yielding a Cohen's Kappa of $\kappa = .85$, indicating strong agreement (Cohen, 1960). Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, and ambiguous cases were revisited during multiple coding cycles. Dependability and transparency were addressed through explicit documentation of analytic procedures, including the integration of inductive (open coding) and deductive coding strategies, and the systematic application of coding criteria across datasets.

This study is best characterized as a classroom-based mixed-methods investigation that integrates quantitative measures with qualitative analysis to capture both measurable and functional dimensions of grammatical development. While pre-post comparisons allow for observing instructional impact, the design does not establish causal relationships. Instead, findings should be interpreted as indicating associations between instructional intervention and observed changes within the study context.

Despite these strengths, several limitations remain. The relatively small sample size and classroom-based design limit generalizability beyond similar instructional settings. Additionally, the instructional period (three weeks) may not be sufficient for full grammatical entrenchment. As such, observed changes are interpreted as developmental tendencies rather than definitive evidence of long-term acquisition or causal effect.

Data Analysis and Results

The results are organized according to the study's research questions and reflect both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of analysis. Quantitative findings are presented first to document measurable pre-post differences in metalinguistic knowledge, adverbial frequency, and readability indices. These statistical results are then complemented by qualitative examination of student writing samples and open-ended responses to provide a contextualized interpretation of how adverbials were integrated into authentic compositions. This combined analytic structure allows

for evaluation of both numerical shifts in grammatical deployment and functional changes in discourse-level application, while maintaining alignment with the study's quasi-experimental design and theoretical framework.

Effects of Explicit Instruction on Metalinguistic Knowledge and Adverbial Deployment

Research Question 1: How does explicit grammar instruction influence adult learners' use of adverbials in academic writing? This research question examined two related dimensions: (1) students' metalinguistic knowledge of adverbs and adverbials, and (2) their deployment of adverbials in authentic writing following explicit instruction.

Pre-Post Differences in Metalinguistic Knowledge. To assess changes in participants' explicit understanding of adverbials, pre- and post-instruction measures of metalinguistic knowledge were compared using paired statistical analyses. The analysis focused on accuracy in identifying adverbial forms, distinguishing between syntactic categories, and articulating functional roles within clause structure. Descriptive statistics were first used to determine overall score distributions at each time point, followed by inferential testing to evaluate whether observed differences were statistically significant. This approach permits evaluation of whether the instructional intervention was associated with measurable gains in conceptual clarity while maintaining attention to variability across individual participants.

Baseline knowledge was assessed using a pretest scored out of 26 points (three points for adverb definitions, three for adverbial definitions, and 20 multiple-choice items). Comparison with posttest responses indicated improvement in definitional precision and categorical awareness following explicit instruction.

Prior to instruction, many students demonstrated partial or form-based conceptions of adverbs. A common misconception restricted adverbs to *-ly* forms and limited their function to verb modification (e.g., "a word that modifies a verb and ends in *-ly*"). Others described adverbs as words that "add detail to a verb" or "answer how, when, and where questions," reflecting functional awareness but limited categorical precision.

Some responses revealed confusion between grammatical categories, such as defining adverbs as words that "describe an adjective" without reference to broader modification patterns or offering vague descriptions such as "a small phrase that helps introduce a subject." These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that learners often possess intuitive knowledge of usage but lack explicit grammatical terminology (Clifton, 2014; Vande Berg, 1999). The discrepancy between example generation and definitional clarity reflects the distinction between implicit competence and explicit metalinguistic knowledge.

Post-instruction responses demonstrated clearer functional and categorical definitions. Students more frequently described adverbs as members of a grammatical class capable of modifying verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or entire clauses. Definitions increasingly referenced grammatical function rather than morphological form alone. Notably, some students moved beyond *-ly* generalizations and acknowledged exceptions (e.g., fast, hard), indicating reduced reliance on surface morphology as the sole diagnostic criterion.

Knowledge of adverbials showed even greater initial uncertainty. Pretest responses often expressed unfamiliarity or conflated lexical realization with grammatical function. Post-instruction definitions, however, more consistently described adverbials as functional sentence elements, accompanied by appropriate contextual examples (e.g., "Hopefully, she can make it to the party next weekend."). These shifts suggest increased awareness of

distributional patterns and positional flexibility, mechanisms emphasized in usage-based accounts of grammatical development (Bybee, 2006; Tomasello, 2007).

Overall, the definitional data indicate improved terminological precision and functional classification following explicit instruction. Consistent with meta-analytic findings on form-focused instruction (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010), the results suggest gains in declarative grammatical knowledge. These gains are best interpreted as increased metalinguistic awareness rather than complete mastery.

Pre–Post Differences in Adverbial Frequency and Positional Distribution. To examine whether shifts in metalinguistic knowledge corresponded with changes in written deployment, pre- and post-instruction compositions were analyzed for overall adverbial frequency and positional distribution within clause structure. Adverbials were coded according to syntactic category and clause position (initial, medial, and final), and normalized counts were calculated to control for variation in essay length. Comparative statistical analyses were then conducted to determine whether differences between pre- and post-instruction texts reached significance. This analytic procedure enables evaluation of measurable changes in the quantity and structural placement of adverbials, while distinguishing between simple frequency increase and broader variability in syntactic positioning.

To determine whether explicit instruction influenced actual grammatical production, adverbial frequency in pre- and post-instruction writing samples was analyzed for 51 students. Descriptive statistics indicated a substantial increase in adverbial usage following instruction. Pre-instruction writing yielded a mean of 11.57 adverbials ($SD = 1.81$), whereas post-instruction writing yielded a mean of 20.16 ($SD = 2.93$), representing an average increase of 8.59 adverbials per student. A paired-samples t-test revealed that this difference was statistically significant, $t(50) = 23.51$, $p < .001$. The magnitude of the effect was very large (Cohen's $d = 3.29$), indicating a substantial overall increase in adverbial deployment across the sample.

This shift demonstrates not only increased frequency of adverbial usage but also greater semantic precision, suggesting growing metalinguistic awareness. Through chunking and analogy exercises during instruction, students repeatedly encountered similar academic phrasing patterns (e.g., *through consistent practice, in response to feedback*), which likely facilitated the adoption of more sophisticated adverbial constructions.

Distributional awareness also improved. Pre-instruction writing showed a strong preference for clause-final adverbials, whereas post-instruction samples displayed greater positional flexibility, including sentence-initial and mid-clause adverbials that contributed to cohesion. This supports the claim that explicit attention to form within meaningful contexts can increase learners' noticing and functional deployment of grammatical structures.

Importantly, these data were drawn from assigned compositions rather than isolated grammar exercises, suggesting that increased usage occurred within authentic writing contexts. While the study design does not include a control group and therefore cannot establish definitive causality, the magnitude of the pre–post shift indicates a strong association between explicit instruction and expanded grammatical production.

Integration of Adverbials in Authentic Writing Contexts

Research Question 2: To what extent does usage-based explicit instruction facilitate the integration of adverbials into authentic writing tasks? This research question examined two related aspects: (1) how students integrated adverbs and adverbials in their writing tasks and (2) how this deployment altered their writing tasks.

Functional Integration and Discourse-Level Application. Beyond the statistically significant increase in overall adverbial frequency, qualitative analysis of post-instruction writing samples suggests improved functional integration within authentic compositions. Because the writing samples analyzed were graded coursework assignments rather than isolated grammar exercises, the observed increases reflect application within extended discourse contexts.

Pre-instruction writing often relied on limited temporal sequencing (e.g., then, later, after) with minimal variation in placement or rhetorical purpose. Adverbials frequently appeared in clause-final positions and functioned primarily as chronological markers. Following instruction, students demonstrated greater syntactic flexibility, including sentence-initial framing devices (e.g., Over the past several years), mid-clause modifiers, and more elaborated process constructions (e.g., through sustained engagement in writing-intensive courses).

This qualitative shift complements the quantitative findings. The substantial increase in adverbial frequency ($t(50) = 23.51, p < .001$) suggests that instruction supported greater production, while the discourse-level analysis indicates that these forms were embedded within meaningful argumentative and reflective contexts. From a usage-based perspective, the integration observed may reflect strengthened form–function associations resulting from repeated exposure and guided practice. Instruction emphasized categorization of adverbial types, identification in model texts, and analogy-based sentence construction. Such tasks align with mechanisms of pattern recognition and entrenchment, which posit that learners abstract constructions from recurring, contextually situated use rather than from isolated rule memorization.

Nevertheless, integration was not uniform across all participants. While most students demonstrated expanded deployment and rhetorical framing, a minority continued to rely on simpler adverbial forms. This variability is consistent with usage-based accounts of gradual development, in which acquisition depends on the frequency of engagement and meaningful interaction with target constructions.

Taken together, the findings suggest that explicit grammar instruction, when embedded within authentic writing tasks, may support both increased frequency and functional integration of grammatical forms. However, without a comparison group, the results should be interpreted as evidence of instructional influence within this specific classroom setting rather than as definitive proof of generalized transfer effects.

Structural Complexity and Readability Indicators. To examine potential changes in writing quality, both quantitative readability measures and qualitative discourse analysis were considered. Readability scores (Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level) were compared across pre- and post-instruction writing samples. Post-instruction texts demonstrated modest shifts toward greater syntactic complexity, as reflected in grade-level adjustments and

changes in reading ease scores. While readability metrics do not directly measure rhetorical quality, they provide an objective indicator of structural variation and sentence-level complexity.

Increased adverbial usage may partially account for these shifts. Expanded use of sentence-initial framing devices, embedded process modifiers, and multi-word adverbial constructions likely contributed to longer clause structures and increased syntactic density, which are reflected in readability calculations. However, readability scores should be interpreted cautiously. Such indices primarily capture sentence length and syllable count rather than coherence, argument strength, or stylistic sophistication. Therefore, they serve as supplementary indicators rather than definitive measures of writing quality.

Qualitative analysis of post-instruction compositions revealed clearer temporal framing, improved logical transitions, and greater discourse cohesion. Students increasingly employed adverbials to:

- Frame arguments (e.g., From a rhetorical perspective . . .)
- Signal causality (e.g., As a result . . .)
- Indicate contrast (e.g., In contrast . . .)
- Provide process elaboration (e.g., Through sustained engagement . . .)

Pre-instruction writing frequently relied on basic chronological sequencing. Post-instruction samples demonstrated a wider range of rhetorical functions and greater positional flexibility, suggesting increased metalinguistic awareness and control over grammatical resources. These discourse-level developments align with the substantial increase in adverbial production identified in RQ1 ($t(50) = 23.51, p < .001, d = 3.29$). The frequency gain appears to have been accompanied by functional diversification rather than mechanical overuse.

Although improvements were observed in both readability metrics and qualitative cohesion, it would be methodologically inappropriate to attribute global writing improvement solely to explicit grammar instruction. Writing development is multidimensional and influenced by familiarity with genre, feedback cycles, revision practices, and broader rhetorical training.

The findings instead suggest that explicit, usage-based grammar instruction may contribute to localized improvements in syntactic variation and discourse framing within authentic writing contexts. These improvements appear most pronounced in the domain of adverbial awareness and deployment rather than in holistic writing proficiency.

Summary of Findings Across Research Questions

Taken together, the findings across research questions indicate that explicit, usage-informed instruction was associated with measurable changes at both the metalinguistic and textual levels. Quantitative analyses revealed statistically significant pre–post gains in participants’ conceptual understanding of adverbials, as well as increases in overall adverbial frequency and greater positional variability in written compositions. Qualitative examination of writing samples further suggested that these shifts were not limited to surface-level insertion but reflected more deliberate integration of adverbials into clause structure and discourse organization.

At the same time, the results demonstrate variation in the extent and consistency of these changes across participants, underscoring that instructional impact was neither uniform nor absolute. Improvements in structural complexity and readability indices were observable but modest, suggesting that enhanced grammatical awareness does not automatically translate into a comprehensive transformation of writing quality. Rather, the findings point to incremental

development consistent with usage-based accounts of learning, in which repeated exposure, attentional focus, and contextualized practice contribute gradually to constructional entrenchment.

Overall, the combined quantitative and qualitative evidence supports the conclusion that explicit attention to adverbial constructions can facilitate increased awareness and more flexible deployment in academic writing, while also indicating the limits of short-term instructional intervention. These results provide an empirical foundation for the interpretive discussion that follows.

Pedagogical Implications: What Explicit Instruction Looks Like in Practice

To make the instructional approach more concrete, this section outlines how explicit grammar instruction can be implemented in writing classrooms. Rather than presenting grammar as a set of abstract rules, instruction in this study treated grammar as a resource for meaning making. For example, when teaching concessive adverbials (e.g., *although*, *even though*), students first analyzed how these structures function in published academic writing to introduce complexity and nuance. They then practiced rewriting their own claims to incorporate concessions, thereby strengthening the depth of their arguments.

Similarly, instruction on causal adverbials (e.g., *because*, *since*, and *as a result*) emphasized how writers construct logical relationships between ideas. Students were asked to revise paragraphs by explicitly marking causal connections, thereby improving clarity and coherence.

These instructional practices demonstrate that explicit grammar teaching does not need to be decontextualized or prescriptive. Instead, it can be integrated into writing instruction in ways that directly support students' rhetorical goals.

Conclusion

This study examined whether explicit, usage-based grammar instruction influenced adult L1 English learners' deployment of adverbials in authentic academic writing. By combining quantitative pre–post analysis with qualitative discourse examination, the study aimed to evaluate both frequency-based change and functional integration.

The findings indicate a substantial increase in adverbial usage following instruction. A paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant rise from pre-instruction ($M = 11.57$, $SD = 1.81$) to post-instruction writing ($M = 20.16$, $SD = 2.93$), $t(50) = 23.51$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect size ($d = 3.29$). This result demonstrates a robust shift in grammatical production across participants.

Qualitative analysis further suggests that the increase was not merely numerical but functional. Post-instruction writing displayed greater syntactic flexibility, more varied rhetorical framing, and increased deployment of adverbials for cohesion, stance marking, and process elaboration. These developments align with usage-based accounts of language learning, which emphasize frequency, pattern recognition, and entrenchment through meaningful engagement rather than isolated rule acquisition.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted within the limits of the study design. The absence of a control group prevents definitive causal claims, and the classroom-based context restricts generalizability. Additionally, while readability metrics suggested modest increases in syntactic complexity, such measures do not fully capture broader dimensions of writing quality.

Rather than demonstrating that explicit grammar instruction serves as the foundation of writing improvement, the results more cautiously suggest that explicit, contextually embedded

grammar instruction can support measurable gains in targeted grammatical features within authentic writing tasks. When integrated with ongoing composition practice, grammar instruction may enhance learners' metalinguistic awareness and expand their repertoire of discourse-level resources.

Future research could extend this work by incorporating comparison groups, delayed posttests to examine retention, and additional measures of holistic writing quality. Longer instructional periods may also clarify whether observed gains reflect durable entrenchment or short-term production effects.

Overall, this study contributes to ongoing debates regarding the role of explicit grammar instruction in L1 composition by providing empirical evidence that usage-informed, context-embedded instruction can yield substantial increases in grammatical deployment without isolating grammar from meaningful writing practice.

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Appendix A: Pretest

A. Answer the following questions.

1. Have you ever had any formal grammar classes?
2. What is an adverb? Bring some examples.
3. What is an adverbial? Support your definition with examples.

B. What does the underlined portion of the sentence express?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. He works <u>in the bank</u> . | a. means b. position c. direction d. condition |
| 2. Jason was coming back <u>from his travel to Europe</u> . | a. position b. distance c. reason d. direction |
| 3. <u>Sadly</u> , the flood destroyed the bridge connecting those two cities. | a. judgment b. manner c. claim d. cause |
| 4. The man was <u>politely</u> admitted to the meeting. | a. respect b. manner c. emphasis d. condition |
| 5. Kenzie drove to Chicago <u>on Monday</u> . | a. duration b. frequency c. position d. relationship |
| 6. The results of the competition were released <u>by the journalist</u> earlier than expected. | a. means b. instrument c. agent d. manner |
| 7. <u>Frankly</u> , he is not going to pass the test. | a. manner b. style disjunct c. content disjunct d. process disjunct |
| 8. Bonita is evaluating her employees <u>by interviewing them</u> . | a. manner b. means c. instrument d. agent |
| 9. Kenzie and Haley had traveled <u>a very long way</u> . | a. distance b. position c. duration d. cause |
| 10. The meeting with the Jones <u>dates back to 1989</u> . | a. duration b. position c. direction d. distance |
| 11. Travis has been working in the company <u>for almost 8 years</u> . | a. duration b. position c. direction d. distance |
| 12. John is <u>still</u> working on his proposal for the conference. | a. position b. relationship c. frequency d. duration |
| 13. <u>Arguably</u> , Mrs. Jenkins consults with her lawyer every now and then. | a. truth b. doubt c. judgment d. reality |
| 14. They tried to solve the issue <u>mathematically</u> . | a. means b. instrument c. agent d. manner |
| 15. They have been working on this machine <u>since 10 a.m.</u> | a. duration b. position c. relationship d. frequency |
| 16. Mr. Foster says <u>that he neglects his children</u> . | a. manner b. relationship c. disjunct d. adjunct |
| 17. The boy, <u>apparently</u> , has forgotten to lock the door. | a. claim b. doubt c. judgment d. respect |

18. Like John, Mary has applied for the senior position in the company. a. manner b. relationship c. position d. agent

19. The Johnsons go fishing once every month. a. manner b. frequency c. position d. agent

20. Is Mary at home, by any chance? a. claim b. doubt c. judgment d. respect

C. Answer the following questions in 2–3 short sentences.

1. How do you think knowledge about adverbs and adverbials can help you in your writing?
 2. How do you think knowledge of adverbs and adverbials can help you in your reading?
 3. What do you think about the following statements? Explain your answer in 2–3 short sentences.
 - a. It is important for learners to know grammatical terminology.
 - b. Explicit discussion of grammar rules is helpful for students.
 - c. Learning grammar can make a student's writing more effective.
 - d. I need to be consciously aware of a structure's form and its function before I can use it proficiently.
-

Appendix B: Posttest

A. Answer the following questions. (6 pts.)

1. What is an adverb? Bring some examples.
2. What is an adverbial? Support your definition with examples.

B. What does the underlined portion of the sentence express? (20 pts.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Justine has been living in this apartment <u>for over 10 years</u> . | a. position b. frequency c. duration d. distance |
| 2. My family has decided to move <u>to Chicago</u> . | a. position b. direction c. distance d. means |
| 3. Jason has <u>already</u> done the tasks he was told <u>by his teacher</u> . | a. relationship-agent b. frequency-agent
c. relationship-instrument d. frequency-agent |
| 4. <u>Fortunately</u> , no one was injured in that accident <u>last night</u> . | a. disjunct-frequency b. adjunct-frequency
c. disjunct-position d. adjunct-position |
| 5. Laurel has to take the job <u>seriously</u> if she wants to get a promotion in her office. | a. manner b. style disjunct c. content disjunct d. illocutionary disjunct |
| 6. Larry should be picked up <u>from school</u> because of the weather condition. | a. relationship b. distance c. direction d. instrument |
| 7. Their first meeting <u>dates back to 2002</u> when they were both hired by the company. | a. relationship b. position c. distance d. frequency |
| 8. Mariana has been <u>cleverly</u> doing the puzzles in the competition. | a. disjunct b. manner c. position d. instrument |
| 9. Could he <u>possibly</u> have killed his father <u>with this knife</u> ? | a. adjunct-means b. adjunct-instrument c. disjunct-means
d. disjunct-instrument |
| 10. He speaks several European and oriental languages as well as Arabic <u>very fluently indeed</u> . | a. manner b. style disjunct c. content disjunct d. illocutionary disjunct |
| 11. A cure for chronic bronchitis is <u>yet</u> to be found. | a. position b. relationship c. means d. distance |
| 12. He <u>immediately</u> stopped the machine after observing a small change in the final product. | a. position b. frequency c. duration d. direction |
| 13. The boy broke his leg <u>running up the stairs</u> . | a. direction b. position c. distance d. instrument |
| 14. The burglars used <u>an acetylene lamp</u> to break open the safe. | a. position b. means c. instrument d. manner |
| 15. Jacob could see his high school classmate <u>on the bus</u> after a long time. | a. means b. direction c. position d. instrument |
| 16. Chris was reading a book written <u>by Tolstoy</u> the other day. | a. agentive b. instrument c. position d. disjunct |
| 17. They have planned to go cruising Europe <u>by train</u> for their summer vacation. | a. direction b. position c. instrument d. means |

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18. **Frankly**, the road had a very poor surface. a. position b. means c. instrument d. disjunct
-
19. This class has **always** volunteered to do the decorations for the New Year. a. frequency b. direction c. position d. agentive
-
20. You can stick the pieces together **with glue**. a. means b. instrument c. direction d. position
-

C. Answer the following questions in 2–3 short sentences. (8 pts.; each question is 2 pts.)

1. Do you prefer explicit grammar teaching or implicit grammar teaching? (In explicit, the teacher presents the rules and principles and then provides examples to practice those rules. In implicit, the teacher provides examples and the students try to infer the rules; the teacher does not provide students with the rules.)
 2. Do you think knowledge about adverbs and adverbials can help you in your writing? How?
 3. Do you think knowledge of adverbs and adverbials can help you in your reading? How?
 4. What do you think about the following statements? Explain your answer in 2–3 short sentences.
 - a. It is important for learners to know grammatical terminology.
 - b. Explicit discussion of grammar rules is helpful for students.
 - c. Learning grammar can make a student's writing more effective.
 - d. I need to be consciously aware of a structure's form and its function before I can use it proficiently.
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Appendix C: Writing Assignment Prompts

Autobiography

Please tell me a little about your background. I am interested in who you are in general, but also, more specifically, in what kinds of writing you do and have done. How is writing (of any kind) part of your daily life? What experiences have you had that made you feel good about writing, and what experiences have been discouraging? What kinds of academic writing have you done in college? What kinds of writing do you anticipate will be important to meet your goals while you are in college or high school? What questions or concerns do you have about the reading and writing you will be doing for this class and beyond? How is English 145 (as described in the syllabus and the course reader) similar to or different from what you were expecting? What do you think is a good piece of writing?

Write as formally or informally as you like until you have one double-spaced page (in 12-point Times New Roman font, around 250 words). Don't stay up all night worrying about your grammar, but do proofread so that my first experience of your writing is a positive one.

Memoir Prompts

Choose a topic that meets the following criteria:

- Something you have **STRONG FEELINGS** about
- Something you **KNOW A LOT** about
- Something you can **DESCRIBE IN GREAT DETAIL**
- Something your **AUDIENCE** will be interested in (automatic if you write about something unique to you)
- Something your audience will feel was **WORTH READING** (automatic if you write about something unique to you)

Your memoir should meet the following expectations:

- It focuses and reflects on the relationship between the writer and a particular person, place, animal, or object.
- It explains the significance of the relationship.
- It is limited to a particular phase, time period, place, or recurring behavior in order to develop the focus fully.
- It makes the subject of the memoir come alive.
- It includes an introduction with an attention-grabbing opening.
- It includes details that set the scene.
- The word count is 800–1,000 words.

Please note: Your writing is confidential on all matters EXCEPT: (1) hurting yourself, (2) hurting others, and (3) illegal actions.

Letter Writing Prompts

Choose three of the five situations below and write a letter for each. Each letter should be between 200 and 250 words.

1. You have recently bought a product, but it is not as you had expected and there is a problem with it. Write a letter to the manufacturer and complain about the product.
 2. You would like to apply for a job or internship. Write a letter of inquiry to that company or institution and show your interest in the position.
 3. You have recently visited a business or an institution, but you were not satisfied with the services. Write a letter to make suggestions about that place. In your letter, state why you were not satisfied and how they can improve their services.
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4. Write a letter to a messy roommate, a letter explaining a request to a parent, or a letter of apology to a friend. This is an informal letter, and your letter should make an impact or create ethos for the reader.
 5. Imagine you are trapped on an island in the middle of nowhere. Write a message in a bottle to someone. This can be an SOS message, a message telling others how good your life is now, or a message about how bad it is. What message would you want people to find?
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Personal Statement Prompts

Read the prompts below and write your personal statement. This paper should be 800–1,000 words. Pay attention to details and try to present yourself in the best way you can.

- There seem to be four distinct time periods captured in a personal statement:
 - The first is the author's past. What has formed you into the person you are?
 - This leads to the present. Who are you? How can you be summed up?
 - A trickier time period to consider is the near future. Who will you be if you are given the opportunity you are applying for (whether a job, internship, public office, or scholarship)? How will this opportunity allow you to grow? How will you use the opportunity to help others or contribute to a common goal? How will you work with this opportunity?
 - Finally, when you come out on the other end of the opportunity, in the distant future, who will you be? How will you be better? How will you have bettered the situation of others?
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