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Original Article

Improving EFL Learners' Writing Accuracy and Fluency through Task-based Collaborative Output Activities and Scaffolding Techniques

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Abstract

Previous research indicates that task-based collaborative output activities (TBCOA) and scaffolding techniques (ST) lead to improvements in English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' writing skill. However, there seems to be a lack of research on the comparative effects of these activities and techniques on EFL learners' writing accuracy and fluency. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the comparative impacts of two types of TBCOA (debating and dictogloss) versus two types of ST (teacher and peer scaffolding) on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing accuracy and fluency (A&F). This research followed a quasi-experimental design. A sample of 80 intermediate-level EFL learners, selected through convenience sampling from a Language School in Malayer, constituted the participants of the study. The learners were divided into four groups (each with 20 members). The homogeneity of the participants in terms of writing A&F was checked through a pretest at the outset of the study. Paired-sample *t*-tests were run to examine the possible significant changes in scores from the pretest to the posttest in each group. Furthermore, the effects of debating vs. dictogloss, teacher scaffolding vs. peer scaffolding, and overall TBCOA vs. overall ST were compared through ANCOVA, with the pretest scores being treated as the covariate. It was found that debating significantly led to more improvement than dictogloss in the learners' writing A&F. Moreover, teacher scaffolding was more effective than peer scaffolding. Regarding overall TBCOA and ST, the latter was significantly more effective. This research provides implications for EFL writing instruction.

Keywords: Accuracy, Collaborative Output-based Activities, Fluency, Scaffolding

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1. Introduction

Limited exposure to language makes writing a vital, demanding activity for EFL learners (Kim & Kim, 2005). Despite its importance not enough attention has been paid to teaching writing dimensions in English classes. As Richards (1990), put it, writing does not naturally and originally have an important role in teaching language, although writing tasks make learners aware of their improvement, think over the final draft, and edit their work in different stages (Moor, 2006). Teng et al. (2022) contended that writing is naturally multidimensional, complex, and process-oriented. It interweaves metacognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects to control, generate, review, and revise a text.

Regarding learners' problems in learning writing, the researchers dealt with the problematic nature of teaching and learning writing for the EFL learners; therefore, at a price, they sought to heel these drawbacks through using new useful tasks and techniques as in TBCOA and ST and getting the teacher and peers' feedback to increase EFL learners' writing skills. They found out that generating the content and developing ideas into a good paragraph or short essay is difficult for EFL learners. Also, a lack of awareness in the domain of paragraph development and essay writing as well as insufficient mastery of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and the number of subordinate clauses discourage the learners to write well. It is supposed that TBCOA and scaffolding are fruitful learning activities and techniques to make classes more dynamic and practical; moreover, the prior relevant literature review confirms that using TBCOA and scaffolding practically makes writing classes more creative and communicative (e.g., Dobao, 2012).

All told this project takes the field by inspecting the effect of TBCOA and ST on writing A&F. Debate and dictogloss intervention deal with process-oriented instruction, a valuable learning program which generally requires an outline, draft, edited version, and final product. Process writing enables foundation learners to get feedback and direction from the beginning to the end of the essay (Yong, 2010), and TBCOA qualifies learners for considering the writing process, feedback reflections, and reviewing and editing tasks" (Majidi et al., 2020, p. 806). Pham (2022) examined whether task-based instruction (TBI) affects students' abilities in speaking and writing skills. Pham stated that the use of TBI was very important in improving students' productive skills.

Abasi Mojdehi and. Zarei, (2023) attempted to check the effects of peer, reciprocal, and distributed scaffolding techniques on EFL learners' anxiety levels. The results suggested

that only the reciprocal scaffolding technique significantly reduced the participants' writing anxiety. From the theoretical perspective, this result is in line with the findings of some second language researchers who believe that writing anxiety is mostly based on the learners' perceptions.

According to Ellis (2005, p. 180), scaffolding handles the social dimension of the development of a new skill in sociocultural theory (SCT). This part of the theory is related to the study of task-based learning. Vygotsky's socio-cultural paradigm theory was the basis of scaffolding theory in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). According to Schwietter (2010), the cornerstone of this theory is promoting the learning condition of a less skillful individual with the help of a more fluent and educated one. Scaffolding is a bilateral supportive function rather than an individual activity that uses both cognitive tasks and affective states.

Holton and Clarke (2006) claimed that scaffolding makes learners independent in learning. The past scaffolding literature focused on the interaction of teachers and students that has the potential to influence understanding and learning. However, current studies have expanded the domain of scaffolding to comprehend learner-learner interaction as the other alternative (Rezaei & Shokrpour, 2011). Scaffolding is an influential interactional educational tool that can help learners teach and learn from each other by decreasing ambiguous information and increasing meaningful learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Task-Based Instruction and Writing Skills

Task type is effective to develop writing (Yoon & Polio, 2016). Yoon and Polio also highlighted the different functions of tasks are more remarkable than the cognitive complexity differences. A great deal of previous research has acknowledged the importance of collaboration of tasks in developing learning (e.g., Dörnyei, 2019). For example, Lee (2001) claimed that tasks of output collaboration (debate & dictogloss) satisfy learners" learning conditions. Talebinezhad and Esmaeili (2012) concluded that collaborative task exposure was more effective than dictation and individual reconstruction tasks to acquire infinitives and gerunds regarding grammatical structure. In recent years, Golparvar and

Rashidi (2021) verified that task complexity dramatically promoted some indices of lexical diversity, syntactic complexity, and causal cohesion.

The literature on debating indicates its usefulness in developing language (Majidi et al., 2018). Furthermore, the past literature confesses that EFL learners' impression of debating as an instructional variable is positive (Doody & Condon, 2012). To add more, Green and Klug (1990) figured out that debate is an operative procedure for modifying learners' viewpoints, and teaching critical thinking and writing technique. In addition, debate-based instruction has to do with 'willingness to communicate in L2' (McIntyre et al., 1998) because the debate can rise learners' preparedness to engage in the discourse, and since sensory emotion is significantly in line with their inclination to speak and eagerness to write (Makiabadi et al., 2019).

Zhang and Zhang (2021) looked at the efficiency of genre-based teaching on learners' overall progress in EFL writing, particularly their writing comprehension and argument-making skills., the experimental group received a genre-oriented writing style while the control group underwent regular writing instruction. The results showed that the experimental group had seen more changes in their understanding of argumentation as a result of the genre-based writing training than the control participants.

Collins (2007) considered dictogloss, helpful in mastering verb tenses for Japanese language learners. Likewise, Kuiken and Vedder (2002) accepted the significance of dictogloss tasks in acquiring passive voice. Although it is confirmed that is influential in second language study (Malmqvist, 2005), the number of researchers that have sought its usage concerning writing proficiency is few (Fortune, 2005). Gallego (2014) probed the learners' responses on the effectiveness of dictogloss. She confirmed that the majority of the respondents, in particular upper-intermediate level ones, approved of its both effectiveness and usefulness. Similarly, Farid et al. (2017) claimed that dictogloss improves students' writing ability because they collaborate.

Shooshtari and Mir (2014) carried out the effectiveness of teacher and peer scaffolding on the learners' writing development. The results revealed that both scaffolding groups positively influenced the participants' writing abilities. Amerian et al. (2014) examined the effect of teacher, peer, and class scaffolding on EFL learners' writing proficiency. They were appointed into three experimental groups and one control group. The findings highlighted

that the teacher scaffolding experimental group developed the participants' writing remarkably, but peer and class scaffolding groups were not effective. Unexpectedly, the control group was better than the experimental group. Richer (1992) studied the effects of peer versus teacher feedback on college students' writing proficiency. The pre/post scores of students' essays indicated that the peer feedback group obtained better results in writing proficiency.

2.2. Teacher Scaffolding

It is upon the teachers to set a suitable scene for learners' social interactions (Allwright, 2005). Teachers must indirectly and insensibly scaffold the learners and raise their responsibility for learning and try to meet their required needs (Wang & Sneed, 2019). That is to say, scaffolding must be adjusted to lead the learners toward their educational needs (San Martín, 2018). In addition, learners would be influenced to act independently by teachers' deliberate or inadvertent attitudes, reactions, thoughts, and teaching strategies in different situations (Lamb, 2008). Bruner (1985) argued that scaffolding originally does not guarantee to ease the task, but it culminates the task support.

2.3. Peer Scaffolding

Peer scaffolding is the learners' mutual and multiple communication or conferring with other learners, instead of merely the teacher, to possibly agree (Webb, 1989). Peers' exchanging knowledge and information, to a large extent, promotes learners' wakefulness of their learning requirements; in truth, intellectual incompatibility or confliction, which is a vague notion during individual activity, becomes meaningful through peer communication (Brown, 1989, as cited in Choi et al., 2005). To put it another way, it is using some props in a purposeful group activity for learning and solving problems. Individuals in the groups should actively engage in using the pedagogical props and helping the group members to learn and find solutions to the problems. (Ge et al., 2005). Choi et al. stated that learners are ready to elaborate on their viewpoint about the topic and compromise with their peers to achieve the intended conclusion. Danli (2011) accentuated that peer scaffolding by itself does not certainly assure accurate target forms because the learners are not masterly enough in linguistic knowledge and using the scaffolding functions. What is more, the teacher's feedback and his/her scaffolding is more reliable for the learners than their peers' (p. 108).

Taheri and Nazmi (2021) revealed that teacher, peer, and "teacher and peer" scaffolding techniques were found to be fruitful and persuasive in the total organization, and linguistic accuracy of the learners' argumentative writing ability.

2.4. Aspects of Production

Skehan, (1998b) distinguishes three aspects of production. The first one, accuracy is the ability of the learner to deal with whatever level of interlanguage complexity he/she has currently achieved, and error-free language producing. In their pioneering work, Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) mentioned the accuracy assessment method by enumerating the number of error-free T-units per T-unit (EFT/T), and errors per T-unit (E/T). In this case, Nakatani (2010) calculated the number of global and local errors to measure accuracy. The second known aspect of L2 ability is fluency which has to do with "the capability of speech production at a normal pace and without interruption" (Skehan, 2009, p. 510), and the learner's ability to coordinate his/her system to communicate meaning in his/her real-time Skehan, (1998a cited in Ellis, 2005, P. 113). Wolfe-Quintero et al. announced that writing skill fluency can best be estimated via T-unit length, EFT length, and clause length. Lu (2011) suggested that longer oral or written presentation relating to fluency is representative of high-level language proficiency.

For measuring accuracy, the researchers first divided the passages into clauses. Following Miller's (2008) rules of thumb, subordinate clauses also include nonfinite clauses, as they represent propositions, and as in finite clauses, they contain verbal collocations and adjuncts. Majidi et al. (2020) suggested the following indices for accuracy calculation: 1) error-free clauses (EFCs), 2) lexical, syntactic, morphological, and prepositional errors per 100 words. To say more, Plakans, et al. (2019) referred to fluency as the number of words produced in 15 minutes by a language learner. In line with Plakans, et al. (2019), in the present study fluency was operationally defined as the number of words produced in 20 minutes as the learners were given 20 minutes to complete the writing task.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, few studies have attempted to examine and compare the effects of TBCOA, and scaffolding techniques on writing A&F in Iranian classes. This research sought to fill this gap operationally through the following research questions.

1. Do EFL learners' A&F in writing in debate, dictogloss, teacher scaffolding, and peer scaffolding groups significantly alter from pretest to posttest?

2. Are there any significant differences between the effects of debate and dictogloss on EFL learners' writing A & F?

3. Are there any significant differences between the effects of teacher scaffolding and peer scaffolding on EFL learners' writing A & F?

4. Are there any significant differences between the effects of TBCOA and ST on EFL learners' writing A & F?

And based on the above research questions the following null hypotheses were formulated.

1. EFL learners' A&F in writing in debate, dictogloss, teacher scaffolding, and peer scaffolding groups do not significantly change from pretest to posttest.

2. There are not any significant differences between the effects of debate and dictogloss on EFL learners' writing A & F.

3. There are not any significant differences between the effects of teacher scaffolding and peer scaffolding on EFL learners' writing A & F.

4. There are not any significant differences between the effects of TBCOA and ST on EFL learners' writing A & F.

3. Methodology

The current study aimed to investigate the effect of TBCOA and ST on improving EFL learners' writing A&F. The methods followed to achieve this goal are explained in detail in the following sections.

3.1. Design and Context of the Study

The present study followed a quasi-experimental design in which the learners from seven available intermediate classes in a language institute in Malayer were finally categorized

into four experimental groups including classes A, B, C, and D. The participants were selected through convenience sampling and received a pretest, a treatment, and a post-test.

3.2. Participants

Initially, 95 EFL learners (from two genders) were selected through convenience sampling based on the accessibility, and willingness of the participants from among intermediate EFL learners of a private language school in Malayer. Quick Placement Test (QPT) version 2 was accomplished to ensure the homogeneity of the participants. They were divided into four groups. Two of them were randomly assigned to TBCOA, and the other two groups followed scaffolding techniques. Fifteen subjects were not included in the study since their scores were one standard deviation (SD) above or below the mean. Therefore, the final number of participants was reduced to 80 learners, 20 in each group. The age range of the learners was 18 to 25, and their first language was Farsi. They had similar characteristics in several aspects as in linguistic background and language learning experiences. To this end, four experimental English classes were identified. The experimental groups were randomly assigned to debating (class A), dictogloss (class B), teacher, and peer scaffolding (classes C and D) respectively. Each group had 60-minute classes in a week working on speaking and writing productive skills. Besides the EFL learners, two raters, who were Ph.D. graduates in TEFL, were involved in the study.

Table 1.

Demographic Background of the Participants

No. of Students	80 (26 Undergraduate & 54 high school students)
Gender	Males & females
Raters	Two TESL Ph.D. holders
Native Language	Persian
Major	English language learners
Institute	Khatesefid Language School, Malayer
Academic Years	2022-2023

3.3. Instruments

The instruments were as follows:

3.3.1. Quick Placement Test (QPT)

Firstly, the QPT was executed to measure L2 learners' language proficiency. It includes 60 multiple-choice vocabulary, grammar, and cloze test items, and its reliability was estimated to be .83 (Cronbach's alpha). The learners were classified into four proficiency levels based on their QPT scores: beginner (0-17), elementary (18-29), lower-intermediate (30-39), and upper-intermediate (40-47). The intermediate-level learners participated in the current study. QPT is a reputable test and has been used in a large number of previous studies.

3.3.2. Pretest

In the second session, before the treatment stage, a pretest which was a ready-made controversial free-opinion topic "Is global climate change man-made?" was administered to examine the learners' argumentative writing A&F. The learners were given 60 minutes to write an essay about 180 words on the topic. For calculating reliability, 20 writing papers were scored by the two raters. The raters were made familiar with the scoring procedure before they embarked on marking the papers. The inter-rater reliability (Pearson Correlation) for accuracy indices were .81, .79, .78, .81, and .73 for EFCs, lexical errors, syntactic errors, morphological errors, and propositional errors, respectively.

3.3.3. Posttest

Following the treatment, a writing posttest was administered, which included a free-discussion topic "The advantages and disadvantages of pursuing academic studies," which was pertinent to their academic career. The same as the pretest, the participants had 60 minutes to write an essay of about 180 words on the topic. To calculate the inter-rater reliability, the researchers had 20 of the learners' writing papers in posttest scored by the two raters. The inter-rater reliability (Pearson Correlation) for accuracy indices were .82, .77, .76, .82, and .75 for EFCs, lexical errors, syntactic errors, morphological errors, and propositional errors, respectively.

3.3.4. Scoring Rubric

In this research, following Majidi et al. (2020) guidelines, the researchers measured accuracy manually and established the taxonomic categorization of errors in each text into four classifications including propositional, morphological, syntactic, and lexical errors. Furthermore, the EFCs were measured manually. Following Plakans et al. (2019), the researchers measured fluency by calculating the number of words produced by each learner in 20 minutes.

3.4. Instructional Materials: American English File (AEF) Series Levels 3 and 4

AEF Series Levels 3 and 4, third edition by Latham-Koenig/ Oxen den and Chomacki (2021) were used as the main course books. These books are planned for lower and upper-intermediate-level language learners and each book has 10 units of three lessons (A, B, and C). Their writing sections are at the end of them with paragraph writing themes that are aligned with the ultimate goal of this study. The selection of the writing texts in this study was based on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) to make sure the validity of the experiment. According to the CEFR, the two books are specifically tailored to those language learners who study English at the intermediate level.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

This study quantitatively aimed to inquire about the treatment effects of four experimental groups including debate, dictogloss, teacher scaffolding, and peer scaffolding on writing A&F in twelve sessions in a language institute in Malayer in Hamedan Province. In the first session, QPT was applied to assure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of EFL proficiency. Then, in the second session, a pretest was administered. Thus, any probable differences in the posttest could be attributed to the effects of treatment.

The next three sessions (3, 4, & 5), sixty minutes each, were allotted to teaching the structural organization of paragraph writing and essay writing. In this stage, the teacher explained, in English and Farsi, the three-paragraph sections including the topic sentence which expresses the topic and controlling idea, supporting sentences, and the concluding sentence. Besides, he elaborated on the introduction, body, and conclusion for essay writing.

Moreover, the teacher explicated the argumentative method of support. Then, he presented the learners with some sample paragraphs and sample short essays from their textbooks. He helped the learners to circle, underline and highlight the three parts of the paragraphs and clarified the thesis statement, body, and conclusion of the essays. Some learners voluntarily read the text samples loudly and expounded the features of paragraphs and essays based on the texts.

During sessions six to eleven, 90 minutes each session, the learners were required to participate in oral discussion and get preparation for the topic in each class in the first 30 minutes. Then they wrote and reconstructed an essay of about 150 words each session on six different topics: the advantages of having fewer tools to communicate, the advantages and disadvantages of living without TV, and the effects of air pollution on human health and so on, in the second 30 minutes. Then in the last 30 minutes, correction and feedback were provided on the part of the teacher and peers on the learners' drafts for all four groups. These drafts were revised on four sweeps including, the whole paragraph, sentences, words and phrases, and punctuation. After revising, the teacher tried to distinguish the learners' weak points in writing a paragraph or an essay. He specifically explained and clarified the areas of problem for all of them. The time constraint of 540 minutes in six sessions was necessary at this stage. Considering the experiment, classes A, B, C, and D were taught through debating, dictogloss, teacher scaffolding, and peer scaffolding so that follows.

In the TBCOA groups, first, the learners were required to participate in oral discussions related to the topic in the first 30 minutes. Secondly, they were asked to accomplish a writing task individually following a free-opinion speaking task. Then, the teacher critically reviewed the learners writing and recommended efficient correction in the last 30 minutes.

The debate group was required to discuss an interesting pre-selected topic (e.g., fashion, games), and express their attitude toward the debate. Majidi et al. (2018) identifies three levels for debate group, and the learners need to know about them during the first session. In line with Majidi et al. (2018), at first, the learners can interact with information, arguments, and texts on the learner-content level. Then, the teacher and the learners debated the topic on the learner-instructor level, and the teacher made feedback on their performance.

In the end, the learners debated the topic in groups on the learner-learner level. This took place in 30 minutes.

According to Wajnryb's procedure (1990), there are four stages of dictogloss collaborative output tasks: preparation, dictation, reconstruction, analysis, and correction. Following Wajnryb's procedure, at first, the teacher divided the class into five groups of four individuals each and started warming up, reviewing the essential vocabulary and collocations to deal with the task. Secondly, the teacher read a related text at a normal speed twice. First, the learners listened carefully without taking any notes. Then, they were required to listen again and note down the keywords for reconstructing the text. Thirdly, the learners were encouraged by the teacher to reconstruct the text in small groups, Finally, the texts were compared, analyzed, and corrected by the learners. The necessary feedback was provided by the teacher. A time constraint of 90 minutes was necessary for these steps.

In the scaffolding groups, the implementation of the research was in some respects similar to and in some other respects different from TBCOA. In sessions six to eleven, which lasted about 90 minutes each, the teacher posed six topics for the learners in both scaffolding groups. After preparation, the learners were required to write a short essay about the topic while considering the features and organization of an essay.

In group C, the teacher familiarized the learners elaborately with a topic. Then throughout the writing process, clarification questions and declarative statements were used by the teacher to pay the learners' attention frequently to the stages and processes of argumentative writing. Moreover, while writing, the teacher checked every individual learner's writing and raised their awareness regarding wrong grammatical structures, vocabulary, and cohesion and coherence of the text. He had the learners revise the incorrect parts such as fragments, alignment, misplaced or dangling modifiers, and references, and whenever they came across a problem, the teacher was present to provide the required assistance.

In group D, there were four sub-groups of five members each, and in each group, the learners were scaffolded and familiarized with the topic by the most proficient peers who the teacher informed about how to scaffold their peers. Additionally, while writing, the best members of the groups took heed of their peers' writing dimensions carefully and informed

them whenever they went wrong in grammatical structures, vocabulary, and text organization.

After the treatment and practice sessions, a writing posttest was administered. The teacher used different topics for pretest, practice, and posttest to eliminate the practice effect. The participant's scores were analyzed to identify any possible changes from the pretest to the posttest (after treatment).

3.6. Data Analysis Procedure

This research aimed to compare the effects of TBCOA and ST on writing development regarding A&F by applying descriptive and inferential statistics for analyzing data. The researchers used SPSS software version 26 to evaluate the inter-rater reliability of accuracy indices and fluency. According to the guidelines offered by Cohen (1960), the inter-rater reliability for these indices was plausible since their rates were .82, .83, .77, .81, .74, and .81 for EFC's, lexical, syntactic, morphological, propositional errors, and fluency respectively. There forth, the researchers conducted six paired-sample *t*-tests or nonparametric Wilcoxon tests for each group to determine whether the post-test gain was significant after the treatment or not. Thereafter, ANCOVA was conducted to examine the effects of debating vs. dictogloss., teacher scaffolding vs. peer scaffolding, and two overall TBCOA vs. two overall ST groups in general while controlling the pretest scores as the covariate.

4.Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of debating and dictogloss, and teacher and peer scaffolding on the intermediate EFL learners' writing A&F. To this end, the researchers compared the sets of scores obtained from the pretest and posttest in both conditions (including the four experimental groups) and on each measure.

Regarding the homogeneity of the learners in terms of EFL proficiency, there were only trivial differences among the mean scores of the four groups in QPT (Table 2); yet, it was necessary to compare the means statistically to ensure that the differences were not significant.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of the QPT

Groups	N	Mean	St. deviation (SD)
Debating	20	33.40	5.90
Dictogloss	20	34.80	6.10
Teacher scaffolding	20	32.80	5.31
Peer scaffolding	20	37.05	5.24

As Table 3 indicates, the variance among the four groups with the *F* value of 0.97 at the significance level of 0.481 being larger than 0.05 was not statistically significant. Therefore, the results of the one-way ANOVA with the assumption of homogeneity of the variances, F (3, 76) = 0.481, $p > 0.05$) indicate that there was no significant difference among the mean scores of the four groups on their language proficiency at the beginning.

Table 3.

Results of One-way ANOVA on Language Proficiency

	Sum of the square	df	mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	17.835	3	5.94	0.97	0.481
Within groups	462.670	76	6.08		

4.1. Testing Null Hypothesis One

This research question sought to underseek the effects of two TBCOA groups and two ST groups on EFL learners' writing A&F. For this purpose, the learners' scores on the writing pre-and posttest in two writing measures (A&F) were compared. The following descriptive statistics results, entailing the means and SDs, displayed that the learners ameliorated during the treatment course in some A&F measures. The learners in four groups got promotion due to the intervention concerning writing A&F. From the two TBCOA groups, the debate group performed better than the dictogloss across most of indices of A&F at the posttests (Tables

4 & 6), the same thing happened between two ST groups with the dominance of the teacher scaffolding groups (Tables 8 & 10), yet the overall ST groups did better than the overall TBCOA groups across most of the indices of A&F at the posttest (Tables 14&15). Hereby**,** the results of descriptive statistics, a Wilcoxon test, and paired-samples t-tests of four groups are inserted in tables 4 to 11. Table 4 shows the results of the debate group descriptive statistics.

Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics for Debate Group

Measure	Index	N	Pretest Mean	St. deviation	N	Posttest Mean	St. deviation
Accuracy	EFCs	20	.4584	.0388	20	.4990	.0368
	Lexical errors	20	1.2885	.1010	20	1.1065	.0749
	Syntactic errors	20	1.7500	.1033	20	1.6425	.0842
	Morphological errors	20	2.3095	.4097	20	2.2520	.0837
	Propositional errors	20	1.1775	.0548	20	1.1275	.0498
Fluency	Number of words	20	97.45	4.9680	20	106.9500	17.5753

Table 5.

Results of Paired-Samples T-tests / Wilcoxon Test for Debate Group

Measure	index	Statistical test	df	t	z	sig
Accuracy	EFCs	t-test	19	-16.480	--	.000
	Lexical errors	t-test	19	11.258	--	.000
	Syntactic errors	t-test	19	16.376	--	.000

	Morphological errors	t-test	19	8.813	--	.000
	Propositional errors	t-test	19	13.784	--	.000
Fluency	Number of words	Wilcoxon	19	--	-3.932	.000

The descriptive statistics (Table 4) along with the outcomes of paired-sample *t*-tests and the Wilcoxon test (Table 5) confirmed that the debate group learners significantly improved over the instruction. The learners displayed improvement across five accuracy measures as in EFCs, t (19) = -16.480, *p* =.00; lexical errors, t (19) = 11.258, *p*=.00; syntactic errors, t (19) =16.376, *p* =.00; morphological, and propositional errors, t (19) = 8.813, *p*=.00; t (19) =13.784, *p*=.00, respectively. The fluency aspect reveals that the learners could write longer texts in their posttest, z (19) = -3.932, *p*=.00.

Table 6.

Descriptive Statistics for Dictogloss Group

Measure	Index	N	Pretest Mean	St. deviation	N	Posttest Mean	St. deviation
Accuracy	EFCs	20	.3695	.0305	20	.4050	.0313
	Lexical errors	20	1.5403	.0759	20	1.4090	.0729
	Syntactic errors	20	1.5170	.1108	20	1.3490	.0605
	Morphological errors	20	2,4475	.0536	20	2.3595	.0396
	Propositional errors	20	1.0700	.0643	20	1.0360	.1653
Fluency	Number of words	20	95.000	4.1039	20	103.050	3.9666

Table 7.

Outcomes of Paired-Samples T-tests / Wilcoxon for Dictogloss Group

Measure	index	Statistical test	df	t	z	sig
Accuracy	EFCs	t-test	19	-26.250		.000
	Lexical errors	t-test	19	12.950		.000
	Syntactic errors	Wilcoxon	19		-3.932	.000
	Morphological errors	t-test	19	14.139		.000
	Propositional errors	Wilcoxon	19		-3.183	.001
Fluency	Number of words	t-test	19	-11.297		.000

The descriptive statistics (Table 6) along with the paired-sample *t*-tests and Wilcoxon test results (Table 7) assured that the instruction for the dictogloss group was significantly effective. In the accuracy dimension, this group manifested improvement in overall accuracy measures: EFCs, t (19) = -26.250, p=.00; lexical errors, t (19) = 12.950, p=.00; syntactic errors, z (19) = -3.932, p=.00; morphological, t (19) = 14.139, p=.00; and propositional errors z (19) = -3.183, p=.001. As regards fluency results, the learners' posttest writing texts were better in length, t (19) = -11.297, *p*=.00.

Table 8.

Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Scaffolding Group

Measure	Index	N	Pretest Mean	St. deviation	N	Posttest Mean	St. deviation
Accuracy	EFCs	20	.4490	.0362	20	.5105	.0357
	Lexical errors	20	1.0619	.1571	20	.4180	.1039
	Syntactic errors	20	1.1115	.1306	20	.9215	.1255
	Morphological errors	20	2.1830	.1083	20	2.020	.0913

	Propositional errors	20	1.1110	.0776	20	.9805	.0735
Fluency	Number of words	20	100.300	5.1819	20	110.650	4.4988

Table 9.

Results of Paired-Samples T-test / Wilcoxon for Teacher Scaffolding Group

Measure	index	Statistical test	df	t	z	sig
Accuracy	EFCs	t-test	19	-12.329		.000
	Lexical errors	Wilcoxon	19		-3.924	.000
	Syntactic errors	t-test	19	13.597		.000
	Morphological errors	t-test	19	22.236		.000
	Propositional errors	t-test	19	22,063		.000
Fluency	Number of words	t-test	19	-21.203		.000

The descriptive statistics (Table 8) along with the paired-sample *t*-tests and Wilcoxon test results (Table 9) assured that the teacher scaffolding group responded positively to the instruction. The conformational results of six paired-sample *t*-tests prove that the learners became better across five accuracy measures, namely EFCs, t (19) = -12.329, *p*=.00; lexical errors, z (19) = -3.294, *p*=.00; syntactic errors, t (19) =13.597, *p*=.00; morphological errors t (19) = 22.239, *p* =.00, and propositional errors t (19) =22.063, *p* =.00. Regarding fluency, the learners' posttest texts, t (19) = -.21.203, *p* =.00 were significantly longer.

Table 10.

Descriptive Statistics for Peer Scaffolding Group

Measure	Index	N	Pretest Mean	St. deviation	N	Posttest Mean	St. deviation
Accuracy	EFCs	20	.3055	.0306	20	.3485	.0281
	Lexical errors	20	1.4240	.0684	20	1.1595	.0360
	Syntactic errors	20	1.4425	.0629	20	1.2065	.0387
	Morphological errors	20	2.2520	.0737	20	2.0925	.1827
	Propositional errors	20	1.2335	.0531	20	1.1170	.0406
Fluency	Number of words	20	95.7000	3.5108	20	103.4000	3.6331

Table 11.

Results of Paired-Samples T-test / Wilcoxon for Peer Scaffolding Group

Measure	index	Statistical test	df	t	z	sig
Accuracy	EFCs	t-test	19	-18.650		.000
	Lexical errors	Wilcoxon	19	--	-3.932	.000
	Syntactic errors	Wilcoxon	19	--	-3.927	.000
	Morphological errors	Wilcoxon	19	--	-3.180	.001
	Propositional errors	t-test	19	14.234		.000
Fluency	Number of words	t-test	19	-21.620		.000

The descriptive statistics (Table 10) along with the paired-sample *t*-tests and Wilcoxon test results (Table 11) confirmed that the learners in the peer scaffolding group have significantly improved over the instruction. To scrutinize, the peer scaffolding group had

improvement across all accuracy measures including EFCs, t (19) = -18.650, *p* =.00; lexical errors, z (19) = -3.932, *p* =.00; syntactic errors, z (19) = -3.927, *p* =.00; morphological errors z (38) = -3.180, *p* =.001, and propositional errors t (19) =14.232, *p* =.00 from pretest to posttest. In the fluency aspect, the learners were able to generate more complete texts in their posttest, z (19) = -21.650, p=.00.

To sum up, in all four groups there were significant improvements in the learners' scores in both A & F measures from the pretest to the posttest. Therefore, null hypothesis one is not supported.

4.2. Testing Null Hypotheses Two and Three

Null hypotheses two and three aimed to compare the debate group and dictogloss group, on the one hand, and the teacher scaffolding and peer scaffolding groups on the other hand, in terms of A&F in the posttest. The descriptive statistics related to the debate, dictogloss, teacher scaffolding, and peer scaffolding groups are: Tables 4, 6, 8, and 10 respectively. As some of the assumptions of parametric ANCOVA were violated, nonparametric ANCOVA was utilized to compare the difference between the effects of the debate land dictogloss groups (Table 12).

Table 12.

Results of Nonparametric ANCOVA for Comparison between Debate and Dictogloss *Group*

Measure	Index	F	DFH	DFE	P
Accuracy	EFCs	1.707	1	38	.119
	Lexical errors	2.750	1	38	.105
	Syntactic errors	8.079	1	38	.007
	Morphological errors	1.931	1	38	.173
	Propositional errors	1.177	1	38	.285
Fluency	Number of words	3.470	1	38	.070

The results of nonparametr***ic*** ANCOVA in Table 12 display a significant difference between two TBCOA groups apropos of syntactic errors, F (1, 38) = 8.079, p =. 007. In reverse, no statistically significant difference was found in EFCs, F (1, 38) = 1.707, p=.119; lexical, F (1, 38) = 2.750, *p* =.107; morphological, F (1, 38) =1.931, *p* =.173, and propositional errors F (1, 38) = 1.177, p =.285. As regards fluency results, there was no significant difference F (1, 38) = 3.470, *p* = .07. To explicate, concerning the means (M) in Tables 3 &5, the debate group was slightly better than the dictogloss group as for EFCs (M =.4990), Lexical errors (M =1.1065), syntactic errors (M =1.6425), morphological errors (M =2.020), and propositional errors (M =1.1275).

Table 13.

Results of Nonparametric ANCOVA for Comparison between Teacher Scaffolding and Peer Scaffolding Groups

Measure	Index	F	DFH	DFE	P
Accuracy	EFCs	0.365	1	38	.549
	Lexical errors	1.059	1	38	.310
	Syntactic errors	1.075	1	38	.306
	Morphological errors	2.276	1	38	.140
	Propositional errors (Reg Slop Not met_	9.544	1	38	.004
Fluency	Number of words (parametric)	21.806	1	38	.000

For examining the differences between teacher scaffolding and peer scaffolding groups, some of the assumptions of parametric AVCOVA were not met. Therefore, nonparametr***ic*** ANCOVA was performed. The results of nonparametr***ic*** ANCOVA (Table

13) showed that the two scaffolding groups are significantly different concerning propositional errors F (1, 38) = 9.544, *p* =. .004. The results of nonparametric ANCOVA (Table 13) along with the results of descriptive statistics (Tables 8&10) indicate that the teacher scaffolding group (M = .98) significantly outperformed the peer scaffolding group (M = .1.11). Nonetheless, no significant difference was found in EFCs, F (1, 38) = 0.365, *p* =.594; lexical errors, F (1, 38) =1.059, *p* =.310; syntactic errors, F (1, 38) =1.075, *p*=.306, and morphological errors, F (1, 38) =2.276, *p*=.140. As regards to fluency results, the two scaffolding groups are significantly different, F (1, 38) = 21.806, *p* =.00. The results of nonparametric ANCOVA (Table 13) along with the results of descriptive statistics (Tables 7 & 9) indicate that the teacher scaffolding group (M = 110.65) significantly outperformed the peer scaffolding group (M = 103.40).

4.3. Testing Null Hypothesis Four

The fourth null hypothesis makes a comparison between the overall TBCOA and ST groups in terms of A&F in the posttest. Table 14 and Table 15 present the results of descriptive statistics for the overall TBCOA group and overall ST group respectively.

Table 14.

Descriptive Statistics for Overall TBCOA *Group*

Measure	Index	N	Pretest Mean	St. deviation	N	Posttest Mean	St. deviation
Accuracy	EFCs	40	.4140	.05674	40	.4520	.05836
	Lexical errors	40	1,4144	.15508	40	1.2577	.16967
	Syntactic errors	40	1.6335	.15845	40	1.4958	.16533
	Morphological errors	40	2,3785	,10448	40	2,3057	.08452
	Propositional errors	40	1.1238	.08028	40	1.0818	.12912
Fluency	Number of words	40	96.2250	4.66568	40	105.00	12.7299

Table 15.

Descriptive Statistics for Overall Scaffolding Group

Measure	Index	N	Pretest Mean	St. deviation	N	Posttest Mean	St. deviation
Accuracy	EFCs	40	,3772	.07987	40	.4295	.08797
	Lexical errors	40	1.2430	.21894	40	.7888	.38325
	Syntactic errors	40	1.2770	.19578	40	1.0640	.17100
	Morphological errors	40	2.2175	.09795	40	2.0562	.14724
	Propositional errors	40	1,1722	.09034	40	1.0487	.09067
Fluency	Number of words	40	98.00	4.95104	40	107.0250	5.45606

For examining the differences between *overall* TBCOA and ST *groups*, some of the assumptions of parametric AVCOVA were not met. Therefore, nonparametr***ic*** ANCOVA was performed.

Table 16.

*Results of Nonparametr**ic** ANCOVA for Comparison between Overall* TBCOA and ST *Groups*

Measure	Index	F	DFH	DFE	P
Accuracy	EFCs	13.270	1	78	.000
	Lexical errors	28.666	1	78	.000
	Syntactic errors	34.482	1	78	.000
	Morphological errors	26.310	1	78	.000
	Propositional errors	62.072	1	78	.000
Fluency	Number of words	13.015	1	78	.001

The results of descriptive statistics (Tables 14 &15) along with nonparametric ANCOVA (Table 16) signify the significant difference between TBCOA and ST groups in relation to morphological, syntactic, propositional, and lexical errors, EFCs, and fluency. The means of five accuracy measures and fluency in Tables 14 &15 states that the ST groups function better than TBCOA groups on the part of EFCs, F (1, 78) = 13.270, *p*=.00; lexical errors, F (1, 78) = 28.66, *p* =.00; syntactic errors F (1, 78) = 34.42, *p*=.00; morphological errors, F (1, 78) = 26.310, *p* =.00; propositional errors, F (1, 78) = 62.072, *p*=.00, and fluency, F (1, 78) = 13.015, *p* =.01.

5. Discussion

In this study, TBCOA and ST were applied to inquire about their effects on writing A&F. The effectiveness of both TBCOA and ST in developing writing apropos of different indices of A&F was confirmed following the treatment.

The results of research questions one and two revealed that the treatment of both TBCOA groups was effective in the development of different indices of A&F in EFL writing. These are in line with Green and Klug's (1990) findings who found that debate format modifies learners' ideas and teaches thinking critically and skills in writing. In the same line, Makiabadi et al. (2019) argued that debate can boost learners' preparedness to engage in the discourse, and since sensory emotions relate significantly and positively with learners' readiness to speak and willingness to write. Similarly, as Mcintyre et al. (1998) reported instructional debating seems to be related to 'L2 willingness to communicate' through writing. In agreement with the present study, Farid et al. (2017) claimed that the dictogloss aspect improves the learners 'writing ability. It seems that collaborative activities can trigger students' writing competence to elevate their levels of attention, involvement, and self-efficacy in doing productive tasks. Moreover, working on collaborative activities enhances critical thinking and enables students to express their opinions.

Concerning ST in research question one, we observed development in accuracy and fluency dimensions of writing proficiency through scaffolding techniques. These findings are compatible with Vygotsky's SCT which concentrates on the social nature of all knowledge and believes that learning due to social context interactions leads to understanding (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In contrast, the finding of the peer scaffolding group in research questions one goes against Danli's (2011) view that "peer scaffolding alone

without a teacher may not always or necessarily lead to correcting target forms due to the learners' limited mastery of linguistic knowledge and ability to use the scaffolding functions". Furthermore, Danli maintains that the learners are more teacher-oriented for giving feedback and scaffolding rather than peer-oriented since they wouldn't like to disclose their competence Achilles' heel and lose their face. What is more, the teacher and learners' interaction was more formal, serious, and active to provide feedback and hints in comparison with the peers', so they paid more attention and had more concentration on the writing and using scaffolding (p. 108). Moreover, the first research question agrees with Shooshtari and Mir's (2014) study that peer and tutor scaffolding positively influenced the participants' writing. However, the findings related to the ST groups in research question one are for and against Amerian et al. 's (2014) work which showed that the teacher scaffolding led to remarkable developments in the writing of participants, but peer and class scaffolding were not effective. The probable reasons for this finding can be attributed to the fact that the learners might have trusted the teacher's knowledge more than that of their peers. They might have speculated that the teacher is the most knowledgeable person in that situation.

Another possible reason can be the fact that some of the learners had more inclination towards the teacher's feedback and scaffolding compared to those offered by their peers. That is why they might have resisted asking their peers for help since they may imagine that if their peers guided them, they would look stupid and weaker in terms of competence or they would lose their face. Furthermore, the interaction between the teacher and the learners was more formal than the interaction among the peers; for this reason, the participants in the teacher scaffolding group might have taken the process more seriously and consequently, had put more attention and concentration on their writing and use of scaffolding. When the learners were put into groups, they mostly spent time in fun, so this might have had an impact on their writing, and the quality and quantity of their use of peer scaffolding. Another reason, the teacher was more active in providing feedback and guidance compared to the peers. He explained the steps of argumentative writing and its principles frequently and asked them if they had problems, while peers responded only when needed.

The findings of research question two indicated that the debate group means were slightly better than the dictogloss group regarding Lexical, syntactic, morphological, propositional errors and EFCs, and fluency. The results associated with this research

question revealed that the debate task was significantly more effective than dictogloss task in reducing syntactic errors. However, these two tasks did not differ significantly in terms of their effects on the other accuracy measures and fluency. It is in contrast with Modarresi's (2021) findings that the debate group revealed more improvements than the dictogloss group in two indices of accuracy entailing EFCs and lexical errors, but the dictogloss improved more than the debate in one accuracy index, including syntactic error.

The findings of research question three demonstrated that group C was more effective than group D regarding increasing fluency and decreasing propositional errors. This is in agreement with Taheri and Nazmi's work (2021) that in apropos of total organization and linguistic accuracy, the teacher scaffolding group obtained a higher mean score than the peer scaffolding group. Besides, the findings related to research question three disclosed that teacher scaffolding and peer scaffolding did not differ significantly regarding their effects on EFCs, lexical, syntactic, and morphological errors. It disagrees with Richer (1992) that greater gains in writing proficiency were obtained by the peer feedback group, not the teacher group.

Regarding research question four, the findings also showed that scaffolding techniques were more effective than TBCOAs concerning fluency and all indices of accuracy. The possible impression for this result has to do with the reality that the teacher's knowledge and peer's consult are more trustworthy for the learners than group discussion and group construction. Moreover, thanks to the point that these scaffolding techniques engage learners better and more actively to rephrase and paraphrase the text together than TBCOA reconstructions. It supports some ideas by Schwieter (2010) that teacher and peer editing as a form of scaffolding heightened the learners' writing skills and Rezaei and Shokrpor (2011) backed the positive effects of teacher and peer scaffolding on writing.

6. Conclusions

The objective of the study was to investigate the effect of TBCOA and ST on writing A&F of Iranian EFL learners. The two mentioned instructional techniques without saying are useful to promote EFL learners' language skills and subskills. The scaffolding techniques appeared to be more effective than task-based activities. The score lines or the final scores

gained from this project emphasized the potency of scaffolding and TBCOA in the future trend of EFL learners' writing talent in A&F.

The outcomes of this study uphold Vygotsky's theoretical attitude about the efficient pedagogical role of scaffolding. The inferences of the current research imply that pair-work or group work along with teacher support and meaningful productive tasks are the cornerstones of language skills development, specifically writing skill promotion. Also, it is vitally essential for EFL learners to be deeply engrossed in controversial output tasks, and socially oriented activities. They should foster their awareness of the different aspects of writing proficiency to help them improve their writing skill. The active participation and concentration situated in the collaborative atmosphere and scaffolding constructive pair work or group work can cultivate learners' understanding of the different dimensions of writing ability. L2 learners should learn to interact with their classmates and teacher and utilize productive output activities to elevate their creativity, accuracy, and fluency in L2 writing.

There are some limitations and delimitations: First, the study was limited by the data collection instruments. Further studies may need to use other methods of data collection such as observation and focus group interviews to strengthen their data. Second, since the sample is not representative of all intermediate-level EFL learners, it may not be generalized to other conditions. Third, there was no control group because equality of treatment was necessary for comparison among all four groups. Fourth, this experiment was conducted in twelve sessions in approximately two months, but as stated by Storch (2009), L2 skills cannot be developed over a 2 to 4-month period. Therefore, more long-haul studies are essential to find out the extent to which TBCOA and ST can revolutionize writing competence apropos of A&F. In the last word, further research can examine the effect of listening to the text and scaffolding on writing A&F. In this study, the participants had similar L1 backgrounds. Will this study have the same results with participants of different L1 backgrounds? More similarities and differences may be discovered. However, this hypothesis is left for future researchers to explore.

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