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## THE ROLE OF SCAFFOLDING IN TEACHING WRITING TO EFL LEARNERS

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**Annotation:** *Scaffolding is a crucial instructional approach in teaching writing to EFL learners, providing structured support that gradually decreases as students develop independent writing skills. This study examines the effectiveness of scaffolding techniques, including modeling, guided practice, peer collaboration, and teacher feedback, in enhancing writing proficiency. By integrating Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning, scaffolding enables students to bridge the gap between their current abilities and higher levels of writing competence. The research highlights how scaffolding fosters learners' confidence, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and overall writing fluency. Furthermore, the study explores how scaffolding strategies help students develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a deeper understanding of writing conventions. The findings suggest that scaffolding not only improves students' writing skills but also enhances their motivation, engagement, and autonomy in the learning process.*

**Key words:** *scaffolding, writing instruction, EFL learners, guided practice, peer collaboration, teacher feedback, writing proficiency, language learning, sociocultural theory, independent learning*

**Introduction:** Writing is one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners, requiring not only grammatical accuracy but also coherence, organization, and creativity (Hyland, 2003). Many students struggle with expressing their ideas in a foreign language due to limited vocabulary, difficulties in structuring their thoughts, and a lack of confidence in their writing abilities (Hammond, 2001). To address these challenges, scaffolding has emerged as an effective instructional approach that provides temporary support to learners until they can perform writing tasks independently (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, scaffolding emphasizes the role of social interaction and guided instruction in learning, allowing students to progressively develop their writing skills with structured support.

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of scaffolding in teaching writing to EFL learners by analyzing various scaffolding strategies and their impact on students' writing skills. By examining both teacher-led and peer-supported scaffolding methods, this research contributes to a better understanding of how structured guidance can enhance writing proficiency, critical thinking, and learner independence. The findings

provide insights for educators on how to design effective scaffolding interventions that support EFL learners in developing their writing abilities.

**Methodology:** This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the impact of scaffolding on EFL learners' writing development. A quasi-experimental design with a pre-test/post-test structure was used to assess students' writing proficiency before and after the implementation of scaffolding strategies. Additionally, qualitative data from classroom observations, student reflections, and teacher feedback were collected to gain deeper insights into the learning process.

This research is grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which highlights the importance of social interaction and guided instruction in cognitive development. Bruner's (1983) scaffolding theory also serves as a framework, emphasizing the gradual removal of instructional support as learners gain proficiency. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of scaffolding in enhancing writing fluency, coherence, and structure in EFL classrooms.

**Participants and Sampling:** The study was conducted in an EFL academic writing course at a university in Uzbekistan. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria:

- Intermediate proficiency level (B1-B2 CEFR)
- Enrolled in an academic writing course
- No prior structured experience with scaffolding techniques
- Willingness to participate in the study

**Participants were divided into two groups:**

- **Experimental Group (Scaffolding-Based Instruction):** Received writing instruction incorporating scaffolding strategies such as teacher modeling, guided practice, and peer feedback.

- **Control Group (Traditional Writing Instruction):** Followed conventional writing instruction with minimal external support, focusing on independent composition and teacher corrections.

**Instructional Procedure:** The intervention lasted six weeks, with both groups receiving writing instruction for equal durations. However, the instructional methods differed:

**Experimental Group (Scaffolding-Based Instruction)**

- **Teacher Modeling (Hyland, 2007):** Instructors demonstrated writing techniques, including paragraph structuring and thesis development.

- **Guided Practice (Gibbons, 2002):** Students completed structured exercises with step-by-step guidance.

- **Peer Collaboration (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010):** Learners engaged in peer review and collaborative editing.

- Constructive Feedback (Ellis, 2003): Teachers provided targeted, formative feedback rather than direct corrections.

### **Control Group (Traditional Writing Instruction)**

- Independent Writing Tasks: Students wrote essays with minimal instructor support.
- Self-Editing and Rewriting: Revisions were based on personal judgment rather than structured guidance.
- Summative Feedback: Teachers provided general feedback after task completion without interactive support.

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

- Pre-test and Post-test: Participants completed an academic writing task before and after the intervention. Writing was assessed based on fluency, coherence, organization, and grammatical accuracy.
- Survey on Writing Confidence and Perception: A Likert-scale questionnaire measured students' attitudes toward writing before and after the study.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

- Classroom Observations: Documented student engagement, participation levels, and responsiveness to scaffolding techniques.
- Student Reflections: Participants maintained learning journals to describe their writing experiences.
- Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted with selected students to explore their perceptions of scaffolding's impact.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

- Descriptive Statistics: Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for pre-test and post-test results.
- T-tests: Used to determine statistical significance in writing improvements.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

- Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): Student reflections and interviews were coded into themes such as motivation, perceived improvement, and writing confidence.

Ethical Considerations: The study adhered to ethical research guidelines:

- Informed Consent: Participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the study.
- Confidentiality: Personal data was anonymized and securely stored.
- Academic Integrity: The research process followed transparent and objective methodologies.

**Limitations and Future Research:** While this study provides insights into scaffolding's role in EFL writing, some limitations exist:

- Short Duration: Six weeks may not fully capture long-term writing improvements.



- **Sample Size:** The study was conducted with a specific group of students, limiting generalizability.
- **Context-Specific Results:** Findings may differ in other linguistic and cultural contexts.

Future research should explore longitudinal effects of scaffolding, expand sample diversity, and integrate digital scaffolding tools to enhance EFL writing instruction.

**Results and Discussion: Quantitative Findings:** Impact on Writing Performance: The comparison of pre-test and post-test scores revealed a significant improvement in the writing performance of the experimental group (scaffolding-based instruction) compared to the control group (traditional instruction). Participants in the experimental group demonstrated enhanced coherence, organization, and grammatical accuracy, whereas the control group showed only moderate progress. Specifically, the experimental group's mean post-test scores were significantly higher, indicating that scaffolding strategies such as teacher modeling, guided practice, and peer feedback contributed to better writing outcomes. T-test results confirmed a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the two groups, supporting the effectiveness of scaffolding in writing instruction.

**Qualitative Findings:** Student Perceptions and Engagement. Analysis of student reflections, classroom observations, and interview data highlighted key themes related to the benefits and challenges of scaffolding in writing instruction.

**Increased Writing Confidence:** Many students in the experimental group reported feeling more confident in their writing abilities. They expressed that breaking down writing tasks into smaller, guided steps reduced anxiety and allowed them to focus on improving specific aspects of their writing. These findings align with previous research suggesting that scaffolding fosters learner autonomy and self-efficacy (Gibbons, 2002; Hyland, 2007).

**Improved Writing Coherence and Organization:** Students who received scaffolding instruction demonstrated better understanding of paragraph structuring, thesis development, and logical flow. This aligns with Bruner's (1983) scaffolding theory, which emphasizes progressive skill development through structured support. Classroom observations confirmed that students in the experimental group were more engaged in pre-writing activities, such as brainstorming and outlining, which contributed to well-organized essays.

**Challenges in Implementing Scaffolding:** Despite its benefits, some students initially struggled with scaffolding due to the increased cognitive load. The requirement to actively engage in peer collaboration and self-reflection was challenging for learners accustomed to teacher-centered instruction. This suggests that scaffolding should be introduced gradually, ensuring that students adapt to interactive learning environments (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010).

**Discussion:** Implications for EFL Writing Instruction: The findings of this study highlight the effectiveness of scaffolding in enhancing EFL learners' writing skills. Compared to traditional instruction, scaffolding facilitates deeper learning by providing structured support, enabling students to internalize writing strategies more effectively.

These results support previous studies indicating that interactive and student-centered approaches lead to better language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1978; Ellis, 2003). Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of peer collaboration and formative feedback in improving writing proficiency. However, implementing scaffolding requires careful instructional planning. Teachers must gradually transition from high-support to low-support instruction, ensuring that learners do not become overly dependent on guidance. Additionally, blended learning approaches, integrating digital scaffolding tools, could further enhance student engagement and writing development.

**Conclusion:** This study highlights the effectiveness of scaffolding techniques in improving the writing skills of EFL learners. The findings demonstrate that structured support, guided practice, and peer collaboration significantly enhance students' writing performance, leading to improvements in coherence, organization, and grammatical accuracy. The experimental group, which received scaffolding-based instruction, outperformed the control group, confirming the positive impact of step-by-step guidance on writing development.

Additionally, qualitative findings indicate that scaffolding not only enhances writing skills but also boosts learner confidence and fosters engagement. However, the study also reveals that the transition to a student-centered approach can be challenging for learners accustomed to traditional instruction. This suggests the need for gradual implementation and adaptive scaffolding strategies to cater to diverse learning needs. Future research could explore long-term effects of scaffolding on writing proficiency, examine digital scaffolding tools, and investigate its impact on different language proficiency levels. Overall, this study reinforces the importance of interactive, structured writing instruction in EFL classrooms and provides valuable insights for educators seeking to enhance learners' academic writing skills.

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