



Pedagogical scaffolding in L2 teaching: An examination of an EFL summary writing lesson

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Abstract

Underpinned by sociocultural theory, scaffolding is a long-standing term but remains an under-researched topic in L2 pedagogy studies. With the aim of investigating what pedagogical scaffolding an EFL teacher applied to a genre-based approach to L2 writing and the effect of the scaffolding, this study scrutinised a lesson plan as part of a school-based workbook and students' response to the scaffolding reflected in their written works. Data were collected from teaching materials, students' written works (N=42), and a semi-structured interview with the teacher participant. Results indicate that multi-layered and multi-dimensional scaffolding was manifested in the design and implementation of the writing lesson. Analysis of the story summaries reveals that the teacher's scaffolding and guidance resulted in students' general application of genre-specific features and focused grammatical structures in their writing. Meanwhile, different degrees of conformity and creativity were demonstrated in the written works: less competent L2 learners displayed greater conformity to the teacher's instructions, while students of higher L2 proficiency displayed more creativity in their works. This study provides suggestions for adopting multi-layered and multi-dimensional scaffolding in EFL writing lessons.

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INTRODUCTION

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasises the importance of peer interaction and teacher scaffolding. The concept Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) indicates that assistance from more competent others (peers or teacher) helps learners achieve their greatest potential (Alexander & Fox, 2013). Another important aspect of sociocultural theory is that learners' contextual backgrounds, including sociocultural and historical dimensions, should be taken into consideration and utilised as contributing factors in language teaching (Unrau & Alvermann, 2008). To satisfy various needs of students with diverse learning profiles and personal backgrounds, pedagogical scaffolding should be provided featuring multi-layeredness and involving multimodality in some cases.

Grounding in sociocultural theory of learning and development, scaffolding in educational contexts is commonly used as a general term, referring to guidance and support provided in the classroom (Boblett, 2012). In recent years, pedagogical scaffolding has been used by some scholars as an incarnation of scaffolding. One way of unravelling scaffolding is defining it as three levels of support that teachers could integrate into pedagogical designs and activities: long-term structural support (the curriculum level), specific content and procedural support (the lesson design level), and assistance in moment-to-moment interaction (the individual response level). Interwoven with the three layers, multiple dimensions of scaffolding also merit teachers' attention, including but not confined to aspects such as metacognitive, cognitive, and subject matter knowledge development (Walqui, 2006).

Aligned with the prominence given to scaffolding in L2 learning, genre-based pedagogy recognises the commonality of community-based and purpose-laden literacies, and therefore underlines teachers' systematic guidance on linguistic and rhetoric choices to engender students' familiarity with the models or strategies appropriate for a specific genre (Abdel-Malek, 2019; Hyland, 2018; Nordin, 2017). It follows that teachers' scaffolding in terms of language preparation and structural modelling are salient for students' development of writing in a second language. One potential problem with genre-based approach is that learners' creativity in writing might be hindered due to their intention to conform to the formal, linguistic, and discursal references (Hyland, 2003). Previous studies concerning EFL pedagogical scaffolding mostly focused on teachers' perspectives (e.g., Awadelkarim, 2021), online teaching strategies (e.g., Hung & Nguyen, 2022), and effectiveness of scaffolding implementation (e.g., Ahmadi Safa & Motaghi, 2024; Yang, 2022). Adding to the existing literature in this field, the present study examined a secondary EFL class by presenting and scrutinising scaffolding strategies the instructor adopted in a summary writing lesson and analysing students' works to test the effect of the scaffolding. Combining and comparing teacher's voice and vision (through interview and document analysis) and students' outcomes is an exclusive feature of this small-scale qualitative study. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following two questions:

RQ1: What scaffolding strategies are provided in an EFL summary writing lesson?

RQ2: How do students respond to teacher's scaffolding in their written works?

Pedagogical scaffolding

Also known as social constructivism, sociocultural theory is directly linked to Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Alexander & Fox, 2013). The foundation of this theory is that children's development in knowledge, attitudes, and values is enhanced through the interaction with others. ZPD, a key concept related to the theory, emphasises that teacher guidance and peer collaboration help a learner fill the gap between the present developmental level and the potential level (Wertsch, 1984). Therefore, scaffolding, the assistance from teachers and more competent peers, 'enables child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts' (Wood et al., 1976, p.90). Ideally, scaffolding bears six major features: continuity, contextual support, intersubjectivity, contingency, handover/takeover, and flow (van Lier, 2004). That is to say, scaffolding should be situated in a supportive and nurturing environment, mainly embodied in various pedagogical tasks which are integrally related. Learners are in tune with each other and get immersed in the tasks. Contingent on learners' response and progress, scaffolding is adjusted or halted until learners are able to take over the learning situation.

Walqui (2006) is the first scholar to use pedagogical scaffolding to highlight the pedagogical orientation and implications of scaffolding. Although scaffolding per se is indicative of fixedness, pedagogical scaffolding transcends the supportive structure which is relatively stable and prescriptive and encompasses scaffolding process which is comparatively dynamic and fluid. To be more specific, scaffolding can be reified in curriculum design – the macro level, particular lesson plans –

the meso level, and moment-to-moment support responsive to pedagogical interaction – the micro level (Walqui, 2006, p.164). In other words, scaffolding is a blend of planned and improvised elements, integrating long-term designs, short-term objectives, and prompt responses in classroom and extended activities. Pedagogical scaffolding is also characterised as multi-dimensional. In the realm of L2 teaching, scaffolding entails ‘amplifying and enriching the linguistic and extralinguistic context’ (p.169), which means cognitive and metacognitive strategies, conceptual understanding of subject content, and contextual application of knowledge all deserve teachers’ attention and facilitation. After Walqui (2006) put forward the notion of three-levelled pedagogical scaffolding, almost no discussion or empirical studies respond to it regarding its practicality and/or effectiveness. The current study aims to extend the discussion by examining an EFL writing lesson which bears features of genre-based pedagogy.

Genre-based pedagogy

In the realm of L2 writing, genre-based pedagogy provides students with ‘explicit and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in social contexts’ (Hyland, 2003, p.18). Different from process approach which disempowers teachers by foregrounding learner autonomy, learning responsibility, and intuitive understanding of language use in writing, genre-based approach stresses linguistic and rhetoric variations in texts specific to certain social purposes or discursive practices (Abdel-Malek, 2019; Hyland, 2018; Nordin, 2017). Rather than dichotomising these two approaches, Schleppegrell et. al (2014, p.38) hold the view that genre approach is about ‘teaching a process of construing meaning purposefully in writing’. That is to say, process is involved in genre-based pedagogy in that interpreting and constructing meaning to fulfil a particular sociocultural or academic purpose entails an ongoing process in which learners need time and effort to digest and internalise the features and regularities specific to the genre. To enable this purposeful social and cultural practice to take place, teacher scaffolding is indispensable in aspects such as contextual, linguistic, and functional features of the writing (Donato, 2016; Halbach, 2018; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). One caveat worth noting is that genre-based approach may infringe upon learners’ creativity due to their conformity to the prescriptive models. A trade-off measure could be teaching genres as ‘moulds’ in which learners pour content with a certain degree of liberty and flexibility (Hyland, 2003).

In the past two decades, there have been myriad studies probing into genre-based pedagogy, and the vast majority of the research investigated the effects of the approach, mostly through collecting quantitative data (e.g., Ramos, 2015; Troyan, 2016; Yasuda, 2015). Comparatively, a limited number of studies accentuated pedagogical activities and scaffolding strategies that teachers adopted in L2 classrooms. Among the rare examples, one case stood out because it shared certain similarities with the current study. This case study was conducted in a university in Taiwan among 41 English majors (Chen and Su, 2012). In the seven-week summary writing project, the instructor provided detailed and systematic guidance during the three major stages: modelling (teacher introduces model texts of a particular genre) – joint construction (teacher and students co-construct an example) – independent construction (students work independently to construct their texts of this genre). Results of pre- and post-text of students’ writing demonstrated overall improvement in the four investigated components (i.e., content, organisation, vocabulary, and language use).

Multimodality

The term multimodality was first coined in the mid-1990s, denoting that different means of meaning making are combined and integrated into ‘a complete whole’ (Jewitt et al., 2016, p.3). Multimodality is closely related to another concept - pluriliteracies approach which places emphasis on hybridity of literacy practices drawing on modern technologies and the interrelationship of semiotic systems (García et al., 2008). In other words, multimodality of communication and semiotic translation of literacy in many cases are essential for meaning-making and knowledge (re)construction (Mickan, 2017). Therefore, visual or audio materials, graphic or symbolic representations, and any other modes of communication can be incorporated into L2 classrooms. On the one hand, the involvement of multimodal texts especially digital media in teaching activities could enhance learner engagement; on the other hand, it challenges teachers to update scaffolding strategies so as to accommodate students of varied backgrounds and learning profiles (Coyle and Meyer, 2021). Last but not least, transforming one mode of text to another facilitates internalisation

of conceptual knowledge and automatization of skills, which then results in deep learning (Meyer, 2016).

Lim and colleagues (2022) conducted a systematic review of 98 articles (published during the period of 2010 to 2021) concerning multimodality in various settings of English language classrooms. Compared with previous systematic reviews which took a more general view, this study particularly focused on multimodal pedagogies adopted in primary and secondary English classrooms. The findings indicate that students' lifeworld provided vast reservoirs of multimodal texts; multimodal pedagogies were often critical, creative, and culturally responsive; multimodal literacy was commonly taught in an explicit manner; affect had been gaining attention in multimodal learning; multimodal assessment merited special attention due to various issues involved in the effectiveness of multimodality instruction.

Adding to the existing literature, this study aimed to provide more empirical evidence and classroom-tested strategies regarding the implementation of pedagogical scaffolding through examining a summary writing lesson conducted in a secondary EFL classroom. Findings were scrutinised from both the teacher's and the students' perspectives: the rationale behind the lesson design and the strategies that the teacher adopted in relation to genre-based and multimodal pedagogies; a multifaceted analysis of students' written works with the intention of testing the effects of teacher's pedagogical scaffolding.

METHODS

Research context

An important feature of this study is that the teacher participant did not consciously follow any theoretical concept or framework in compiling the school-based workbook and implementing the teaching plan under discussion. The researcher acted as both an insider (she had many years of EFL teaching experience in a similar context) and an outsider (she was not engaged in any part of the design or implementation of the teaching activities) (Breen, 2007). The lack of intervention in the study to some extent increases the transferability of the research because the findings were drawn out of teacher participant's intuitive pedagogical decisions in her EFL teaching rather than a result of external influences (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019).

The teacher participant, Lily (pseudonym) with ten years of EFL teaching experience, was teaching two Grade Eight English experimental classes in a secondary school in Beijing. Students were 13 or 14 years old, mostly intermediate English learners, or B1-B2 CEFR levels. In Lily's school, English experimental classes did not use textbooks intended for the age group because for the majority of students in these classes, textbooks were 'too easy' (Lily, interview). Following the guidelines of the national curriculum, Lily and colleagues compiled a series of school-based workbooks with materials selected from various teacher reference books, grammar books, and textbooks targeted at English native speakers. These workbooks, almost taking the place of textbooks, were used as the main source of teaching materials. Each unit of the workbook was composed of different language skills practice centred on specific grammatical items. In addition, Bloom's revised taxonomy, i.e., Remembering-Understanding-Appling-Analyzing-Evaluating-Creating (Anderson et al., 2001), was integrated into the activity design of the workbooks. Take Unit 6 of the target workbook as an example. This unit, titled Adverbial Clauses and Phrases – Concession, covers five lesson plans: Grammar Mini Lesson (Remembering); Grammar Exercises (Understanding); Comprehensive Grammar Exercises (Applying); Reading and Vocabulary Exercises (Analysing + Evaluating); Persuasive Writing (Creating). The lesson plan under discussion was Lesson 3 of this unit, entitled Story Summary Writing (see Appendix).

Data collection and analysis

This qualitative case study collected data from three major sources: teaching materials (including a school-based EFL workbook and teaching slides for the target lesson), student written works – the products of this lesson (N=42), and a semi-structured interview with the teacher participant. Content analysis was adopted to analyse the interview transcript and teaching materials following the preparation-organizing-resulting stages (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). In the preparation phase, I familiarised myself with the teaching materials and noted down questions or thoughts related to the research questions, which helped frame the interview questions. The main purpose of the interview was to investigate the rationale for the workbook and lesson design. During the organising phase, I started from open coding of the interview transcript and teaching materials,

followed by grouping and categorizing codes, which led to the resulting phase when I reported the analysing process and abstraction of findings.

Regarding student written works, my initial analysis was based on manual count mainly following the three requirements Lily set for the writing: '10 or more sentences; 3 subordinating conjunctions; 1 big idea'. In addition to the three categories, I also conducted word count of each summary, target language use, and correct target language use. Here and elsewhere in the paper, 'target language' refers to the grammatical items that the teacher highlighted and reviewed in this lesson (i.e., though, although, even though, in spite of the fact that, despite the fact, in spite, and despite). In the second round of student work analysis, I focused on outlier cases which are 'conspicuously different from the norm' (Tomas, 2021, p.118) to gain 'something remarkable by virtue of its difference' (Tomas, 2021, p.24). Amongst these outlier cases, I reported and contrasted two cases in the Findings section for the reason that one used only one target language item but the writing was of relatively high quality, while the other used two target language items although the overall writing quality was fairly low.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An EFL lesson design and the rationale

As aforementioned, the lesson in question was Lesson 3 of this unit which focused on concessive clauses and phrases. This lesson consisted of four teaching procedures: grammar review, grammar exercises, structural review, and story summary writing. Facilitated by pairs of pictures (multimodal texts), students first reviewed target grammatical structures that they learned and practised in the previous two lessons (genre-based instruction). With each pair of pictures, students were instructed to make a sentence with subordinating conjunctions (see the left slide in Figure 1). After eliciting answers from students, Lily presented a group of complete sentences as possible answers. To help students 'notice' the target language, Lily highlighted the key words or phrases (see the right slide in Figure 1). Following this warm-up activity, Lily helped students consolidate and internalise the grammatical structures with another four pairs of pictures and the same communicative task (i.e., making meaning of the pictures with subordinating conjunctions). Through providing multimodal texts and genre-based instruction, students gained linguistic input and preparation regarding subordinating conjunctions.

Review
<p>1. <u>Though</u> he was angry, he stayed calm.</p> <p>2. <u>Although</u> he was angry, he stayed calm.</p> <p>3. <u>Even though</u> he was angry, he stayed calm.</p> <p>4. <u>In spite of the fact that</u> he was angry, he stayed calm.</p> <p>5. <u>Despite the fact that</u> he was angry, he stayed calm.</p> <p>6. <u>In spite of his anger</u>, he stayed calm.</p> <p>7. <u>In spite of being angry</u>, he stayed calm.</p> <p>8. <u>Despite his anger</u>, he stayed calm.</p> <p>9. <u>Despite being angry</u>, he stayed calm.</p>

Figure 1. Slides for grammar review—prompts and possible answers

In addition to linguistic scaffolding, Lily also provided structural support by reviewing the sequence of events in summary writing they had learnt last semester: Somebody-Wanted-But-So-Then (SWBST). Respectively, this sequence answers questions 'Who is the main character?' (Somebody), 'What did the main character want?' (Wanted), 'What was the problem?' (But), 'How was the problem solved?' (So), and 'What happened at the end?' (Then). Following that, Lily played a two-minute short film about which students were instructed to write a summary (see details in Figure 2). Regarding the rationale for using visual materials into this summary-writing lesson, Lily gave the following explanation:

"We learnt how to write a summary last semester, including fiction and non-fiction summaries. Most students have grasped relevant skills. This semester, our focuses are grammar and vocabulary, so I selected a relatively short video which accommodates the target grammatical structures and story elements. I think this is something interesting for students." (Lily, interview)

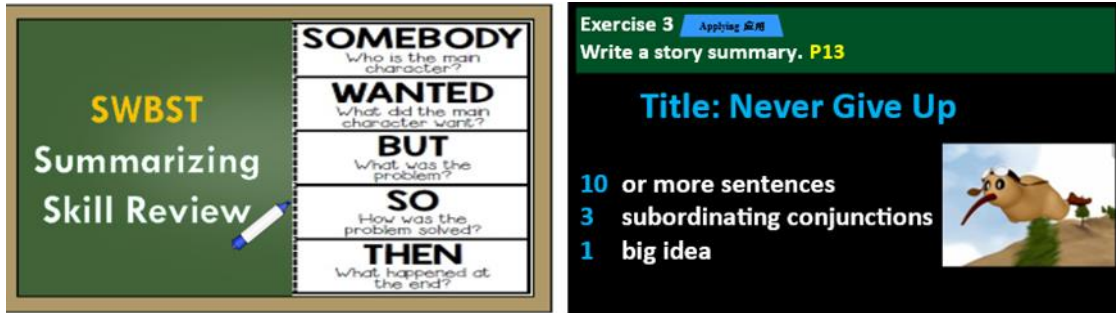


Figure 2. Slides for summarising skill review—prompts and a writing task

As illustrated in the right slide of Figure 2, Lily set explicit requirements concerning the length of the writing (counted by sentence), use of subordinating conjunctions, and a theme or ‘big idea’. When asked how the summary writing was related to Bloom’s revised taxonomy which was embodied in almost all the activities in the workbook, Lily provided such an answer:

“In the preparatory activities for the summary writing, different components of Bloom’s taxonomy were integrated. For example, we started with exercises for Remembering, followed by Understanding or Evaluating activities... the final summary writing was labelled as Applying in the workbook... I think it’s also Creating considering the nature of the writing.” (Lily, interview)

Lily’s answer reflected her awareness of improving students’ multi-dimensional competence (linguistic and extralinguistic) in a single lesson design. Regarding feedback on students’ summary writing, Lily provided continuous scaffolding in different forms. She first collected common mistakes from students’ writing and guided students to correct them in a plenary session in class. Based on the collective feedback, students revised their writing after class. Then Lily provided individual written feedback on the second draft. Accordingly, students completed the third draft of the summary. With this draft, Lily’s scaffolding was contingent: for students whose writing still had evident mistakes, Lily provided further help; otherwise she accepted the draft as the final one. After all the students submitted their final drafts, Lily published their works on a popular mobile application—WeChat Subscription. All students and their parents gained access to the published works. Lily explained why she utilised such a digital platform to disseminate students’ written works:

“This could provide impetus for students: I told them I would publish their writings, so they paid extra attention to the revision of their works.” (Lily, interview)

Students’ response to teacher scaffolding in their written works

The 42 students’ published works were analysed following the procedures introduced in the Methods section. Results show that the average word count of all the summaries was 124, with an average of nine sentences in each summary, lower than the requirement of ‘10 or more sentences’ that Lily set for the writing. However, 37 students (88% of the total) used at least ‘3 subordinating conjunctions’, therefore fulfilling the second requirement. Strictly speaking, in spite and despite among the target language (i.e., though, although, even though, in spite of the fact that, despite the fact, in spite, and despite) cannot be subsumed under the category of ‘subordinating conjunctions’ because they are prepositions. Therefore, two additional counts were conducted to track the use of target language and whether the usages were correct or not judging from the semantic and grammatical formation of the sentence. Results reveal that the average use of target language items per summary was 2, and 98 per cent of the target language usages in all the summaries were correct (see Figure 3).

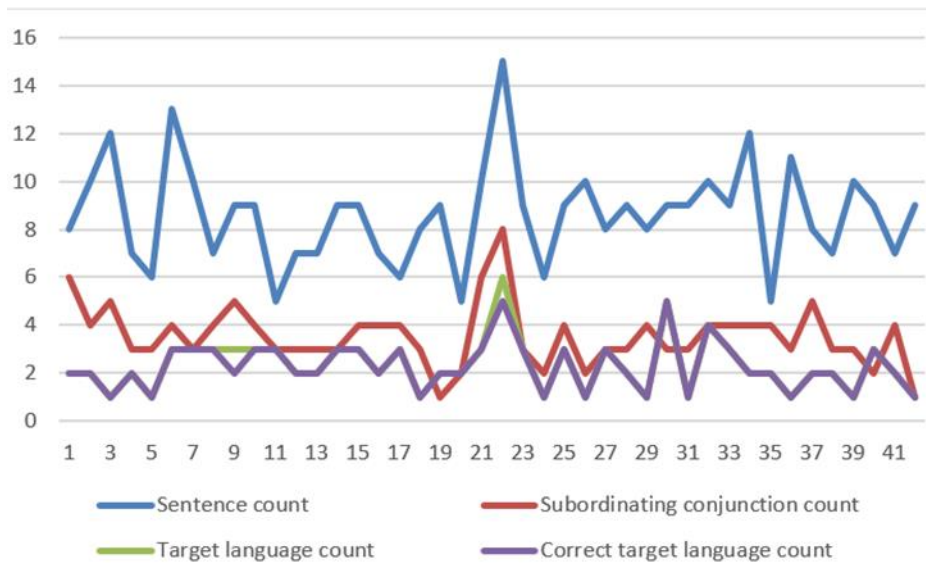


Figure 3. Statistical analysis of 42 students' summaries

Further analysis of *outlier cases* (see explanations in the Methods section) among students' works indicates that students of higher English competence showed the tendency of prioritising meaning-making over applying target language, compared with students of lower English competence. Figure 4 presents a 145-word writing which met all the three requirements with 12 sentences, 5 subordinating concessions, and '1 big idea'. This 'big idea' was conveyed through using a variety of verbs or verbal phrases, including 'jump off... hit... fasten... wore... tied up... connected... protect... complete... approached... encouraged... achieved'. Another important factor for the effective conveyance of meaning was the use of adverbs of time, such as 'First of all... Second... Moreover... And then... Later...'. These linking words on the one hand reflected the effect of teacher's scaffolding on the sequence of events in a summary; on the other hand demonstrated the ability to go beyond teacher's instructions in relation to the structural framework. Concerning the use of subordinating concessions, this writing could be regarded as a good example, not only due to the correct usages of target grammatical items, but also in recognition of the complex structures some sentences manifested as a result of using subordinate clauses. It is interesting and important to note that only one target language item—*although*—was used in this passage.

By contrast, summaries written by students of lower English competence exhibited more direct effects of teacher's scaffolding. Figure 5 presents an 86-word writing which consists of seven sentences (less than the required '10'), two subordinating conjunctions (less than the required '3') both of which (i.e., 'although' and 'in spite of the fact that') were from the target language. To some extent, the correct use of subordinating conjunctions enhanced the complexity and readability of this piece of writing. In addition, the reviewed sequence of events was almost clearly reified in the passage, following the Somebody-Wanted-But-So-Then (SWBST) format. While demonstrating a high level of conformity to teacher's instructions, a trace of rigidity of language use could be spotted in the writing. For instance, the two sentences containing target language items (i.e., 'Although it was a flightless bird, it wanted to fly' and 'In spite of the fact that it couldn't fly, it assumed to glide in the sky') essentially repeat each other in meaning, which indicates that the writer deliberately used the target language while meaning-making was a relatively minor consideration.

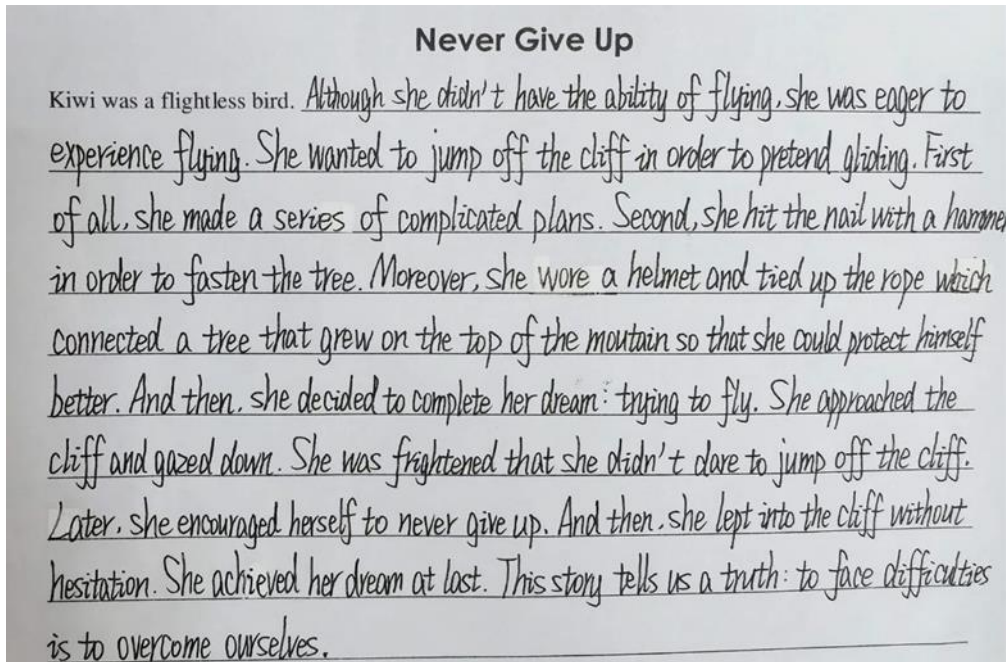


Figure 4. Sample writing which demonstrates a certain degree of creativity

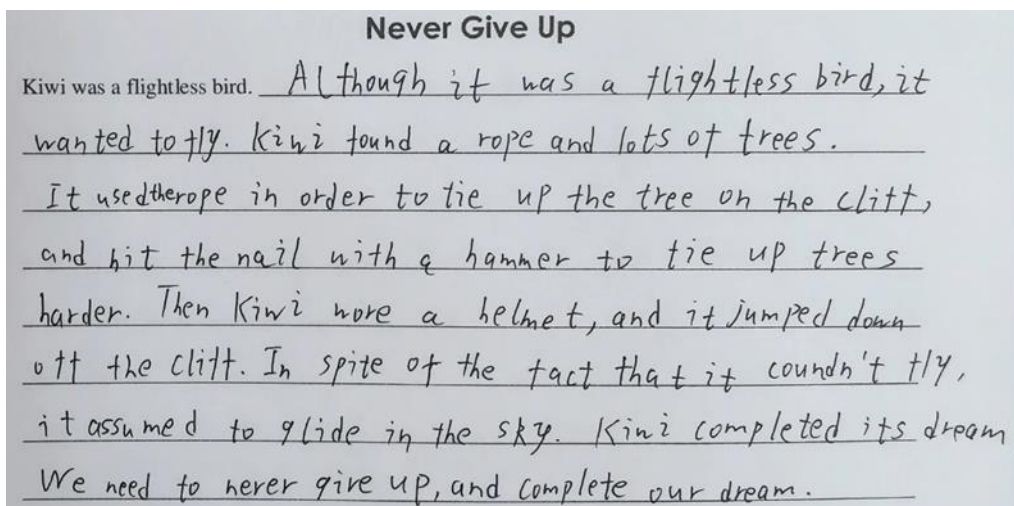


Figure 5. Sample writing which demonstrates a certain degree of conformity

Discussion

Pedagogical scaffolding reflected in an EFL writing lesson

Corroborating the notion of providing multi-layered scaffolding, Lily's scaffolding incorporated into the lesson under discussion (as part of a school-based workbook) could be categorised into three levels: compiling context-sensitive workbooks – the macro level; designing a summary-writing lesson – the meso level; providing continuous and contingent feedback on students' written works – the micro level (Walqui, 2006). These three levels from different aspects and in a comprehensive manner exhibited the six features of scaffolding – continuity, contextual support, intersubjectivity, contingency, handover/takeover, and flow (van Lier, 2004). First, self-compiled teaching materials, or rather, the school-based workbooks, enabled teachers to achieve continuity in their lesson design and scaffolding strategies. Meanwhile, the context-sensitive teaching materials took full account of students' specific needs and language competence, which embodied contextual support to a certain degree. This finding corroborates Awadelkarim's (2021) research by confirming the importance of incorporating scaffolding into course design and materials preparation. Moreover, in the preparatory activities, including picture-facilitated grammar practices and collective revision of summary writing format, learners interacted with each other through exchanging and

comparing answers and thoughts. By getting immersed in the collaborative activities and the flow, learners had the chance to internalise the grammatical and structural knowledge. Furthermore, teacher's scaffolding was contingent in the stage of giving individual feedback on different drafts of the writing, which mirrors the finding that scaffolding should be based on diagnostic assessment which reflects students' diverse learning competence and pedagogical needs (Hung & Nguyen, 2022). In the process of drafting and revising the summary, learners took over the responsibility from the teacher for completing a work of quality and ultimately demonstrated confidence in their published works online.

Taking a comprehensive view of this lesson, we may conclude that scaffolding also bears the feature of multi-dimensionality. First, after remembering and understanding concessive clauses and phrases in the previous two lessons, applying the grammatical structures was a key task of this lesson. Thus, linguistic or grammatical scaffolding was predominant in addition to cognitive scaffolding which was facilitated by Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001) embedded in the workbook. If we perceive summary writing as the central task of this lesson, then the structural scaffolding the instructor provided was reflective of genre-based approach. Rather than following a typical genre-based design, for example, the modelling – joint construction – independent construction format (Chen and Su, 2012), Lily provided proactive scaffolding (Meyer, 2016) to activate students' prior knowledge in relation to the genre, specifically, the sequence of events in summary writing. This study affirms the finding that adopting an appropriate model (genre-based contents and/or structures) in EFL writing lessons may enhance students' multi-dimensional strategies and capabilities (Yang, 2022).

Multi-dimensionality of scaffolding was also reflected in the application of multimodality. To facilitate the internalisation and automatization of the target knowledge and skill, Lily integrated multimodal texts into the lesson, including verbal, visual, and video modes. This type of scaffolding could not only enhance students' engagement in the activities, but also contribute to the development of multiliteracies (Coyle and Meyer, 2021; García et al., 2008). To put it differently, in order to fulfil the writing task, students needed to navigate multimodal representations of information and construct meaning from non-verbal to verbal (i.e., from picture to sentence), and from visual to written forms of text (i.e., from video to summary). Through engaging in meaning making and reconstructing knowledge across modalities, students harnessed and developed semiotic translation skills, which gave rise to deep learning (Meyer, 2016). Involvement of multimodality in this lesson was also embodied in the transmission of learning outcomes on the platform of a popular social media. The utilisation of digital media for publication of written works could possibly boost students' motivation and autonomous learning (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

The effects of scaffolding on students' written works

As illustrated in Figure 3, the overall analysis of 42 story summaries shows that teacher's multi-layered and multi-dimensional scaffolding exerted apparent effect on students' written works, particularly in the quantity and accuracy of using target language. Deeper analysis of the summaries indicates that scaffolding on the sequential order of events resulted in different degrees of application of the Somebody-Wanted-But-So-Then (SWBST) format. This finding corroborates the proposition that guidance on linguistic, functional and structural features of a particular genre of writing could develop students' discourse awareness and application of genre-specific strategies (Halbach, 2018).

Concerning the notion of teaching genres as 'moulds' and allowing for students' creativity reified in the content they fill into the structural framework (Hyland, 2003), this study provides some reassuring findings coupled with discoveries for further exploration. For students of higher L2 competence with a relatively large linguistic repertoire, creativity embedded in the genre-specific framework was more evident in the writing as Figure 4 exemplifies. Comparatively speaking, students of lower L2 competence manifested a certain degree of rigidity and a limited scope of meaning-making in their works. Nevertheless, the conformity to teacher's instructions and scaffolding in a way enhanced the overall quality of the writing due to the effective use of target language and genre-specific structure. It is important to note that although some works of competent L2 learners exhibited lower compliance with teachers' guidance, if examined closely, indirect effects of teacher's scaffolding could be identified. As the example in Figure 4 displays, on the surface, the student only applied one target linguistic item to the writing; a deeper analysis of the writing revealed that teacher's two-dimensional guidance on subordinating conjunctions and the sequential format for summary writing was reflected in the relatively comprehensive and indirect application of the linguistic and structural frameworks.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have some implications for language teachers and teacher educators in relation to providing scaffolding in L2 pedagogy. One of the implications is that multi-layered scaffolding is conducive to students' acquisition and application of linguistic, discursive, and structural frameworks. At the macro level, an institutional long-term design (e.g., school-based teaching materials) could regulate individual lesson plans and ensure the continuity of teachers' scaffolding. Specifically in the case under study, the integration of Bloom's Taxonomy into the teacher-compiled workbook amplified the layers of pedagogical scaffolding. At the meso level, pertaining to a particular lesson plan, multi-dimensional scaffolding may enrich the input and increase the quality of students' output. In the target lesson, the instructor organised preparatory activities to consolidate grammatical knowledge and adopted proactive scaffolding to activate the structural framework students had learnt. As a result, students' works demonstrated genre-specific features and intensified grammatical constructions. In addition, the involvement of multimodality in this lesson also enhanced the dimensionality of scaffolding. The integration of and transformation between multiple modalities of text engaged students in meaning making and semiotic interpretation, which in a sense promoted internalisation of the taught knowledge and strategies. At the micro level, scaffolding needs to be contingent and learner-tailored. In the lesson under discussion, the instructor set individualised requirements for submitting summary drafts (i.e., no fixed number of draft; all depending on the quality of the revision) and provided contingent feedback accordingly.

The discussion of scaffolding is inextricably linked to students' exertion of creativity, especially in L2 writing. This study offers some insight into this topic. Students' written works displayed the tendency that students of lower L2 competence manifested more conformity to the grammatical and structural requirements in their writing, sometimes at the cost of meaning making. In comparison, students of higher language proficiency demonstrated more creativity in their works which might not be seemingly following teachers' requirements. This could be an interesting topic for future research to probe into, for example, how to assist students in achieving a higher level of creativity when adopting the genre-based approach.

Considering the scope and nature of this study, transferability of the findings has its limitation. Taking into account the location of the school (downtown Beijing) and participants' status as English experimental class students, readers do need to exercise caution in adopting the strategies tested effective in this study. However, the results have value in that this case study reveals what strategies could be adopted in terms of applying scaffolding in a systematic and comprehensive manner to L2 pedagogy. Future research may deepen the discussion with longer research duration or wider research context. Students' voice and perspectives may also be included in further exploration of similar topics.

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APPENDIX

Learning objectives and teaching schedule of Unit 6 of the workbook under discussion.

Unit 6 Learning Objectives & Schedule

第六单元 学习目标及学习计划

Learning Objectives



1. To evaluate and edit completed work using the writing rubric.
使用评估表评估及编辑写作内容。
2. To use adverbial clauses/phrases of concession correctly in writing.
在写作中正确使用让步状语从句和短语。
3. To write a persuasive writing using the PEE format.
用 PEE 格式写一篇有说服力的文章。
4. Choose a position on a controversial issue and express opinions clearly.
在辩论性话题中选择立场并清晰表达观点。
5. To develop critical thinking through persuasive writing.
通过议论文写作培养思辨能力。

Schedule

Date	Activity	Homework
5.17 Mon. 40 mins	Grammar Mini lesson and Exercises 语法迷你课+基础练习 (让步状语从句及短语)	Reading P34-35
5.18 Tues. 40 mins	Grammar Exercises+Mini Writing 语法巩固练习+迷你写作	Reading P36-37
5.19 Wed. 40 mins	Comprehensive Grammar Exercises 综合语法练习 (原因/目的/让步状语从句)	Reading P37-38
5.20 Thur. 40 mins	Reading and Vocabulary Exercises 阅读与词汇练习	Reading P39-40
5.21 Fri. 90 mins	Vocabulary & Grammar Exercises/Persuasive Writing (1) 词汇语法练习+议论文写作第一节	Reading P41-43