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Research Article

**L1 and L2 Peer-scaffolding Techniques Affecting on EFL Learners' Writing Skill:
Link to Cognitive Learning Theory**Mousa Ghonchepour¹Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Farhangian University,
Tehran, IranAzar Bagheri Masoudzade²Assistant Professor of TEFL, Department of English Language, Kerman Branch, Farhangian University,
Kerman, IranAkram Shekarian Behzadi^{3*} (Corresponding Author)Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Department of English Language, Kerman Branch, Farhangian University,
Kerman, Iran**ABSTRACT**

Scaffolding and its relationship to second or foreign language learning has been studied in different aspects of interaction such as teacher-student or student-student interaction, called peer-scaffolding. Peer-scaffolding as its name suggests refers to student-student help and cooperation in a situation that one student is more knowledgeable than the other. The researchers of the present study noticed the empty place of examining the effectiveness of peer scaffolding on language learners' writing skill in the extant literature. With a view to this, the main aim behind this study was to analyze the impact of peer scaffolding in L1 vs. L2 on Iranian EFL learner's writing development. To achieve this aim, out of 55 students who were selected based on available sampling, 44 of them participated in this study. That is to say, a pre-test of writing was administered to the participants at the beginning of the term to examine homogeneity of students. Then, they were randomly assigned in the two experimental groups (22 Ss in each). Posttest of writing in the form of essay writing was performed and scores were obtained and analyzed using SPSS Software. Careful analysis indicated that there was no significant difference between applications of the two languages in peer scaffolding writing. Moreover, there was a significant relationship between peer-scaffolding and student's writing skill scores and the size of this effect was 94.7% due to 10 sessions of peer scaffolding of writing skill. The findings have some implications for EFL teacher education researchers, policy makers, curriculum developers, and teachers.

Keywords: Scaffolding, Peer Scaffolding, Cognitive Theory, Writing Skill, First language, Second Language

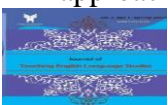


1. INTRODUCTION

In the current time learning is more concerned than teaching because students have different learning capacities and, in a class, using the same instructions students obtain different scores. Haddad (2016) argued that the privilege of learning over teaching brings force the issue that asks how students can help themselves to be autonomous learners. Doubtless, equipping students to be autonomous learners requires teaching cognitive instructions to prepare them to be responsible for their learning. From among the four language skills developing writing skill is a necessity since academic students required to be potent in specially to prepare their research drafts. Language learners need to reinforce their writing skills using different strategies such as gaining help by means of the first language or foreign language. Writing development is a process-based activity that students' progress can be manifested in while working on writing skills. This type of developing writing skill requires the help of students at the time of writing letters, compositions and articles (Kaya & Ateş, 2016).

Scaffolding and its relationship to second or foreign language learning has been studied in different aspects of interaction such as teacher-student or student-student interaction, called peer-scaffolding. In studies most of the time the emphasize in directed on teacher-student scaffolding as peer-scaffolding relationship while the new trend of cognitive studies requires that peer-scaffolding should be from student to student (Riazi & Rezaie, 2011). Since scaffolding is related to cognitive psychology and mental processes the shift might occur in the methods of language learning, however, scaffolding as one of such new methods emphasizes on gaining supports from student-tutor and student-student that both ways are influential aids of learning. Since scaffolding is related to cognitive psychology and mental processes the shift might occur in the methods of language learning, however, scaffolding as one of such new methods emphasizes on gaining supports from student-tutor and student-student that both ways are influential aids of learning (Shehadeh, 2011).

Traditionally, learning second language was product oriented, in this view teacher was the authority in the classroom and students were dependent on teachers in asking questions and repetition of materials (Thompson, 2019). The aim of teaching was to measure students' achievement in final scores and passing lessons. On one hand, the aim of learning was lost, and on the other hand, the flexibility and cognitive dimensions of learning was ignored. Practically, in traditional methods students learnt without developing their cognitive intelligence and cognitive awareness. With advent of cognitive theories in language, learning process-oriented approach toward learning became significant and scholars developed studies and examined the influence of such methods, as when the effectiveness of process-oriented approach was examined, some questions remained unanswered that scholars were required to specify entirely (Trung & Binh, 2023). The problem with scaffolding approach is that when the purpose is merely acquiring foreign language, scaffolding is significant and in cases of testing, it is not working, unless the purpose of testing is reinforcing learning. Therefore, the aim of teaching and learning is to help acquiring language, and formal testing is different from the processes required for learning. The peripheral questions and details with process-oriented approaches of learning states that whether the abandoned traditional approaches are worthless



or they should be reexamined to select some useful principles among them. Of such issues is application of the first and second language while scaffolding students. One question is that does scaffold students by means of their first language is effective while scaffolding by peers or scaffolding in second language is more affective on learners' writing skill. However, some methods emphasize on application of L1 in classroom setting to assist students to develop second language skills and some classes use mere second language.

As learning is seen as a process rather than product; thus, instructors' method of testing has changed considerably toward process-based writing. Using peer scaffolding in the writing tests as a process-based method of learning, not only has become very common, but also is dominant in teaching and evaluating the second language proficiency (Saadat & Alavi, 2020). Application of first language and second language also requires to be specified in the process of language learning and therefore in this study both methods of peer scaffolding were used to find out which approach is more beneficial and applicable (Zarei & Alipour, 2019). The current research focused on the effect of using L1 vs. L2 peer scaffolding on writing of EFL learners. In fact, the study tries to find out the most proper and convenient method that helps students to reach at their goals easily, that in this case refers to the use of first and second language. The main objective of this work is to see whether the scores of writings are different or not in the case on applying L1 and L2 by peer-scaffolding in the process of writing tests in the classroom. Moreover, the study made an effort to find any difference between the effects L1 and L2 peer scaffolding on writing skill. In order to meet the research objectives, following research questions have been formed:

1. Does using L1 peer scaffolding has any remarkable effect on writing skills of Iranian EFL Learners?
2. Does L2 peer scaffolding has any remarkable effect on writing skills of Iranian EFL Learners?
3. Is there any difference between the effects of L1 peer scaffolding and L2 peer scaffolding on EFL learners' writing skill?

2. LITRATURE REVIEW

Ebrahimi and Sadighi (2022) analyzed the effect of online teacher-scaffolding vs. peer-scaffolding on EFL learners' grammatical achievement. The study investigated the effect of online teacher scaffolding and peer scaffolding on Iranian EFL learners' grammatical achievement by examining 40 Iranian EFL learners within the age range of 12-17. Results indicated that the technology-based peer and teacher scaffolding considerably improved Iranian EFL learners' grammatical knowledge. In the same context, Jamali Kivi et al. (2021) examined the comparative effects of teacher versus peer-scaffolding on 60 EFL learners' incidental vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. The results showed that both experimental groups had better performance than the control group and there was a significant difference between teacher-scaffolding and peer-scaffolding in both vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension performance and the peer-scaffolding group had a better performance than the teacher-scaffolding group.

Afzal (2019) studied to see if using the mother tongue when applying adequately and effectively, can be used as a means of language learning and language teaching. In this paper she argues that analytical and descriptive studies along with teachers' observations have revealed valuable additional



information about the validity of using the mother tongue as a tool for language learning and/or language teaching. She concluded that those who believe that L1 has a minimal role to play in the teaching of a foreign language are invited to think again of its role and contributions it makes to the fields of language learning and teaching. The result also showed that judicious use of the mother tongue in the English classroom does not reduce students' exposure to English, but rather can assist in the teaching and learning processes. In another study, Shabani and Malekdar (2016) evaluated the effect of peer scaffolding on 33 language learners' listening comprehension. The participants were divided in two groups, that in the first group students corrected their listening mistakes and the other group teachers were responsible for error correction. Findings of the study showed that peer scaffolding plays a significant role in developing language listening comprehension.

Bhooth et al. (2014) studied the role of the L1 as a scaffolding tool in the EFL reading classroom on 45 EFL Yemeni students. They concluded that that L1 can be used as a scaffolding strategy by students in facilitating their learning and can be used as a pedagogical instrument by the teacher to help students to promote learning experience as well as maximize engagement in the classroom. In the same year, Karimi and Jalilvand (2014) analyzed the effectiveness of peer and teacher scaffolding in reading comprehension of 150 intermediate EFL students in symmetrical and asymmetrical groups. After a two-months treatment using ANOVA scale the researchers found a significant difference between asymmetrical subgroups and symmetrical subgroups in reading comprehension development. Besides, significant development in the reading comprehension of EFL students in experimental group 1 receiving peer and teacher scaffolding was observed by performing correlated t-test. The results of the study showed that teacher scaffolding being accompanied by peer scaffolding, rather than just having peer scaffolding, can have positive effects on the reading comprehension of EFL learners.

Khalili Sabet et al. (2013) studied the impact of peer scaffolding through process approach on EFL learners' academic writing fluency. This study was performed on 40 homogenous learners at an intermediate level and in the two experimental and control groups. Control group wrote argumentative essays based on product approach to writing and those in the experimental group practiced essay writing through process approach while a competent writer provided scaffolding to a less competent one. The result showed that both competent and less competent writers in the experimental group have improved in their writing fluency than control group. Moreover, Baleghizadeh and Timcheh Memar (2011) studied a sociocultural perspective on second language acquisition and the effect of high-structured scaffolding versus- structured scaffolding on the writing ability of EFL Learners. This study indicated that scaffolding can be performed by students other than teachers and it needs mediation of other students and should be both directly and indirectly. The results indicated that the low-structured scaffolding group are better than the other groups and their study represents the influence of ZPD and gradual scaffolding on progress of students.

The importance of writing in the academic level incited the researchers to focus on the impact of L1 and L2 peer scaffolding on writing skill. Previous studies were considerable, but they did not prescribe Iranian academic situations properly; therefore, the need for more studies incited the researchers to reexamine the peer scaffolding in the Iranian context.



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Design

This study was a quantitative and experimental study based on peer scaffolding, a concept derived from Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development in which difference between what students can learn without help and what they can do with help. Vygotsky (1978) sees the ZPD as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). This research examined the effect of an independent variable as peer scaffolding in the L1 vs. L2 on language learners' writing skill as a dependent variable.

3.2. Participants

The study population consisted of 55 EFL students of Farhangiyar university of Kerman who were selected based on the available sampling method. The participants eligible for the study were selected after administering pretest writing. 44 students whose mean scores were in the range of ± 1 SD, participated in the present study. Students' scores were specified and then they were randomly divided into two similar groups of 22.

3.3. Instruments

The main instruments were three testing tools and extra teaching materials in 10 sessions during the first semester of 2023-2024. All the students participated in the writing pretests to examine their homogeneity in the two classes. The participants were supposed to write a short essay about the two topics in order to measure composition skills in standard written English. That is to say, the aim of the pretest is to see if students are divided similarly and homogeneously into two groups. Writing essays were scored based on grammatical, lexical, and cohesive correctness. Considering the scores, the students labeled as intermediate language learners. Before applying the tests to samples, they were administered to a group of students in another university to measure its reliability and stability. Materials of the study were physical properties including equipped classes and experienced teachers who were the researchers. Moreover, the teachers were educated the instruction that should be performed in each class.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

After the students were homogenized as the intermediate ones, they were randomly divided into two equal groups as first experimental and second experimental, 22 students in each one. In the pretest, participants were given two topics and some related terms and pictures to write a short essay about the two topics. The length of each essay was 250-300 words. Students were equipped with key terms to provide them ideas and feedback about what they should write, and to prevent their writing from beating around the bush and dealing with unnecessary issues such feedback helped students to be to the point in writing and to make the process of scoring easy. To avoid subjective scoring, essays were scored by two raters and mean of scores was considered as the result of pretest scores. The next step was treatment which lasted for 10 sessions.

Students in the experimental group 1 were instructed to avoid speaking second language while scaffolding writing. In this method, students were divided into some smaller groups. In each group, there was a student with more knowledge of English language. In each session the teacher in this group presented some guidelines for writing including language structures such as positive and negative verbs, active and passive verbs, sequence of using adjectives, pronouns and so one. Then teacher introduces a topic and offers the key terms and provides related pictures. Students started writing short essays about topics. Students in the groups exchanged information gaining help from more knowledgeable students.



Persian language was used as the means of scaffolding, and usage of English language was restricted to necessary terms and materials. In the experimental group 2, students were helped by more knowledgeable students while writing essays. The process of educating students was similar to the previous group except in the case of the language of using scaffolding that the students was allowed to be spoken in the classroom for the aid of scaffolding was English. That is to say, the students used English language as the tools of transferring information when helping each other during writing. In the last phase of the study, posttest of writing was administered. After 10 sessions, they took part in a final exam of writing. In the final exam, students were allowed to gain help from each other. It measured the effect of using L1 and L2 as means of peer scaffolding of writing in the classroom. This test included two topics along with key terms related to each topic to be used in the essay writing. The length of each essay was 350-400 words. The posttest was scored like the pretest, by the two raters, and the mean of scores was considered as the final score for all groups.

The raw data was submitted to SPSS software to perform statistical analysis. First, descriptive statistics was specified. Then pretest of writing was administered using independent sample test and normal distribution of the two groups were ensured. Afterward, posttest was performed using independent sample test. Finally, to compare the results of the two experimental groups covariance and paired samples test analysis were administered.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

After data was collected from 44 students including the two groups (each group 22 students), results were analyzed and presented in table 1. The results showed that the mean level for experimental group 1 is 49.12 and for experimental group 2 it is 48.24.

Table 1:

Result of Pretest Writing Skill

	Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Tests	1	22	49.123	12.4235	2.8974
	2	22	48.241	12.685	2.7613

To ensure about students' normal distribution in the experimental and control group, the independent sample t-test was performed. Results of this test showed that the sig level regarding difference between the scores of the two experimental groups showed that the p. value is 0.896 and more than 0.05; therefore, with 95% confident there is no significant difference between results of the two groups respecting the level of writing skill, accordingly the two groups are normally distributed. Result is presented in table 2.

Table 2:

Pretest for Equality of Mean Scores for the Two Experimental Groups

Pretest	F	p.	t	df	p. value. (2-tailed)	Difference Mean	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.012	.922	0.95	42	.896	.35421	3.425154	-7.321540	8.10234
Equal variances not assumed			0.95	41.964	.896	.35421	3.425154	-7.321555	-8.10312

After mediation, posttest was administered on students. Descriptive result showed that the mean of scores in the post test for experimental group 1 is 51.25 and for experimental group 2 is 51.19 (Table 3).



Table 3:

Result of Posttest Writing Skill

Post-Tests	Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
	1	22	51.251	12.2365	2.8465
	2	22	51.195	11.4756	2.4235

The following table presented the result of independent sample test on the posttest for the first and second language usage as means of peer scaffolding. The p. value is 0.912 that is more than 0.05%, therefore with 95% confident there is no significant difference between the two experimental groups and after examining the usage of first and second language as means of peer scaffolding there was no significant difference between the two languages and H0 is accepted (Table 4).

Table 4:

Posttest for Equality of Mean Scores for the Two Experimental Groups

Posttest	F	p.	t	df	p. value. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.675	.423	0.28	42	.912	.07652	3.36521	-7.51362	7.85422
Equal variances not assumed			0.28	41.598	.912	.07652	3.36521	-7.51523	-8.86521

4.2. Inferential Statistics

Result of comparison between pre and posttest was achieved using linear general model by univariate analysis. As table 5 shows, the p. value is 0.000 that is less than 0.05; therefore, with 95% confident there is a significant difference between the result of pre and post text. Also, in the previous section it was approved that there is no significant difference between application of L1 and L2 in the process of peer- scaffolding. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between peer-scaffolding and student's writing skill scores and the size of this influence to 95.6% has been because of 6 sessions of teaching writing skill.

Table 5:

Comparing Pre and Posttest Result of Peer Scaffolding in Writing Development

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P. value.	Partial Eta Squared	Nonce nt. Parameter	Observed Power ^b
Corrected Model	4241.532 ^a	2	2124.251	314. 055	.000	.953	635.2 10	1.000
Intercept	64.321	1	64.325	9.01 3	.005	.206	9.015	.833
pre	4321.425	1	4124.625	628. 102	.000	.956	632.1 02	1.000
gro	.731	1	.752	.101	.753	.003	.102	.062
Error	262.251	41	7.321					
Total	107451.32	44						
Corrected Total	47401.052	43						

*b. Computed using alpha = .05

As mentioned earlier, the study dealt with data analysis with the help of analytical instruments to measure the effect of L1 vs. L2 peer scaffolding on writing knowledge of students. Result of posttest brought forth two issues. At first, difference between L1 and L2 as means of peer scaffolding was questioned which result showed that with 95% confident there is no significant difference between



applications of the two languages in peer scaffolding writing. Second, in general result of the mean scores from pretest to post test showed a considerable change, that due to the p. value of 0.000 which was less than 0.05, a significant difference was observed between pre and post test scores indicating that regardless of using each language 10 sessions peer scaffolding of students has been influential on writing development of students.

Peer-scaffolding treatment programs were approved to effect on students writing skill regardless of the language of instruction and scaffolding. It showed that in any condition students received the necessary message required for their development. Previous studies have examined the effect of second language in classroom scaffolding. From among the studies that emphasized on the effect peer-scaffolding in second language we can refer to the study of Ebrahimi (2022), Jamali Kivi et al., (2021), Shabani and Malekdar (2016) Barnard and Campbell (2005) who studied the effect of second language and its influence on different learning skills such as listening, writing and vocabulary development. Also, other studies such as Hasan and Rezaul Karim (2019) were administered in the foreign context and approved the significance of peer scaffolding on writing skill using second language. The Iranian studies of Ahangari et al (2014), Khalili Sabet et al (2013), Baleghizadeh and Timcheh Memar (2011) and Shafiee and Mirzaee (2024) in the Iranian context have reached similar results as achieved in the present study.

5. CONCLUSION

Using the first language or mother tongue has been said to be influential factor as the means of peer scaffolding students. Accordingly, this study examined the use of L1 as the tool of peer scaffolding and result of analysis of pretest and posttest for users of L1 showed that mean score of writing in the pretest has changed, such changing seemed to be significant. Using first language as a means of scaffolding was emphasized in Bhooth et al (2014) which indicated that L1 can be used as a scaffolding strategy by students in facilitating their learning and can be used as a pedagogical instrument by the teacher to help students to promote learning experience as well as maximize engagement in the classroom. It can be concluded that the use of mother tongue when applying adequately and effectively, is an influential toll of peer scaffolding and emphasized that the use of the mother tongue in the English classroom does not reduce students' exposure to English, but rather can assist in the teaching and learning processes. In the behavioral approaches of language learning using only L2 in the classroom was recommended and using first language was forbidden. It was assumed that using second language can result in better achievement of students. Result of analyzing pretest and posttest of L2 users showed that mean score of writing in the pretest and in the posttest was changed. Such a change was tested and specified the comparison of signification of using peer- scaffolding in second language. General ideas about using L2 in the classroom for scaffolding and peer scaffolding in the previous studies was examined but they were referred to implicitly since scaffolding second language naturally occur in L2, however, several studies emphasized that using L2 is an influential instrument.

As result of this study, scaffolding writing fastens and reinforces writing development in EFL learners. In addition, peer-scaffolding proved to be influential factor in the process of teaching and testing writing. Students during the term gain helps from each other, as well when such helps are to be issued by more knowledgeable students, results and error correction is more affective. This study implies that writing skill is mere effective in the academic level, and the main level to build up the mind of students to reinforce their knowledge is elementary and intermediate level, in which they can fundamentally work on writing and correct their errors. This study recommended students and teachers that learning is a process-based matter and any source of information should be taken for granted since more or less they are influential factors on learning development. Peer scaffolding implicitly instructs teachers to develop cognitive method of teaching in the classroom to familiarize students with all kinds of scaffolding that they can treat mutually, and to help them to take the responsibility over their learning



process in a form of a knowhow action. The findings of the project may be used to suggest teachers use scaffolding strategy teaching in their classes since participants' attitudes were positive towards participating in this method. Scaffolding can contribute to improving the process of teaching English in general and the writing skill in particular. Moreover, the curriculum should be suited to the students' interests, needs and abilities. All these findings may encourage teachers to implement scaffolding strategy teaching in their teaching instruction.

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