



Faculty of Education
Journal of Education

***A Strategy Based on Scaffolding to Develop EFL Essay
Writing and Reduce Writing Anxiety Level among
Secondary Stage Students***

BY

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Receipt date: 21 Desember2020 - Date of acceptance: 21 January2021

DOI: 10.12816/EDUSOHAG. 2021.168278

Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the effect of using scaffolding in teaching on developing EFL essay writing and reducing writing anxiety level among secondary stage students. The participants were first year secondary stage students. They were randomly assigned to forty students for the experimental group, and forty-two students for the control group. Three main instruments were used for data collection: writing sub-skills checklist, essay writing test and writing anxiety scale. The experimental group were taught using the proposed strategy based on scaffolding for twelve weeks. Data collected through the pre and post administration of the instruments was subjected to t-test. The results revealed through the post-administration of the essay writing test and the writing anxiety scale showed that the post-performance of the experimental group significantly exceeded its own pre-performance and exceeded the post-performance of the control group. Thus, the results reflected support for the research hypotheses. They proved the positive effect of the strategy on developing EFL essay writing, and reducing writing anxiety among first year secondary stage students.

Keywords: Strategy, scaffolding, essay writing, writing anxiety.

إستراتيجية قائمة على السقالات التعليمية لتنمية كتابة المقال باللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية وخفض درجة القلق الكتابي لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية إعداد

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ملخص

استهدفت الدراسة الحالية التعرف على أثر إستخدام السقالات التعليمية في التدريس على تنمية كتابة المقال باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وخفض درجة القلق الكتابي لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية. وقد قامت الباحثة بتطبيق الإستراتيجية المقترحة على مجموعة بحثية من طلاب الصف الأول الثانوي، والذين تم اختيارهم عشوائياً وتقسيمهم إلى مجموعتين: أربعون طالباً للمجموعة التجريبية وإثنان وأربعون طالباً للمجموعة الضابطة. وقد قامت الدراسة باستخدام ثلاث أدوات لجمع البيانات هي: قائمة المهارات الفرعية للكتابة وإختبار كتابة المقال ومقياس القلق الكتابي. وقد قامت الباحثة بتطبيق الإستراتيجية المقترحة في إثني عشر أسبوعاً، و تم معالجة البيانات التي تم جمعها من خلال التطبيق القبلي والبعدي للأدوات، وذلك عن طريق إستخدام (إختبارات - ت). وقد أشارت النتائج إلى تحقيق المجموعة التجريبية مستوى أفضل في الأداء في التطبيق البعدي للإختبار والمقياس عن التطبيق القبلي لنفس المجموعة، وعن التطبيق البعدي للمجموعة الضابطة. وبذلك فقد أكدت النتائج صحة فروض الدراسة، وكذلك الأثر الإيجابي للإستراتيجية المقترحة على تنمية كتابة المقال باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وخفض درجة القلق الكتابي لدى طلاب الصف الأول الثانوي.

الكلمات المفتاحية للدراسة : إستراتيجية - سقالات تعليمية - كتابة المقال - القلق الكتابي

I. Introduction

Writing is considered an essential main skill in EFL learning. It reflects learners' ability to communicate their ideas and opinions. Writing demands students to express their ideas and opinions in a meaningful and well-organized way, giving explanations and details, selecting suitable words and writing correct structures and mechanics.

“Writing is also one of the indicators of academic success since it is an active and productive skill” (Vonna, Mukminatien & Laksmi, 2015:227). It involves a variety of cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective factors (Xiao-Xia, 2007:31). Consequently, teaching writing is a complicated and challenging task at the same time. Writing requires a broad range of necessary cognitive skills as the ability to comprehend, synthesize, and apply knowledge in order to produce an adequate and accurate written work. Good writers should also be creative and obtain reflective and communicative skills (Piamsai, 2020:288). In addition, the written work is considered the outcome of a number of cognitive procedures that include planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Gong, Tan & Chin, 2018:124).

Writing includes different types: descriptive, narrative, expository and persuasive. The purpose of description is to re-create or present a person, place, event or action. Narration is a kind of retelling of something that took place. Exposition is providing a background about a theme, plot, character and setting of a story. While persuasion tackles how humans reach logically acceptable conclusions (Huy, 2015: 54-55).

Therefore, scaffolding techniques represent one of the tools that can be used by teachers in teaching many subjects and skills including English Language writing. It can help teachers to guide and support students to change and develop their performance gradually from a dependent into an independent one. “Scaffolding is a metaphor for the support offered by teacher to learners, and learner to learner” (Simeon, 2015:21). This support can help teachers to achieve their roles in a writing class as facilitators, collaborators, audience, investigators, problem solvers, and evaluators (Richards 2015:500).

Scaffolding is related to Vygotsky's (1978) belief that learning is a social process not an individual one, and his “zone of proximal development”. Vygotsky defined the zone of proximal development as “the distance between the actual developmental 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” (Vygotsky, 1978:86). Thus, the zone of proximal development focused the attention on how to use scaffolding in order to allow learners to go beyond their independent abilities and reach their potential (Benko, 2012:292).

“In scaffolding, therefore, tutors concern themselves with motivation along with skill development” (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2014:56). If the student writes incorrectly, the teacher gives more help, and if the student is successful, the teacher steps forward until the student becomes capable of completing the task. Gradually, the student regulates his effort and performance independently and reaches autonomy. When the student becomes able to accomplish the task without help, the teacher stops offering assistance.

Consequently, when learners learn writing through scaffolding, they get guidance when needed, and that can increase writing achievement, develop their writing skill and reduce writing apprehension (Vonna, Mukmiantien & Laksmi, 2015:228).

Writing inquires students to follow the cycle of writing including: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. This cycle implies having sufficient skills in using vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, how to connect the written work coherently and how to generate new ideas. Therefore, the teacher should support his students in their writing process, but it must be clear that the teacher’s support is temporary and that this support leads his students to perform other similar tasks independently (Ikawati, 2020:54).

Roehler and Cantlon (1997, as cited in Ikawati, 2020:54) suggest five scaffolding techniques for teachers to use in class:

1. offering explanation;
2. inviting student participation;
3. verifying and clarifying students’ understanding;
4. modelling of desired behavior; and
5. inviting students to contribute clues; which means stimulating students to think about how to accomplish the activity successfully.

Scaffolding techniques used with students during their writing process are usually classified into three main types: instructional, cognitive and motivational. Instructional scaffolding is concerned with telling students what to do. It comprises telling students information to

direct them in brainstorming, revising ideas and pointing out errors or problems. It also comprises suggesting by giving students advice that improves their writing. Cognitive scaffolding is concerned with providing structured support that helps students generate ideas. It attempts to make them consider and reconsider the content, form, and process of writing. It includes pumping questions that help students to think, construct and connect ideas and display what they do not know or understand. It also includes hinting by presenting several alternatives to students, expecting them to select the correct alternative. Motivational scaffolding is concerned with maintaining and increasing students' engagement in the writing process. It also helps them develop confidence as writers. It comprises showing concern by demonstrating to students that their teachers care about their comprehension and success. It also comprises praising by pointing to students' success with positive feedback and verbal encouragement (Thomson, 2009: 419), (Mackiewicz & Thomson, 2014:51-64). Besides the verbal expressions of scaffolding, teachers can use some nonverbal expressions as using hand gestures to communicate information (Thomson, 2009: 419).

In addition, scaffolding techniques are sometimes classified into two main types: cognitive and metacognitive. Cognitive scaffolding is related to content building, vocabulary and structure selection and recycling. Metacognitive scaffolding is related to goal setting, self-assessment and peer-assessment used throughout the writing stages (Piamsai, 2020: 293).

In spite of the importance of the written work as an evaluative tool that can determine learners' academic achievement, a number of studies proved that EFL learners have many problems with writing as shown through their incorrect written sentences and paragraphs. Moreover, tackling the scaffolding techniques in the Egyptian context still needs additional research to investigate this important issue.

Context of the problem

Firstly, in the light of the researcher's experience in teaching EFL for secondary stage students, she observed their need of a certain strategy based on scaffolding to develop their writing sub-skills; especially essay writing. Secondly, the results of the previous studies asserted the need of focusing on scaffolding as a base for developing the students' writing sub-skills. Thirdly, the researcher conducted a pilot study in essay writing on thirty first year secondary stage students. The results of the pilot study proved that about 60% of the students could not generate

ideas to present adequate content, 50% of them were unable to select suitable vocabulary items, 40% of them could not write correct structure, 30% of them could not achieve coherence and cohesion in their written work and 20% of them used punctuation marks improperly.

Statement of the problem

The problem of the present study could be stated in the need of secondary stage students for a certain strategy based on scaffolding to help them develop their English Language essay writing, rather than the traditional method in teaching based mainly on the student's individual work and the teacher's final assessment.

Consequently, the present study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the English Language essay writing sub-skills suitable for secondary stage students?
2. What is a proposed strategy based on scaffolding to develop the English Language essay writing sub-skills among secondary stage students?
3. What is the effect of the proposed strategy based on scaffolding on developing the English Language essay writing sub-skills among secondary stage students?
4. What is the effect of the proposed strategy based on scaffolding on reducing English Language writing anxiety level among secondary stage students?

Aims of the study

The present study aimed at investigating the effect of a proposed strategy based on scaffolding on developing the English Language essay writing and reducing the writing anxiety level among secondary stage students.

Significance of the study

This study intended to:

1. Develop English Language essay writing among first year secondary stage students.
2. Help English Language teachers to benefit from the proposed strategy in developing English Language essay writing among their students.
3. Help course designers to develop other similar strategies for the students.

4. Pave the way for other studies in the field of TEFL that can use scaffolding in developing students' Listening, Speaking and Reading sub-skills.

Study variables**1. *The independent variable***

The proposed strategy based on scaffolding.

2. *The dependent variables*

A- Performance of the experimental group on the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test.

B- Performance of the experimental group on the post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale.

Study hypotheses

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group students' performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the English Language essay writing test as a whole in favour of the post-administration of the test.
2. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students' performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the English Language essay writing test in each assigned writing component in favour of the post-administration of the test.
3. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students' performance and the control group students' performance on the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test as a whole in favour of the experimental group students' performance.
4. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students' performance and the control group students' performance on the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test in each assigned writing component in favour of the experimental group students' performance.
5. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students' performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale in favour of the post-administration of the scale.

6. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students' performance and the control group students' performance on the post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale in favour of the experimental group students' performance.

Delimitations of the study

1. The study was delimited to developing first year secondary stage students' English Language essay writing sub-skills.
2. The proposed strategy was based on the prescribed textbook New Hello!
3. The study was delimited to developing the descriptive type and the persuasive type of English Language essay writing as the researcher noticed the students' need to develop their writing sub-skills in those two types in particular.
4. The research was conducted at Om-El Abtal Secondary School for girls in El-Omrana Educational Directorate during the first semester of the scholastic year 2019-2020, two classes per week, forty-five minutes each. The school was selected because it was the nearest secondary school to where the researcher worked.

Definition of terms**1. Strategy**

Shehata and El-Nagar (2014:39) defined strategy as "a set of measures, practices that the teacher follows in the classroom to reach outputs in the light of the aims s/he puts. It includes a collection of techniques, means, activities and evaluation styles".

El-Wakeel and El-Mofty (2016:341) defined strategy as "a set of general rules that use some means to achieve certain goals".

In this study, strategy means "a set of steps that the teacher of first year secondary stage students follows in order to achieve the desired outcome in English Language essay writing".

2. Scaffolding

Mackiewicz & Thompson (2014: 54-55) defined scaffolding as a learning opportunity in which a more expert teacher teaches a less expert student to perform a task. In other words, the teacher helps the student to do something that he or she cannot perform alone.

Hasan & Karim (2019:289) defined scaffolding as "an expert's supportive behavior for the novice learner to become independent, to be able to solve a learning problem and carry out a task".

In this study, scaffolding is “the support offered by the teacher to first year secondary stage students in order to accomplish a certain English Language writing task”.

3. *Essay Writing*

Guo and Ouyang (2010:137) defined it as “a piece of writing that methodically analyses and evaluates a topic or issue”.

Connelly (2013:201) defined it as a group of organized paragraphs that support a certain idea.

In the present study, essay writing is “a piece of writing that contains paragraphs representing an introduction, a body and a conclusion, and tackles a certain considerable issue for first year secondary stage students”.

4. *Writing Anxiety*

McAvoy (2005:22) defined it as “the feelings of uneasiness writers experience while performing the task”. Erkan & Saban (2011:163) defined it as “the tendency of a person to avoid the process of writing, particularly when it is to be evaluated in some way”.

The researcher defined it operationally as “the general avoidance of first year secondary stage students of writing and of situations that require him/her to write using EFL, especially if there is a probability to be assessed or have grades on that writing”.

II) Review of Literature and Related Studies

A number of studies tackled scaffolding, and how to develop learners’ writing sub-skills in general, and essay writing in particular. Some of them also tackled how to reduce writing anxiety or modify learners’ attitude towards writing.

Veerappan (2011) investigated the effect of using scaffolding on students’ journal writing. The study was conducted on a number of three university students in Malaysia. The researcher used some interactive writing methods in his teaching. Scaffolding proved to achieve positive effect on students’ journal writing and decreasing writing errors made by students.

El-Said (2012) examined using three feedback techniques on the writing performance and attitude of first year secondary stage students. Two types of genres were implied in the study; namely narration and description. The results confirmed the positive effect of the teacher’s three feedback techniques on the students’ writing and their attitude towards English.

Fathi (2013) investigated the effect of using a proposed self-assessment strategy on improving first year secondary stage students' writing sub-skills and decreasing their writing anxiety. The results revealed the positive effect of the strategy on the students' writing performance. It also helped in decreasing the students' level of writing anxiety.

Mackiewicz & Thompson (2014) analyzed teachers' scaffolding. They discovered that teachers used telling and suggesting as instructional scaffolding, pumping and hinting as cognitive scaffolding and showing concern and praising as motivational scaffolding. The findings of the study could help in designing teachers' training programmes.

Faraj (2015) investigated the effect of teacher's scaffolding on the students' stages of the writing process: Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing and Publishing. The study was applied on college students in Koya University. The results reflected improvement in the students' writing performance. In addition, students could express their ideas through writing successfully.

Simeon (2015) studied scaffolding from a sociocultural point of view. The study tackled ESL secondary school teachers in Seychelles. It shed light on the concept that teaching writing strategies demands considerate planning of how to help strategy development in students, that has to be built up and practiced by both the teacher and his students.

Vonna, Mukminatien & Laksmi (2015) explored the impact of using some scaffolding techniques on the writing achievement of first year students at English Education Department in Abulyatama University. The results proved that scaffolding techniques can considerably develop students' writing achievement.

Ashry (2018) examined the effect of the process / product learning strategy on improving some EFL writing sub-skills among second year students in Salah Al-Din Secondary School. The results revealed evidence of the positive effect of the process / product strategy on improving students' writing performance.

Rababah & Almwajeh (2018) investigated how EFL teachers utilized scaffolding in writing classes. The study used interviews and observations in data collection. The results indicated that eight out of ten teachers used scaffolding to increase learners' creative writing in particular.

El-Qersh (2019) investigated the impact of using a strategy based on service learning on improving the EFL functional writing sub-skills of second year secondary stage students. The results revealed that using the proposed strategy had a positive effect on improving students' writing sub-skills.

Ikawati (2020) explained that many students at various educational stages and levels had challenges in generating new ideas, using vocabulary, grammar and maintaining unity in their written work. The researcher figured out how scaffolding could be used to develop learners' writing. She proposed integrating the writing process through scaffolding. She also described how the teacher can gradually decrease his assistance in order to achieve students' autonomy and success in writing.

Piamsai (2020) investigated academic writing among second-year non-proficient EFL university students in Thailand. The researcher involved cognitive, metacognitive and affective scaffolding into students' activities. The results showed an obvious development in students' overall writing competence. Added to that, students showed a positive attitude towards using scaffolding in teaching writing.

Aish (2020) investigated the challenges faced by faculty of education students' English essay writing as well as the impact of giving students feedback on their writing in the light of their learning styles. The results confirmed that there was a correlation between writing, giving feedback and considering students' learning styles.

A general comment on the previous studies

A number of previous studies tackled scaffolding and how it could be utilized in developing students' writing sub-skills. Many of these studies investigated the effect of scaffolding presented by the teacher on students' writing process stages; namely: Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing and Publishing. Other studies concentrated on how scaffolding could help in treating students' difficulties in generating new ideas, using proper vocabulary, suitable structure, maintaining coherence and using punctuation marks accurately. Moreover, some studies showed how scaffolding achieved students' positive attitudes towards their writing classes or reduced the writing anxiety level among them.

In spite of the importance of scaffolding in EFL teaching and learning, either in developing language skills in general, or writing sub-skills in particular, few studies only tackled this crucial issue in the

Egyptian context. That is why, the researcher of the present study attempted to investigate the effect of using scaffolding on developing EFL essay writing and reducing the writing anxiety level among secondary stage students.

III) Method and Procedures

A. Design

The current study used both the analytical and the quasi-experimental designs. It is partially analytical as it presented a theoretical framework, and partially experimental as it implemented a pre-post essay writing test and a writing anxiety scale.

B. Participants

Participants of the current study were eighty-two first year secondary stage students. They were enrolled in a governmental school; namely Om El-Abtal Secondary School for girls in El-Omrania Educational Directorate, Giza. The strategy was implemented during the first semester of the scholastic year 2019/2020. The participants were randomly assigned to forty students (one class) for the experimental group, and forty-two students (another class) for the control group. The control group was taught essays using the traditional method. The teacher passed on the theoretical framework of writing, gave students instructions to write, then assigned marks to their written work.

C. The proposed strategy

In order to achieve the aims of the strategy, the following procedures were carried out during the writing classes. They were adapted from Laksmi (2006:146-147):

- *Stage 1: Prewriting*

Firstly, the teacher encouraged all his students to brainstorm and generate ideas about the new writing topic. Secondly, students gathered and arranged their suggested ideas individually and put their ideas in groups. Thirdly, they specified their topic sentence which would guide the reader anticipate the contents of the body paragraph. Fourthly, they wrote a plan for their essay, including an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

The introduction introduced the topic to the readers. So, the teacher stressed that it had to be concise and meaningful at the same time. The body began with the topic sentence which stated the main idea of the paragraph. The teacher explained to students that they should write details and examples to either support or clarify what is

written in the topic sentence. In the conclusion, the teacher guided his students to summarize what was previously written, but in a new language.

- *Stage 2: Drafting*

Students began their first writing draft. It might contain some errors like grammatical, spelling or mechanical mistakes. The teacher had to inform students to write their drafts in double-space to leave space for self or peer revising or teacher's feedback.

- *Stage 3: Revising*

In this stage, students reread their essays. They could add, delete, substitute or rearrange what they have written. The revising stage had three steps; namely: self-revision, peer-revision and teacher's feedback. Each student revised her essay. Then, one of her colleagues revised the essay using a pencil in writing her remarks. The content and organization of ideas were the most important components at that stage. Students discussed their essays with their teacher; especially the difficulties that faced them in writing. Then, they modified their essays according to the feedback they obtained.

- *Stage 4: Editing*

In this stage, students proofread their essay. The modifications that happened were in the spelling, structure and punctuation. The editing stage had three steps; namely: self-editing, peer-editing and teacher-editing. The student went through the essay line by line to check that there were not any writing mistakes. Then, one of her colleagues edited the essay using a pencil in writing her remarks. After that, the teacher read the essay, and wrote his comments. The teacher used correction symbols besides the mistake. If some students could not understand their mistake, they could discuss the matter with their teacher and accordingly make the necessary modification.

- *Stage 5: Publishing*

In this stage, students finished writing the final copy of their essay. Then, they handed their writing to their teacher for sharing. Accordingly, the teacher played the role of the audience and assessor at the same time. He gave marks on his students' final piece of writing.

Teaching Methods

According to the previously mentioned proposed strategy, the teacher used: brainstorming, discussion, individual and peer-work as teaching methods.

Instructional Aids

The current study used the following instructional aids:

1. The whiteboard.
2. Charts.
3. Teacher's Guide.
4. Students' Worksheets.

Assessment

The assessment system used in the current study was represented in the worksheets marks as formative assessment, a pre-post essay writing test and a pre-post writing scale as summative assessment. So, the researcher used both formative and summative assessment.

D. Study instruments

1. The English Language essay writing sub-skills checklist:

Aim of the checklist

The checklist aimed at identifying the English Language essay writing sub-skills suitable for secondary stage students in the light of using the scaffolding techniques.

Description of the checklist

The researcher designed the checklist in the light of the previous studies. It was designed in the light of the Student's Book prescribed on first year secondary stage students (New Hello!), and its Teacher's Guide. It included -in its final form- fifteen writing sub-skills related to five different writing components; namely: Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Structure and Mechanics (see Appendix No. 1).

Validity of the checklist

The checklist was submitted – in its initial form – to specialized jury members in the field of Curriculum and EFL Instruction, and modified in the light of their recommendations and suggestions.

2. The English Language essay writing test:

Aim of the test

The test aimed at measuring the English Language essay writing of first year secondary stage students as a whole, and the essay writing sub-skills related to each component of the five assigned writing components.

Description of the test

The test contained an essay question. The student had to choose one of two essays (either A or B). Test duration was estimated by counting the times of thirty students, different from the study group,

divided on the number of students. Thus, the time allotted for the test was 45 minutes (see Appendix No. 2).

Test validity

In order to ensure the content validity of the test, it was shown to specialized jury members in the field of Curriculum and EFL Instruction to assess it in terms of the consistency of the test questions to the aim of the test and the suitability of the test questions to the level of first year secondary stage students and the suitability of the instructions of the test to the students' level. Consequently, the test was modified according to the jury members' recommendations.

Test reliability

In order to ensure the test reliability, the test-retest method was applied before the implementation of the strategy, with an interval of two weeks, on thirty first year secondary stage students other than the study group. The reliability coefficient was 0.85, which was relatively high.

Test scoring

The test questions were scored according to the test rubric (see Appendix No. 3). The rubric was justified by specialized jury members in the field of Curriculum and EFL Instruction. Consequently, it was modified according to their recommendations. The rubric -based on the essay sub-skills checklist- contained five components; namely: Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Structure and Mechanics. Content implied four essay writing sub-skills; Organization, Vocabulary and Structure implied three essay writing sub-skills; whereas Mechanics implied two essay writing sub-skills. Each skill of the fifteen sub-skills measured in the essay question was given three marks. Thus, the total mark of the pre-post essay writing test was forty-five marks.

To ensure the reliability of the test rubric, the researcher needed another specialized senior teacher to assess the students' writing. The essays were scored by both of them independently. The inter-raters' correlation coefficient was estimated using the Cronbach-Alpha Formula. It was 0.91, which was relatively high.

3. The English Language writing anxiety scale

Aim of the scale

The scale aimed at revealing the level of first year secondary stage students' English Language writing anxiety.

Description of the scale

The scale was designed in the light of the previous studies. It contained – in its final form – twenty items, taking into account having ten positive items and other ten negative items to ensure objectivity. The items of the scale were clearly directed towards actual writing practices that take place in class.

Moreover, the scale duration was estimated by counting the times that thirty students, other than the study group, took to answer the scale divided on their number. Thus, the estimated time for answering the scale was thirty minutes.

Scale validity

To ensure the scale validity, it was submitted to specialized jury members in the fields of Curriculum and EFL Instruction, and Educational Psychology. They assessed the scale in terms of: the relevance of the scale items and suitability to the students' level, and the clarity of the scale instructions and items. The scale items were modified according to their suggestions.

Scale reliability

To ensure the scale reliability, it was administered to a group of thirty first year secondary stage students, other than the study group. The reliability coefficient was estimated using Cronbach Alpha Formula. The estimated value was (0.83) which was considered relatively high.

Scale scoring

The instrument was a five-point Likert-Scale. Participants were asked to state how much they agree with each item ranging from Strongly disagree = 1 to Disagree = 2 to Uncertain = 3 to Agree = 4 to Strongly agree = 5 for positive items; and from Strongly disagree = 5 to Disagree = 4 to Uncertain = 3 to Agree = 2 to Strongly agree = 1 for negative items.

IV) Data Analysis and Results

The aim of the current study was to investigate the effect of a strategy based on scaffolding on developing English Language essay writing and reducing writing anxiety among secondary stage students. The strategy was developed and experimented with students who were enrolled in the first year. The sample, the experimental and the control groups, was submitted to pre-post-administration of the essay writing test and the writing anxiety scale. The statistical analysis of the data and the results were interpreted in terms of the study hypotheses. To test the first hypothesis which stated: “There is a statistically significant difference

between the mean scores of experimental group students’ performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the English Language essay writing test as a whole in favour of the post-administration of the test”, a t-test was conducted to compare the overall performance of the students on the pre-administration versus the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test. Paired sample t-test was utilized. Table 1 shows means, standard deviations and t-values of the experimental group on the pre-and-post English Language essay writing test.

Table (1)

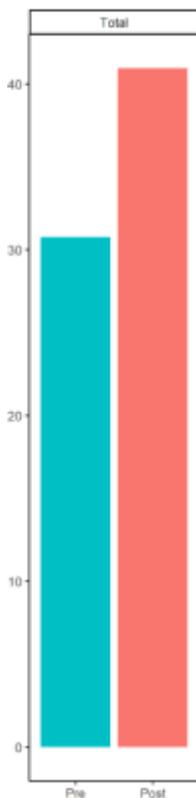
T-test Results Comparing Mean Scores of the Pre-and-Post Administration of the English Language Essay Writing Test, as a Whole, for the Experimental Group. (N = 40, DF = 39)

| Administration | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t-value | Sig. Level | Effect Size (n ²) |
|----------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|---------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Pre | 30.78 | 5.920 | 0.936 | 22.688* | 0.000 | 0.93 |
| Post | 40.95 | 4.169 | 0.659 | | | |

*t-value = 22.688

T-test proved that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group students’ performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the English Language essay writing test as a whole in favour on the post-administration of the test. The calculated effect size indicated that the implemented strategy had a significant effect on the experimental group post-performance on the total score. The total effect size was (0.93) with a t-value of (22.688). Thus, the first hypothesis was supported. For more elaboration of the pre-post English Language essay writing test results of the experimental group, figure (1) was designed:

Figure (1): The Pre-Post English Language Writing Test Results of the Experimental Group



To test the second hypothesis which stated: “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students’ performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the English Language essay writing test in each assigned writing component in favour of the post-administration of the test”, a t-test was conducted to compare the students’ performance on the pre-administration versus the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test. Paired sample t-test was utilized. Table (2) shows means, standard deviations and t-values of the experimental group on the pre-and-post English Language essay writing test.

Table (2)

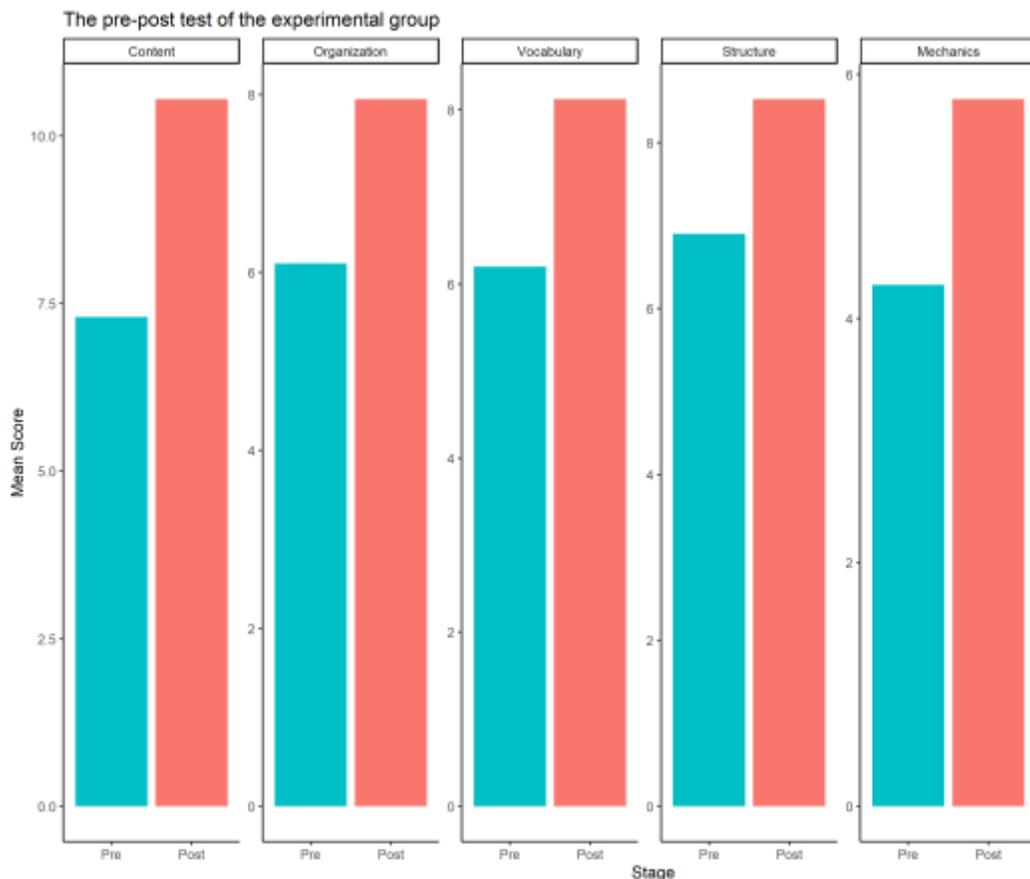
T-test Results Comparing the Mean Scores of the Pre-and-Post Administration of the English Language Essay Writing Test for the Experimental Group in Each Writing Component Including its Assigned Sub-Skills. (N = 40, DF = 39)

| Components | Administration | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t-value | Sig. Level | Effect Size (n ²) |
|----------------|----------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|---------|------------|-------------------------------|
| 1.Content | Pre | 7.30 | 1.667 | 0.264 | 18.625* | 0.000 | 0.90 |
| | Post | 10.55 | 1.395 | 0.221 | | | |
| 2.Organization | Pre | 6.10 | 1.482 | 0.234 | 15.203* | 0.000 | 0.86 |
| | Post | 7.95 | 1.218 | 0.193 | | | |
| 3.Vocabulary | Pre | 6.20 | 1.436 | 0.227 | 17.547* | 0.000 | 0.89 |
| | Post | 8.13 | 1.202 | 0.190 | | | |
| 4.Structure | Pre | 6.90 | 1.411 | 0.223 | 9.978* | 0.000 | 0.72 |
| | Post | 8.53 | 0.905 | 0.143 | | | |
| 5.Mechanics | Pre | 4.28 | 1.198 | 0.189 | 9.527* | 0.000 | 0.70 |
| | Post | 5.80 | 0.405 | 0.064 | | | |

T-test proved that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group students’ performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the English Language essay writing test in favour of the post-administration of the test. The calculated effect sizes indicated that the implemented strategy had a significant effect on the experimental group post-performance on each writing component score.

The largest effect size was for Content (0.90), with a t-value (18.625). It was followed by Vocabulary (0.89), with a t-value (17.547). Then, Organization (0.86), with a t-value (15.203). Subsequently came Structure (0.72), with a t-value (9.978). The lowest effect size was for Mechanics (0.70), with a t-value (9.527). Thus, the estimated effect size values indicated that the implemented strategy had a large effect on students’ mastery of each essay writing component. Consequently, the second hypothesis was supported. For more clarification of the pre-post English Language essay writing test results of the experimental group, figure (2) was presented:

Figure (2): The Pre-Post English Language Essay Writing Test Results of the Experimental Group



To test the third hypothesis which stated: “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students’ performance and the control group students’ performance on the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test as a whole in favour of the experimental group students’ performance”, a t-test was conducted to compare the overall performance of the post-administration of the experimental group versus the control group. Paired sample t-test was used. Table (3) shows means, standard deviations and t-values of the experimental and control groups on the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test.

Table (3)

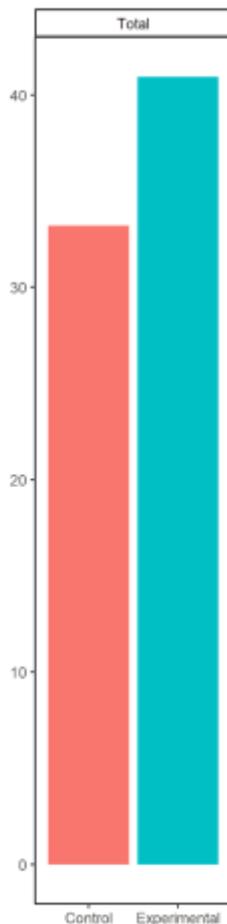
T-test Results Comparing Mean Scores of the Post-Administration of the English Language Essay Writing Test, as a whole, for the Experimental and Control Groups (N = 82, DF = 80)

| Group | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t-value | Sig. Level | Effect Size (n ²) |
|--------------|-------|----|----------------|-----------------|---------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Control | 33.21 | 42 | 3.942 | 0.608 | 8.636* | 0.000 | 0.50 |
| Experimental | 40.95 | 40 | 4.169 | 0.659 | | | |

*t-value = 8.636

T-test proved that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group students’ performance and control group students’ performance on the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test as a whole in favour of the experimental group. The calculated effect size indicated that the implemented strategy had a significant effect on the experimental group post-performance on the total score. The total effect size was (0.50) with a t-value of 8.636. Thus, the third hypothesis was supported. For more elaboration of the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test of the experimental and control groups, figure (3) was designed:

Figure (3): The Post English Language Essay Writing Test Results of the Experimental and Control Groups



To test the fourth hypothesis which stated: “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students’ performance and the control group students’ performance on the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test in each assigned writing component in favour of the experimental group students’ performance”, a t-test was conducted to compare the post-administration of the experimental group students’ performance versus the control group students’ performance in the English Language essay writing test. Paired sample t-test was utilized. Table (4) illustrates means, standard deviations and t-values of the experimental and control groups on the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test.

Table (4)

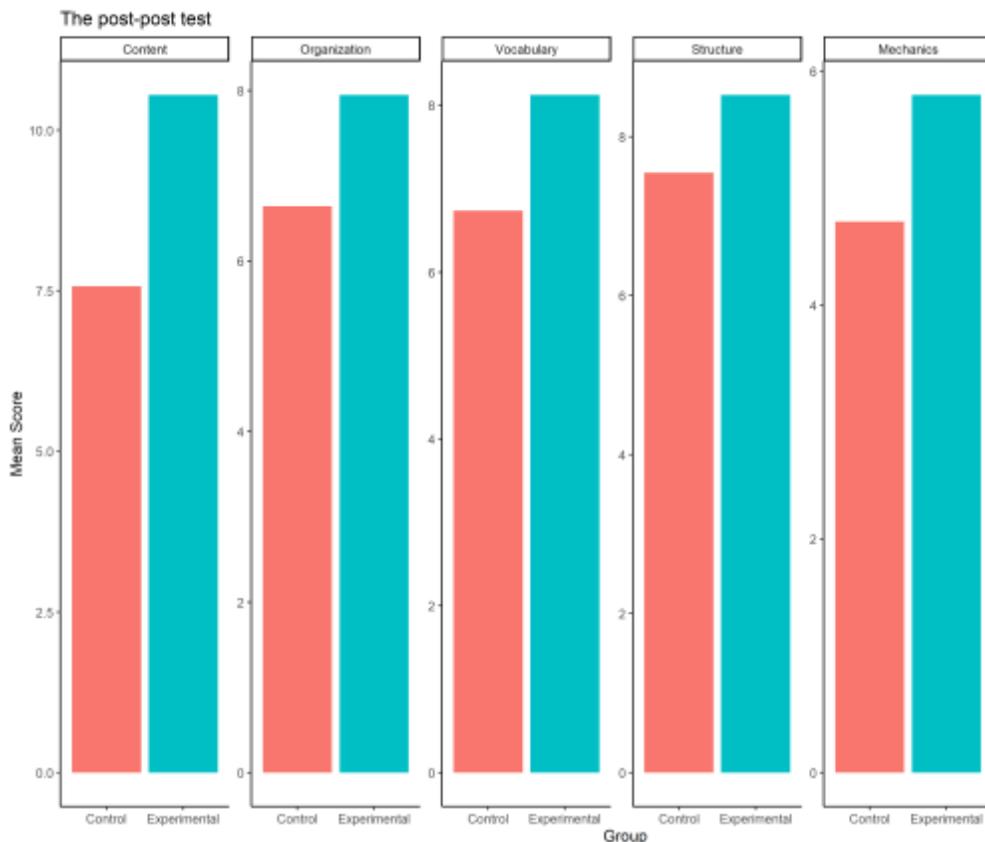
T-test Results Comparing the Mean Scores of the Post-Administration of the English Language Essay Writing Test for the Experimental and Control Groups in Each Writing Component Including its Assigned Sub-Skills (N = 82, DF = 80)

| Components | Group | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t-value | Sig. Level | Effect Size (n ²) |
|----------------|--------------|-------|----|----------------|-----------------|---------|------------|-------------------------------|
| 1.Content | Control | 7.57 | 42 | 1.727 | 0.266 | 8.566* | 0.000 | 0.50 |
| | Experimental | 10.55 | 40 | 1.395 | 0.221 | | | |
| 2.Organization | Control | 6.64 | 42 | 1.511 | 0.233 | 4.299* | 0.000 | 0.19 |
| | Experimental | 7.95 | 40 | 1.218 | 0.193 | | | |
| 3.Vocabulary | Control | 6.74 | 42 | 1.563 | 0.241 | 4.488* | 0.000 | 0.20 |
| | Experimental | 8.13 | 40 | 1.202 | 0.190 | | | |
| 4.Structure | Control | 7.55 | 42 | 1.292 | 0.199 | 3.949* | 0.000 | 0.16 |
| | Experimental | 8.53 | 40 | 0.905 | 0.143 | | | |
| 5.Mechanics | Control | 4.71 | 42 | 1.175 | 0.181 | 5.539* | 0.000 | 0.28 |
| | Experimental | 5.80 | 40 | 0.405 | 0.064 | | | |

T-test proved that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group students' performance and control group students' performance on the post-administration of the English Language essay writing test in favour of the experimental group. The calculated effect sizes indicated that the implemented strategy had an effect on the experimental group post-performance on each writing component score.

The largest effect size was for Content (0.50) with a t-value (8.566). It was followed by Mechanics (0.28) with a t-value (5.539). After that came Vocabulary (0.20) with a t-value (4.488). Subsequently came Organization (0.19) with a t-value (4.299). The lowest effect size was for Structure (0.16) with a t-value (3.949). Consequently, the estimated effect size values indicated that the implemented strategy had an effect on students' mastery of each essay writing component. Thus, the fourth hypothesis was supported. For more clarification of the post essay writing test results of the experimental and control groups, figure (4) was presented:

Figure (4): The Post English Language Essay Writing Test Results of the Experimental and Control Groups



To test the fifth hypothesis which stated: “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students’ performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale in favour of the post-administration of the scale”, a t-test was conducted to compare the experimental group students’ performance on the pre-administration versus the post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale. Paired sample t-test was utilized. Table (5) shows means, standard deviations and t-values of the experimental group on the pre-and-post administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale.

Table (5)

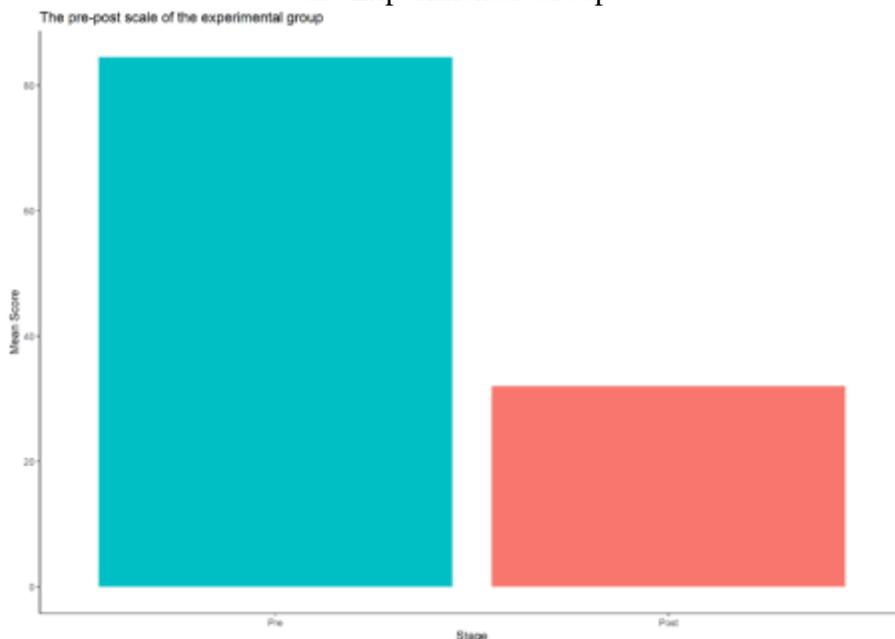
T-test Results Comparing Mean Scores of the Pre-and-Post Administration of the English Language Writing Anxiety Scale (N = 40, DF = 39)

| Administration | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t-value | Sig. Level | Effect Size (n ²) |
|----------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|---------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Pre | 84.48 | 6.353 | 1.004 | 52.496* | 0.000 | 0.99 |
| Post | 32.05 | 3.202 | 0.506 | | | |

*t-value = 52.496

T-test proved that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students’ performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale in favour of the post-administration of the scale. The total effect size was (0.99), with a t-value of (52.496). Thus, the fifth hypothesis was supported. For more clarification of the pre-post English Language writing anxiety scale results of the experimental group, figure (5) was designed:

Figure (5): The Pre-Post English Language Writing Anxiety Scale Results of the Experimental Group



To test the sixth hypothesis which stated: “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students’ performance and the control group students’ performance on the post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale in

favour of the experimental group students’ performance”, a t-test was conducted to compare the experimental group students’ performance versus the control group students’ performance on the English Language writing anxiety scale. Paired sample t-test was utilized. Table (6) illustrates means, standard deviations and t-values of the experimental and control groups on the post administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale.

Table (6)

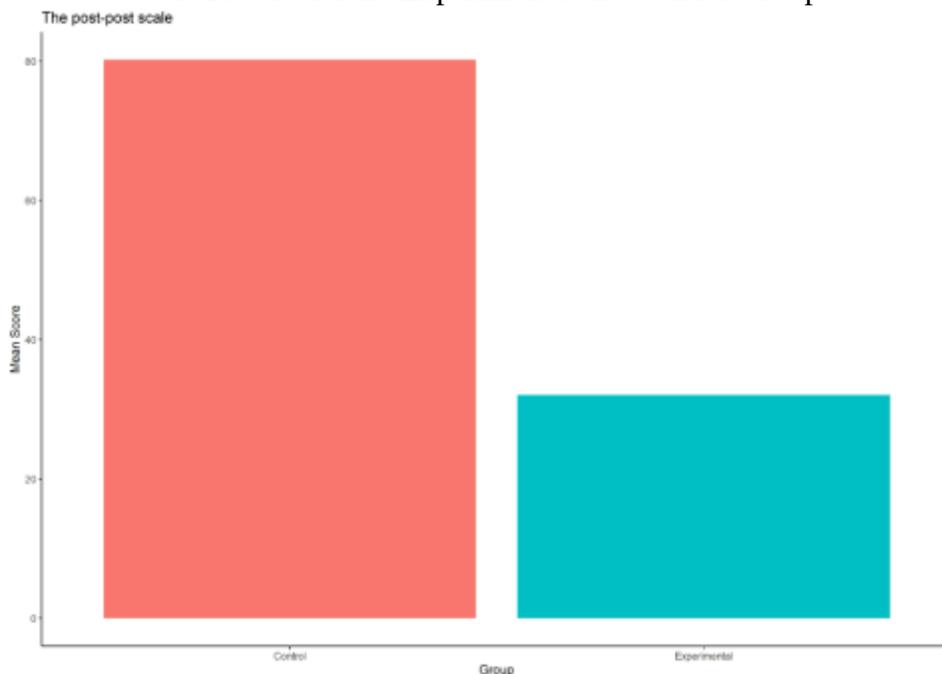
T-test Results Comparing Mean Scores of the Post-Administration of the English Language Writing Anxiety Scale for the Experimental and Control Groups (N = 82, DF = 80)

| Group | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t-value | Sig. Level | Effect Size (n ²) |
|--------------|-------|----|----------------|-----------------|---------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Control | 80.18 | 42 | 5.911 | 0.891 | 45.740* | 0.000 | 0.96 |
| Experimental | 32.05 | 40 | 3.202 | 0.506 | | | |

*t-value = 45.740

T-test proved that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students’ performance and the control group students’ performance on the post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale in favour of the experimental group. The calculated effect size indicated that the implemented strategy had a significant effect on the experimental group post-performance. The total effect size was (0.96), with a t-value of (45.740). Thus, the sixth hypothesis was supported. For more elaboration of the post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale results, figure (6) was presented:

Figure (6): The Post-Administration of the English Language Writing Anxiety Scale Results for the Experimental and Control Groups



V. Discussion of Results

By reaching the above-mentioned results, the current study has answered all the research questions. It identified the English Language essay writing components including their assigned sub-skills suitable for secondary stage students, the proposed strategy based on scaffolding was identified, and the effect of the proposed strategy on developing the English Language essay writing and reducing the English Language writing anxiety among secondary stage students was reached.

Results of the study proved that the experimental group's post-performance significantly exceeded its own pre-performance on total essay writing as well as on each writing component. It also proved that the experimental group's English Language writing anxiety was significantly reduced on the post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale than on its pre-administration. Moreover, results of the study proved that the experimental group's post-performance exceeded the control group's post-performance on total English Language essay writing as well as on each writing component. It also proved that the experimental group's English Language writing anxiety was significantly reduced on the post-administration of the English Language writing anxiety scale than the control group.

These results are consistent with the result of other researchers' studies; namely: Veerappan (2011), Mackiewicz & Thompson (2014), Faraj (2015), Simeon (2015), Vonna, Mukimatien & Laksmi (2015) and Ikawati (2020). Scaffolding proved to achieve positive effect on developing students' writing and decreasing their writing errors. Using self-assessment and peer-assessment in addition to teacher-assessment enriched the feedback given to students, and consequently improved the final copy of their writing. Moreover, using brainstorming, telling and suggesting by teachers as instructional scaffolding, pumping and hinting as cognitive scaffolding and showing concern and praising as motivational scaffolding helped students' writing progress. Teacher's scaffolding positively affected all the students' stages of the writing process: Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing and Publishing. Using scaffolding also significantly integrated the stages of the students' writing process.

The results of the current study are also on line with the results of other researchers' studies, namely: El Said (2012), Fathi (2013) and Piamsai (2020). The enrichment of the feedback given to students positively affected their attitude towards learning English as a foreign language, and towards using scaffolding in teaching writing. It also significantly decreased students' writing anxiety and apprehension.

The success of the proposed strategy in achieving quantitative and qualitative results was due to the teacher's interaction with students as a facilitator of the teaching and learning process, the support and encouragement he gave to his students during the process of writing, students' understanding each strategy step and what to perform in each step, and the teacher's decrease of his assistance in order to reach students' independence. That is how scaffolding enabled the teacher to create a positive environment by giving help until his support was gradually reduced.

Concerning English Language essay writing, the experimental group students achieved obvious progress on their post-performance in English Language essay writing as a whole, and in all the five components incorporating the fifteen identified sub-skills (see Appendix 1); namely: Content, Vocabulary, Organization, Structure and Mechanics respectively than on their pre-performance. Mechanics got the least effect size. This might be attributed to the students' previous training and practice on the writing mechanics in previous scholastic stages and

levels. Concerning the English Language writing anxiety, the experimental group students also showed significant reduction in the writing anxiety. This reduction could be attributed to the scaffolding, especially the motivational scaffolding, given to the experimental group. Students' work co-operatively, in pairs and individually with each other and with their teacher helped them gain experience and acquire self-confidence. That helped them, consequently, to reduce their writing anxiety.

The experimental group students also achieved progress in English Language essay writing as a whole, and in the five components incorporating the fifteen identified sub-skills, than the control group students, namely: Content, Mechanics, Vocabulary, Organization and Structure respectively. Structure got the least effect size. This might be attributed to the great attention given to that component in English Language teaching in previous scholastic stages and levels. Concerning the English Language writing anxiety, the experimental group students also showed more significant reduction in the writing anxiety than the control group. The difference between the results of the two groups could be attributed to using scaffolding in teaching writing to the experimental group which exceeded the results of the traditional method of teaching writing used with the control group.

However, it has to be mentioned that the reached results proved that concerning English Language essay writing, the traditional method of teaching writing used with the control group students still achieved progress on their post-performance on the English Language essay writing test as a whole, and on all the five components incorporating the fifteen identified sub-skills, but less than the progress achieved by the experimental group students who were taught using the proposed strategy based on scaffolding. That explains why the total effect size and the effect sizes of the five English Language writing components are greater in comparing the pre-post performance of the experimental group with the post-post performance of the experimental group and the control group.

On the other hand, concerning reducing English Language writing anxiety, the reached results proved that the traditional method of teaching writing used with the control group students did not help them reduce their writing anxiety on their post-performance on the English Language writing anxiety scale. That explains the correlation between

the effect sizes when comparing the effect size of the pre-post performance of the experimental group on the scale, with the effect size of the post-post performance of the experimental group and the control group on the same scale.

Recommendations

In the light of the results of the current study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Scaffolding is essential in teaching English Language writing as it helps improve students' writing, promote their independence and reduce their writing anxiety.
2. Teachers should engage students throughout all the stages of the writing process, so as to produce meaningful and appropriate writing.
3. Teacher-feedback, self-assessment and peer-feedback should all be utilized in the writing process.
4. Scaffolding can be an essential part in designing teachers' training programmes.

Suggestions for further research

In the light of the results of the current study, the following suggestions are presented for further research:

1. Similar studies should be conducted on Listening, Speaking and Reading to reach conclusions about the effect of scaffolding on developing those skills.
2. Other studies can be applied on other learners in different stages to measure the effect of using scaffolding in teaching on their writing performance.
3. Other studies might consider the effect of using scaffolding on students' motivation towards English Language writing and their attitude towards learning English as a foreign language.

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