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*Scaffolding with Online Tasks for Developing Critical
Writing Skills of 2nd Year Secondary School Students*

BY

Dr .Manal Farouk Mohammed

Assistant professor of Curriculum and EFL Instruction
Faculty of Education
Helwan of University

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Abstract

The study aimed at developing the required EFL critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students through using scaffolding with online tasks. Participants of the study were randomly selected and divided into two groups(31 for the experimental group and 31 for the control group). The study employed a critical writing skills test and a critical writing skills rubric. The necessary critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students were determined through the use of a checklist approved by a jury of specialists in teaching EFL. During the experiment, the experimental group received instruction through using scaffolding with online tasks, while the control group received regular instruction. The experiment lasted for two months. The analytical descriptive method and quasi experimental design were followed. The statistical analysis of the obtained data from the administrations of the test confirmed the effect of scaffolding with online tasks on developing critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students .Thus ,the aim of the study was achieved as using scaffolding with online tasks showed a large effect size on developing the critical writing skills for the experimental group of the participants . Based on the results, it was recommended that teachers should give due attention to the development of critical writing skills in EFL classes through online scaffolding tasks .In addition, using scaffolding in developing other language skills was suggested.

Keywords: scaffolding , online tasks and critical writing skills

السقالات التعليمية بمصاحبة الأنشطة عبر الانترنت في تنمية مهارات

الكتابة الناقدة لدي طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي

إعداد

د/ منال فاروق محمد

أستاذ المناهج وطرق تدريس اللغة الانجليزية لمساعد

كلية التربية - جامعة حلوان.

الملخص

هدفت الدراسة الي تنمية مهارات الكتابة الناقدة لدي طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي باستخدام السقالات التعليمية بمصاحبة الأنشطة عبر الانترنت في وقد تكونت عينة البحث من ٦٢ طالب وتم تقسيمهم الي مجموعة تجريبية ومجموعة ضابطة كما تم استخدام اختبار لمهارات الكتابة الناقدة و كذلك مقياس تقدير . تم تصميم قائمة بمهارات الكتابة الناقدة تحتوي على مهارات الكتابة الناقدة اللازمة لدي طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي. وقد استخدم البحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي والشبه التجريبي وقد تم معالجة البحث واستخدام السقالات التعليمية بمصاحبة الأنشطة عبر الانترنت في تنمية مهارات الكتابة الناقدة مع المجموعة التجريبية وطريقة التدريس المعتمدة مع المجموعة الضابطة و قد تم عمل التحليل الاحصائي واسفرت النتائج عن فاعلية استخدام السقالات التعليمية بمصاحبة الأنشطة عبر الانترنت في تنمية مهارات الكتابة الناقدة لدي طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي. وبالتالي تحقق الهدف من الدراسة حيث ان حجم الاثر لاستخدام السقالات التعليمية بمصاحبة الأنشطة عبر الانترنت كان كبير في تنمية مهارات الكتابة الناقدة لدي طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي. و قد اوصت الدراسة بضرورة اهتمام المعلمين الي تنمية مهارات الكتابة الناقدة لدي طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي باستخدام السقالات التعليمية بمصاحبة الأنشطة عبر الانترنت. وقد اقترحت الدراسة استخدام السقالات التعليمية بمصاحبة الأنشطة عبر الانترنت في تنمية مهارات لغوية أخرى.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: السقالات التعليمية - أنشطة عبر الانترنت - مهارات الكتابة

Introduction

The onset of the information age brought about by the rapid development of technology has resulted in the exponential growth and easy availability of a massive amount of information .It also resulted in the call of education specialists to reform curriculum and to teach critical thinking and information management as practitioners should re - look at the way of teaching . As students grapple with managing projects, struggling to make sense of the large chunks of information, they should be equipped with the skills to make sense of information while managing their own learning .One of the possible ways of carrying this out is making use of the psycho social constructivist theory.

The philosophy behind constructivist pedagogies is that understanding is much enhanced when individuals constructed their own knowledge. Learner is an important agent in the learning process. Thus, when learning is shaped by the social environment , every learner has a larger extent of potential for learning .This range of a learner’s potentials called the zone of proximal development (ZPD) . Learning in the (ZPD) is combined activity in which the teacher simultaneously keeps an eye on the goals of the learning design sequence and what the student with assistance is capable to do. Thus, a number of ways in which teacher can assist students in developing language and subject matter knowledge from the interactive sociocultural perspective can be used. One way that is particularly consonant with the Socio-Cultural perspective of the theory (SCT) is scaffolding(Har,2013).

In education , scaffolding refers to moving students progressively toward stronger understanding and ultimately greater independence in the learning process(Walqui, 2006).The underlying idea for learning scaffold is relatively old. The theory was first introduced in the late 1950 by Jerome Bruner,a cognitive psychologist. He used this term to describe young children’s oral language acquisition helped by their parents when they first start learning to speak. Young children are provided with informal instructional formats with which learning is facilitated . The term includes all the things that teachers do already when they predict the kinds of difficulty that the class or individual student will have with a given task. A scaffolding format investigated by Bruner and his student Anat Ninio is joint picture book reading.(Gant,2017).

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On the other hand , many researchers traced the concept to Lev Vygotsky in 1978. According to him, a learner's developmental level consisted of two parts; the actual developmental level and the potential developmental level . The (ZPD) then, is 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. In Vygotsky's words, scaffolding instruction is the role of teachers and others in supporting the learner's development and providing supporting structures to act to the next stage or level. Thus, ZPD awakens a variety of internal development processes that are able to operate only when the learner is interacting with others in his/her environment (Fisher and Frey,2011).

Sigmund(2012) mentioned that the great benefits for educators who use scaffolding in teaching include the following:

1-Clear directions: When students begin to learn new concept, all the necessary steps are laid out for them in detail. Thus, eliminating confusion and anxiety,

2-Clear expectations: Students learn through scaffolding what the teacher expects them to do from the beginning .

3-Gradually increasing independence: When students are expected to perform a task entirely on their own from the beginning, they often become discouraged if they do not understand the subject matter. So, building confidence helps them tackle more difficult tasks .

4-Motivation and momentum: Scaffolding can help in motivating students to succeed. As students become proficient, they desire to learn more about the subject matter than becoming overwhelmed by a task that seems impossible,. They are motivated to prove themselves.

Analogous to the way that scaffolding is built to just the needed level when constructing a building and then removed when the building is complete, educators engage in scaffolding by providing the necessary level and type of support that is well timed to students' needs. Therefore, the analogy with construction of knowledge is that cognitive scaffolding allows learners to take places that they would otherwise be unable to reach with the right word or question or any other device. Scaffolding allows new knowledge to be constructed , wrong concepts to be

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challenged and corrected or forgotten knowledge to be recalled. This scaffolding stimulates learners actively in the ZPD. In addition, when a piece of knowledge has been learned, the mechanism by which it was constructed is no longer apparent. On the other hand, the memory of the scaffolding may still remain.(Khare, 2018)

When applied to language classroom ,scaffolding learning has attracted an increasing amount of researchers 'attention to use in teaching language. For example, Benson (2001) emphasized that the use of modeling as a scaffolding structure supports students' learning to be autonomous and use language in their real life. Nomnian (2002) called for more attention to promote teacher- student scaffolding interaction in the language classroom .Liang (2018) recommended that educators need to scaffold and design activities that promote learning beyond the child's development in order to move a learner through his/her zone effectively. It is vital that educators create a learning environment that exposures second language learners to various forms of language acquisition methods such as scaffolding strategies.

Three types of scaffolding have been identified as being especially effective for second language learners as follows:

- 1-Simplifying the language : Teacher can simplify the language by shortening selections, speaking in the present tense and avoiding the use of idioms.
- 2- Asking for completion, not generation: Teacher allows students to choose answers from a list or complete a partially finished outline or paragraph.
- 3-Using the visuals : Teacher can present information and ask for students to respond through the use of graphic organizers ,tables , charts , outlines and graphs(Bradley and Bradley,2004).

Accordingly with the great importance of scaffolding, the ever growing incorporation of technology in second language teaching across various educational contexts in recent years is increased . Also, a growing awareness of the centrality of tasks in technology mediated environments (online task) has given rise to completely new pedagogy in second language teaching . So, the potential links between technology and scaffolding have gained prominence (Rovira, 2015).

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The idea of using scaffolding with online tasks will be made use in the present study. The need to use scaffolding with online tasks resulted from the instructor's need to use scaffolding strategies and promoting interaction online and offline. The study connects between face to face and online tasks to allow students to seek help from peers and instructors in a timely manner. Online tasks present the challenge that students rely heavily on asynchronous discussions boards to interact with peers and instructors

The role of online task is to stimulate students for using language contextually through situations tasks. Students are asked to perform various tasks that require the use of language skills. The tasks also require the use of laboratory with internet access (Yeh, 2003). In addition, Rossen (2017) stated that online tasks can often prove counter productive, requiring that students stay online an inordinate amount of time. Indeed, the sort of tasks teachers have their students perform need not differ from what teacher would have them in the classroom. They still need to go to libraries to perform the functions of sound research. They need to investigate phenomenon on their own. The difference lies in how they communicate what they have learned, how they talk to each other and how teachers talk to them. So, Hill (2018) recommended that one subject that is often overlooked for digital integration in instruction is English language class, specifically in the area of writing instruction.

When selecting and using online writing tasks, some guidelines should be taken into considerations; they should teach the writing process explicitly. They should increase students' awareness, promote noticing and contextualize writing instruction. In addition, they should provide guidance, use a task based learning framework and provide answers with concise explanations. Moreover, they integrate exchanges between learners and provide ongoing training and technical support (Arslanyilamz, 2012).

As a writer, student can engage with topic in two different ways. If s/he adopts a descriptive writing approach, s/he is providing information about the topic or subject s/he is writing about. Whilst this type of writing is needed to provide all the background information for the research, student also needs to use some critical or analytical writing to make sure that s/he shows additional skills. The English word criticism comes from the ancient Greek verb 'krinco' meaning to judge. Critical writing is not necessarily writing about the topic in a negative

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way .It is simply making sure that the writer has considered all sides of the argument to show his/her awareness of all the issues associated with the topic. The critical writing received its name because it requires its author to apply and demonstrate critical analysis while writing on a given topic(University of Cumbria , 2017).

Learning English aims to develop critical writing skills. So, critical writing learning inspires students to think critically and practise writing skills. They are directed to be able to express their own opinions based on logical thinking in the form of writing .In order to be able to express opinions ,students should inspire things that may have never been thought of before. They did not only know about a particular thing but also understand it. Students must consider the work from opinions about what they have read, and think about how the ideas are connected to the world in a larger way. Thus, critical writing can be seen when an individual has a different way of thinking that is different from the other(Valentin, Ananthi, and Muliasari, 2019).

With critical writing, students face challenge. It requires the ability to adopt diverse perspectives on the same topic .Students need to read, evaluate complex concepts and step outside of one's daily work to view what can be taken for granted assumption through a critical lens. In addition, they should identify key positive and negative aspects. They can evaluate their relevance and usefulness to the debate . Moreover, they should identify how best these aspects can be woven into the argument they are developing .They make comparisons between materials and analyze why something do not work. Furthermore, they apply their own judgments, make links between areas of knowledge and weigh up alternatives(Joan and Phil,2014).

Despite these challenges, the researcher agrees with the call for developing critical writing skill as it encourages the use of mind while writing. It creates and stimulates students' point of views to be able to make a decision. It highlights searching for information from different resources . So, the present study seeks to develop critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students.

Context of the Problem.

The researcher's awareness of the importance of developing critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students was emphasized through reviewing the Ministry of Education Egyptian Standards of Education . It was obvious that fostering the ability to think logically and

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writing critically about a range of topics and the ability to develop and form opinions about and comment on a range of subjects were the target goals of teaching English for those students.

On the other hand , the researcher noticed the negligence of teaching critical writing skills that led to weakness in students' performance in writing critically. Thus, to make sure of the existence of the problem the researcher did the following procedures

First : Interview

The researcher held informal interview with ten teachers of English in the secondary stage . It aimed at identifying teachers' knowledge of the following

- the importance of critical writing skills
- the critical writing skills that should be developed for 2nd year secondary school students
- the methods and strategies used for developing critical writing skills
- evaluation techniques of critical writing skill

The results of the interview revealed that teachers were not knowledgeable about the importance of developing critical writing skills . From their points of view, the critical writing skills that should be developed for 2nd year secondary school students are presenting their opinions with paying due attention to language, content and organization. Overall ,they stated that they did not have enough information about critical writing. Few of them mentioned that critical writing means writing about both positive and negative sides of a topic. As for the strategies and methods used for developing critical writing skills , teachers indicated that they use the regular instruction in teaching writing. They asked students to write a paragraph about specific topic. There is a need for devoting more time and adopting teaching strategies if students' critical writing skills were to be developed. Moreover, evaluation should be more than asking students to write a paragraph and correcting it in the regular way.

Second : Critical writing test

To be more sure, the researcher of the present study administered a critical writing skills test on 30, to the 2nd year students from Al Mosheer Ahmed Ismail secondary school. The test asked them to write a critical essay about woman's rights. As students did not know the difference between critical writing and descriptive writing, they wrote a

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descriptive paragraph without writing even their points of views .In addition, they did not use any resources to support the topic or raise argument although the researcher assured that it was a critical writing essay that needs many resources . Thus, the researcher 's feeling of the weakness of 2nd year secondary school students was emphasized .So, there was a pressing need to develop critical writing skills in English language for those students.

Third : Previous studies

Most of the recent studies such as : Abou Bakr(2016) and Ahmed (2018))showed that students could not express their own ideas in EFL writing and that this may be related to their low critical thinking skills. They recommended that teaching them critical thoughts in language learning can significantly foster their critical writing abilities and be a solution .

So, having been sure of the existence of the problem of the weakness of critical writing skills she felt, the researcher conducted this study in a trial of developing those skills for 2nd year secondary school students.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the present study is represented in the weakness of the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students . Thus, in a trial of overcoming this problem, the present study attempted to investigate the effect of using scaffolding with online tasks on developing those skills.

Questions of the Study

In order to tackle the above problem, the present study attempted to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of scaffolding with online tasks on developing the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students?

From the main question, the following three sub- questions were derived:

- 1- What are the required critical writing skills in English language that should be developed for 2nd year secondary school students?
- 2- What are the suggested techniques of the proposed framework for using scaffolding with online tasks to develop the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students?

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- 3- To what extent will the scaffolding with online tasks affect the development of each of the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students?

Hypotheses of the Study

The present study hypothesized that

- 1-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups' students on the post administration of the critical writing skills test, in favour of the experimental group
- 2-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the critical writing skills test , in favour of the post administration of the test
- 3-Scaffolding with online tasks is effective in developing each of the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students

Aim of the Study

The present study aimed at developing the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students through using scaffolding with online tasks.

Variables of the Study

The present study variables are as follows:

- 1-The independent variable : scaffolding with online tasks
- 2-the dependent variable : critical writing skills

In the present study , the researcher measured the effect of the independent variable (scaffolding with online tasks) on developing the dependent variable the (critical writing skills) for the 2nd year secondary school students.

Delimitations of the Study

The present study was confined to

- 1-62 students that were randomly selected of the 2nd year secondary school students as according to the specifications of Ministry of Education for secondary stage critical writing should be developed for those students and they need to express their points of views while writing
- 2-Following scaffolding with online tasks in teaching five units in academic textbook Hello English for Secondary Schools Year Two in the first term to give students chance to develop these skills

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3-Developing only the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students as determined by the study critical writing skills checklist see appendix 1.

Significance of the Study

The present study significance lies in the fact that it attempted to develop critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students. It is hoped that the results of the present study would contribute to

- 1-Providing language teachers, supervisors and curricula designers with a list of the required critical writing skills for the 2nd year secondary school students to be taken into consideration while planning and designing the activities and tasks in the curricula.
- 2-Drawing the attention to the importance of using online tasks in teaching English for secondary school students.
- 3-Broadening teacher's awareness of using scaffolding in EFL classroom in general and in developing critical writing in particular.
- 4-Presenting example of how to use and connect scaffolding with online tasks for developing students' critical writing

Definition of Terms

Scaffolding

Celce-Muria (2001 ,p10)defined the term scaffolding as the way in which a teacher or adult structures a learning task and uses dialogue to provide guidelines and clues that guide the learners' participation in the learning task. Learners can attain higher level of achievement and reach this higher level, two conditions must exist: the learner must be willing to try and the teacher must provide scaffold.

Scholand (2015, p22) defined scaffolding as the creation of support features that help an individual student or a group of students transition from tasks at which they are successful due to the successful procedural skill and development to tasks that are difficult for them to complete independently.

Jumaat and Tasir (2018, p43) reported another definition to scaffolding as it is a guidance or support from teachers or other knowledgeable persons that helps students to achieve the goals. It provides them with instructions slowly shifting the responsibility to them as they develop their own understanding and skills.

The researcher of the present study defined scaffolding as graduating the support and help of the teacher until students reach their goal. Learning starts with prior knowledge and ends with self rubric.

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Students are shifted from being dependent to independent learners practising critical writing skills .

Online tasks

Chun and Guofang(2011, p32) defined online tasks as holistic activities in which learners make use of the language and cross cultural and communicative resources to achieve some non linguistic outcome through stretching their linguistic interest based communication and digital literacy skills.

Online writing task was defined by Gauthier and Karsenli (2018, p25) as a computer assisted writing that allows students to contribute to writing tasks designed for various purposes.

The researcher of the present study defined online writing tasks as providing students with opportunities to practice critical writing skills online through activities .

Critical writing

It is an involvement in an academic debate. It requires a refusal to accept the conclusions of other writers without evaluating the arguments and evidence they provide (University of Leicester Development Center , 2013).

Smith (2007, p65) defined critical writing as the process of thinking in which one reviews all the available information and points of view about a particular issue on the basis of evidence, argument and conclusion

In the present study critical writing involves engaging in a debate . The participants express their points of views with evidence and a reasoned argument .It includes defending ideas with references and finalize the essay with adding a confident look and perspective. Students can be inspired things that have never been thought of before.

Theoretical Background

It is divided into three sections . The first section deals with scaffolding theory. The second one discusses online tasks while the third one involves critical writing skills . The following part will deal with them in more details.

Section 1 : Scaffolding Theory

The Nature of Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a teaching behaviour as it is contingent, collaborative and interactive. That is to say, it is contingent when an action depends on other actions. In addition , it is collaborative when the end result ,

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whether it is a conversation or the solution to a problem, is jointly achieved. Furthermore, it is interactive when it includes the activity of two or more students who are mutually engaged. For more elaboration, scaffolding can be thought of as three related pedagogical scales. First, there is the meaning of providing a supportive structure to enable certain activities and skills to develop. Second, there is the actual implementation of particular activities. Third, there is the assistance provided in moment interaction (Walqui, 2006).

On the other hand, the most common misconceptions about scaffolding are the following:

- 1-Scaffolding only means giving students small chunks of content, not too much at once.
- 2-The gradual release of responsibility has three steps I do, we do, you do.
- 3-Scaffolding takes too much time. There is no sufficient time to teach what teachers have to teach.
- 4-Students can not handle the freedom of working in pairs or small groups.
- 5-Teachers need to stay at each step until everyone is ready to move on. They do not want anyone to feel left out (Fisher and Frey, 2011).

Benefits

The importance of using scaffolding in teaching attracted the attention of many researchers. For example Van and Stuyf (2002) indicated that using scaffolding has great benefits in the learning process as it can help in

- 1-engaging students in working with low self esteem and learning disabilities to provide an opportunity for positive feedback to students,
 - 2- clarifying the purpose and giving clear step by step instruction,
 - 3-promoting cooperative as students are attuned to helping rather than competing and
 - 4-giving positive affective attitude and encouraging social relationship
- Hall (2008) added other benefits for scaffolding as follows:
- 1-challenging students through deep learning and discovery,
 - 2-engaging students in meaningful and dynamic discussion in small and large classes,
 - 3-motivating students to become better,
 - 4-increasing likelihood for students to meet instructional objectives,

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- 5-providing individualized instruction. So, it can benefit each learner
- 6-affording opportunity for peer teaching and learning,
- 7-being inclined for other learning situations, and
- 8-providing a welcoming and caring learning environment

Features of effective scaffolding

Walqui (2006) identified the following features for effective scaffolding :

- 1- Continuity :tasks are repeated , with variations and connected to one another,
- 2- Contextual support: exploration is encouraged in a safe and supportive environment . Access to means and goals is promoted in a variety of ways,
- 3- Inter subjectivity: mutual engagement and rapport are established ; there is encouragement and non threatening participation in a shared community of practice,
- 4- Contingency tasks: procedures are adjusted depending on actions of learners. Contributions and emotions are directed towards each other and may be constructed,
- 5- Handover / taker :there is an increasing role for the learner as the skills and confidence increase .The teacher guides and monitors his/her performance and
- 6- Flow : skills and challenges are in balance, participants are focused on the task and are ‘in tune’ with each other.

Forms of Scaffolding

Various studies highlighted the need to provide various forms of scaffolding to support instruction and performance on assessments. The different forms of scaffolding vary according to students’ needs and characteristics . Huynh (2017) identified three forms for scaffolding as follows:

1-Sensory scaffolding

It allows students to use their senses to understand abstract concept or learn new ideas. For most students, using visuals and manipulations is effective forms of sensory scaffolding. It contains images and gestures, illustrations, videos, films, models , figures , diagrams, drawing, pictures, photographs, demonstrations ,models, real life objects and physical activities.

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2-Interactive scaffolding

As much as human beings are visual learners , they are social learners too. This is why in addition to sensory support educators should integrate social interaction into the lesson plan . For English language students, social scaffolding is a sufficient opportunity to use language for meaningful purposes. It includes pairs, small groups , using home language with coach or mentor , conferences, interviews and discussions with the internet.

3- Graphic scaffolding

Scaffolding using graphic means teaching through charts, tables and graphic organizers. They are effective when teachers need to communicate highly abstract concepts or show the relationship between things in a phenomenon .It includes charts, tables, graphs, timeline, number line and information graphics .

The researcher used the three forms of scaffolding while designing the framework as it involves visual aids , graphic and work in pairs and groups

ZPD and Scaffolding

The zone of proximal development (ZPD)can be described as the difference between what a learner can do independently and what can be accomplished with the help of a more knowledgeable other. This concept is critical for understanding how to scaffold learning . the more knowledgeable who can be adult or peer ,shares knowledge with the learner to bridge the gap between what is known and what is not known. When the learner has expanded his/ her knowledge, the actual developmental level has been increased and the zone of proximal development has shifted upward. In other words , the zone of proximal development is ever changing as the learner validities and extends knowledge .In fact, it is only within the ZPD that scaffolding can occur(Alber, 2014).

Some scaffolding in the various zones are

Zone 1: Conceptual scaffolding by an expert.

The teacher is an expert who seeks to get students to bring to bear

their content knowledge in a learning situation relating to a gradient.

Zone 2: Heuristic scaffolding by an expert.

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The teacher interacts with a group of students trying to find the answer to

a problem that s/he poses to the class .

Zone 3: Conceptual scaffolding in the situation of reciprocal scaffolding.

Two students work together on a problem posed by the teacher to the class.

Zone 4: Heuristic scaffolding in a reciprocal scaffolding situation.

A group of students works on a problem posed by the teacher to the class.

Zone 5: Conceptual scaffolding by self scaffolder

Learner recounts his/her thoughts while solving a problem.

Zone 6: Heuristic scaffolding by a self scaffolder

Learner describes his/her thoughts in terms that were less content specific and more related to generic strategies.(Khare,2018)

Elements of scaffolding

Scaffolding can be analyzed for application through six general elements as follows:

1-Sharing a special goal : Although it is the instructor's responsibility to establish a shared goal, the learner's interests should be considered through inter subjectivity, the sharing of intentions, perceptions, feelings and conceptions and assessing the goal in terms of student's prior knowledge.

2-Whole task approach : The whole task approach spotlights the overall goal to be attained through the learning task. This task is conceptualized as a whole instead of defined by the elements that make it up

3-Immediate availability of help: Student's experience becomes far less discouragement and frustration if teachers help them proceed with the learning process.

4-Intention assisting: Inherent in the scaffolding process is the act of understanding a student's present focus (another way to view the zone of proximal development). In order to provide an optimally productive learning environment, educators must relate and confer information according to students' own current intentions.

5-Optimal level of help: The learner should be given enough guidance to overcome the current obstacle. So, the instructor should only offer guidance through the areas of a task that the student can not accomplish his/her own.

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6-Conveying an expert model : A task can be demonstrated with an expert model either explicitly or implicitly. In an explicit demonstration, the expert model clearly conveys how to accomplish the task. In an implicit demonstration, the information is outlined around the expert model (Pinantoan, 2013).

Reality of scaffolding

Maltiluck(2016) mentioned that teacher's **reality** influences the scaffolding s/he creates as follows:

1- **R**: Reframing thinking

Creating scaffolding begins with knowing where students are .
Teacher

asks him/ herself what is new in the standard than what s/he has taught before. Teacher also asks what concept students need to relearn.

2- **E**: Evaluating students' needs

While designing scaffolding, teacher should also know the learning needs of his/her students and where they usually struggle.

3- **A** : Analyzing the big picture

Before creating scaffolding , teacher should reread the progression document to understand the development of the subject , standards , contents and tasks.

4- **L**: Lesson study

Scaffolding begins with examples , exercises and work through problem set tasks.

5- **I** :Instructional planning

This is where planning for creating. Thus, the creation of additional problems in a lesson should be strategic.

6- **T**:Teach for learning

This is where teachers engage , comment, discuss, give immediate and accurate feedback and assessment while still being flexible and responsive to the needs of students.

7-**Y**: Your reflection

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Teacher informs the decisions. Reflection gives him / her the opportunity to

build into his / her strengths. It positions him/ her to support others as s/he is

building scaffolding.

Principles of scaffolding

According to Khare (2018), scaffolding principles are

1-recruiting of the learner 's interest in the task as it is defined by the tutor,

2-reducing the number of steps required to solve a problem by simplifying the

task. So, the learner can manage components of the process,

3-maintaining the pursuit of the goal, through motivation of the learner and

direction of the activity,

4-making critical features of discrepancies between what the learner has produced and the ideal solution,

5-controlling frustration and risk and

6-demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed.

Structure of scaffold instruction

The structure of scaffolding can be as follows:-

First: The instructor does it .

The instructor models how to perform a new or difficult task such as how to use a graphic organizer .

Second : The class does it.

The instructor and students then work together to perform the task .Students may suggest information to be added to the graphic organizer.

Third :The group does it .

Students work with a partner or small cooperative group to complete the task.

Fourth :The individual does it.

This is the independent practice stage where individual students can demonstrate their task mastery(Larkin, 2002).

Support in scaffolding

The purpose of teacher who uses scaffolding is not only to help student acquire new knowledge ,but also to provide him/ her with such assistance and support. Thus, the type of support and challenge in

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scaffolding that teacher chooses to offer is basic in the extension of students' understanding. Support and challenge may be combined in the following ways

- 1- High challenge -low support: it might be interesting for students but can lead to their frustration . They are not able to understand or do a task.
- 2- Low challenge- low support : it makes students be bored and unmotivated. They will probably learn little.
- 3- Low challenge - high support : may be easy and enjoyable to the students but they do not learn a lot.
- 4- High challenge- high support: most learning takes place(Milne, 2011).

Strategies of instructional scaffolding

There are many strategies of instructional scaffolding to be used with English students as Walqui (2006) and Loewen(2018)stated in the following :

1-Modeling

Students need to be given clear examples of what is requested of them for imitation. Models for English learners may serve not only to set performance guidance but also to encourage and stimulate students by the evidence of past students ' progress in accomplishments of similar tasks.

2-Bridging

Students will only be able to learn new concepts and language when they are built on previous knowledge and understanding. A common bridging approach is based on activating students' prior knowledge. Comprehension is widely understood to require the weaving of new information into existing mental structures.

3-Contextualizing

It includes embedding the language in a sensory context by using manipulations. A few minutes of film can make language accessible and engage students.

4-Schema building

Schema is based on how to organize knowledge and understanding .If understanding is a matter of weaving new information into pre existing structures of meaning , then it becomes indispensable for teachers to help learners see these connections through a variety of activities.

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5-Re presenting text

It involves engaging students in activities that require the transformation of linguistic constructions . They modeled in one genre into forms used in another genre.

6-Developing meta cognition

Scaffolding and metacognition draw upon the same set of actions . The outward signs of scaffolding in a learning environment are equivalent to those used by the individual when engaging in meta cognition. The external dialogue of scaffolding becomes the inner dialogue of metacognition , The tutor serves the learner as a vicarious form of conscious and control. In this situation, the expert is acting as an external brain to provide the consciousness and control .

Steps of teaching with scaffolding

The followings are the teaching steps of scaffolding to be implemented in the classroom

Zurek(2014)stated the following steps for carrying out scaffolding in classroom

- 1-Determining time and the approach by subject: Timing is crucial with scaffolding. If students do not feel supported and encouraged through complex topics, they will get frustrated.
- 2-Finding a great visual or visualization: Using visualization in scaffolding is a technique that allows teachers to model the nuances of complex topics
- 3- Using visualizations and visuals as an opportunity for discussion: Once teachers use visuals for the topic, they can create discussions among the students .
- 4-Moving to an individualistic approach: It is Important for teacher to read the students' needs and tailor his/ her teaching to accommodate each student's needs .Personal background can offer students a chance to share personal experiences and expand how other students relate to the material.
- 5-Emphasizing errors : Teachers encourage students to see that errors are a way to learn . They will approach mistakes as an opportunity to better understand the material .

Khare (2018) identified the phases of teaching scaffolding as follows:

- 1-Modeling: teaching behavior that shows how one should think ,feel and act

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within a given situation.

2-Application: allowing students to practise the skill that teacher modeled .

Teacher assesses student's understanding by noting errors, observing performance and providing feedback.

3-Scaffold fading: providing progressively less assistant to student as s/he begins to master the concept.

4-Student's achievement of mastery : student has achieved the target goal as scaffold is not longer needed.

Reviewing the above stages, the researcher attempted to focus on the underlying idea of scaffolding phases and create her own steps using different scaffolding strategies in the experiment.

Scaffolding and Assessment

Scaffolding for second language learners should not be limited to scaffolding instruction only, but should also include the scaffolding of assessments . The assessment does not look the same for all students as they can demonstrate what they know and can do in varied ways. In scaffolding, an assessment for students at the beginning levels of English proficiency may be to demonstrate their understanding of content through non verbal assessments such as picture sorts. Where students at higher levels of proficiency may benefit from using sentence stems or frames to complete an assessment. As with scaffolding instruction, as students gain proficiency , teachers can gradually release scaffolding support on classroom based assessments (Shepard, 2005 and Black and William 2004).

From a sociocultural learning theory and Vygotsky's ZPD, scaffolding like formative assessment is a collaborative process and involves negotiation of meaning between teachers and learners about expectations and how best improve performance. Formative assessment is a dynamic process in which supports help learners move from what they already know to what they are able to do next using their zone of proximal development. As for scaffolding, teacher supports students until they can . Thus, teacher uses scaffolding and formative assessment to move learning forward in the ZPD(Shepard, 2005).

Challenges

Scaffolding implementation has faced many challenges as follows:

1-Planning and implementing scaffolds is time consuming and demanding.

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- 2-Selecting appropriate scaffolding that matches the diverse learning and communication styles of students .
- 3-Knowing when to remove the scaffold so that student does not rely on the support.
- 4-Failing to know students well about their cognitive and affective abilities to provide appropriate scaffolds for different reasons ; time , confidence , reading level (Hall ,2008)

Van, and Stuyf (2002)mentioned other challenges that should be overcome to carry out scaffolding as follows:

- 1-Potential for misjudging the ZPD because success is based on identifying the area that is just beyond but not too far beyond students' abilities
- 2-Need for appropriate modeling for the desired behaviours and activities because if the teacher has not fully considered the individual students' needs, interests and abilities , the scaffolds will not help.
- 3-Need to give up control as fading occurs. Teacher allows students to make errors because scaffolds are not intended to be permanent. This may be difficult for teachers to do,
- 4-Lack of specific examples and tips in teacher's editions of textbooks. Teacher's manuals and curriculum guides do not include examples of scaffolds or outlines of scaffolding methods that would be appropriate for the specific lesson content.
- 5-Implementation of individualized scaffolds in a classroom with a large number of students would be challenging
- 6-Without properly training, a teacher may not properly implement scaffolding instruction

In the present study, the researcher attempted to overcome these challenges by using various techniques to meet the challenge of diversity of students in ZPD.

In addition, the researcher Used different types of support ; identifying and giving resources, modeling a task and giving advice.

Second Section : Online based learning tasks

Task based learning has its foundations in a range of learning theories including information processing, input processing and neo Vygtskian socio cultural theory. The approach has strong affiliations with constructivist theories of learning and advocates a teaching methodology that aligns with communicative language teaching .It emphasizes the

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need to work through tasks with others in order to achieve outcomes with perceived real world relevance and application . A primary focus is on meaning making , which links to knowledge being socially constructed through meaningful engagement with others(Harji and Tanchain,2017).

The nature of online task based learning

The current advocacy of task based learning and the increasing use of technology in language teaching highlights the importance of developing a fuller understanding of how to design tasks for use with different technologies .it focuses on how best to implement the tasks in ways that foster language learning and how learners construct tasks in technological environments(Thomas and Reinders,2010)

The introduction of technology into task based learning context provides more resources for task performance , encourages learners to exercise agency , enacts, identities and fosters learners' digital literacy development . However, despite the fact that online task based learning is introduced as powerful language pedagogy , there appears to be limited studies that focus on the effect of technology enhanced task based approach on students' EFL development. The role of online task based learning is to provide learners to use language contextually through situation tasks .Students are asked to perform various tasks that require the use of language skills laboratory materials with internet access (Harji and Tanchain,2017)

Benefits of online tasks

Using online tasks facilitates students' learning through the following :

- 1- Enhancing the authenticity of tasks and motivation for tasks implementation,
- 2- Facilitating student's ownership and agency in the tasks,
- 3- Providing convenient venues for follow up post task work that can help students enhance their language and culture knowledge,
- 4- Offering students' choices and fostering community in learning(Chun and Guafang ,2011).

As for the benefits of online writing tasks , some studies attempted to highlight them as follows:

Arslanyilamz(2012) stated that online writing tasks provide EFL students with extension activities and additional opportunities for practicing writing. It helps students acquire writing skills in English .In addition,Al Jarf(2017) mentioned that through online writing tasks, students can access and perform tasks any time at their own convenience.

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They are in charge of their own learning as they learn independently. So, they are able to express their needs and follow up their own progress. Also, students of different levels can share and interact together.

Teach Thought Staff (2017) mentioned the following benefits for teaching writing with online tasks :

1-Alignments with writing standard Learning does not happen unless students

have specific skills and improvement goals they are trying to achieve

2-Timely relevant feedback

With online tasks, students can request feedback as frequently as they want

3-Opportunities to differentiate instruction

Teacher can use and have a way to differentiate instruction for every student.

4-Creating new ways to engage students

Gouthier and Karsenli (2018) mentioned that online writing tasks allow students to contribute to writing tasks designed for various purposes . In addition, some of the key impacts are improved; overall writing quality , more time spent writing and greater motivation . It can improve feelings of self efficacy and the promotion of critical thinking . Besides, reader's awareness towards writing can be developed. Also, Colling (2019) stated that online writing tasks have many advantages in foreign language classroom as they lead to independent study so students can learn at their own pace. In addition, they present exclusive information, learning materials and learning with others. So, students can learn quickly and build new relationships.

Criteria for online tasks

Zeigler(2016) identified the criteria for selecting online tasks as follows:

1-The primary focus is on meaning : Learning is focused on the content , including semantic and pragmatic meanings rather than the form

2-Goal orientation is necessary: The task must provide communicativepurpose stimulated by learners' need to impart information, express opinions and solve problems

3-The task should be learner centered : It requires students to draw their attention mainly on their own linguistic and non linguistic resources in addition to their digital skills.

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- 4-Tasks are authentic and representative of the real world : Tasks are based on real world processes of language use and integrating form and function.
- 5-Opportunities for reflective learning are also provided: Learners are provided with chance not only to learn by doing , but to consider the process as well as the outcome, encouraging cyclical and reflective learning.

Principles of online tasks instruction

Generally,there are several principles of online tasks .Field and Field (2017)found five important principles underlying the creation of online tasks as follows:

- 1-Tasks should be between human beings
- 2-Teachers should have a reason for communication eg share information ,opinions and values
- 3-Tasks should have a purpose and closure in an end point. Communication should achieve something
- 4-Tasks should involve two way participants .Members should both take account of each other's contributions and contribute themselves.
- 5-Tasks should include a range of interaction and task types

Specifically, Zamparini(2018) stated that online writing tasks are based on definite principles such as:

- 1- Focus on writing and not on technology orientation or teaching students how to use learning and other technologies.
- 2- Appropriate composition teaching/ learning strategies should be developed for the unique features of the online instructional environment .Teachers should rethink and reshape their teaching strategies toward a new approach. It is based on the opportunities and benefits provided by the new environment.
- 3- Students should be prepared by the institution and their teachers for the unique technological and pedagogical components.
- 4- Online writing teachers and their institutions should develop personalized and interpersonal online communities to foster students ' success.

Types of online tasks

According to Belin (2019) ,it is important to have a variety of online task types to cater for learner' s performance and for different language use. The task types were outlined to include the following:

- 1- Factual : it includes sharing information on factual topics

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- 2- Critical : it involves exchange of opinions
- 3- Personal : it is based on an exchange of personal information
- 4- Fanciful : it involves entering into an imagery scenario as roleplay
- 5- Creative : it focuses on the creation of a story or a poem.

On another aspect , Timlinson(2001) agreed with Al Jarf (2017) that the various types for online writing tasks are the following :

1-Online self assessment : Websites should provide pre- and post-instruction self assessment, accommodate the different proficiency levels ,help students

diagnose their weaknesses and enable them to assess their mastery of a specific writing task.

2-Error correction tasks : involve correcting sentences , correct mistakes and correct word order.

3-Production tasks : include combining reading and writing tasks such as reading a short story or writing a summary.

4-Leveling up tasks : mean practicing the language in an online language learning community . Group of two or more students exchanges their knowledge of language and helps each other practise a foreign language.

5-Differentiation tasks: Teacher creates an environment that is structured and positive for each student .When grading students ‘ paragraphs, the instructor can focus on strong points and areas of improvement in each student .S/he can

point out one or two weaknesses for each student to work on , starting with the

simplest to more complex ones, depending on the student’s competency level.

Arslanyilamz(2012) also stated the following online writing tasks

- 1- Sentence writing skills ; involving run on sentences, simple, complex , periodic loose ,balanced sentences and parallel structure.
- 2- Paragraph writing skills; including writing topic sentences, supporting details, concluding sentences, types of paragraph, coherence and cohesion , and using transitional words and phrases.
- 3- Essay writing skills; dealing with the thesis statement, introductory paragraph , concluding paragraph and classification essays.
- 4- Writing mechanics; containing grammatical structures such as parts of speech, subject verb agreement ,use of idioms, spelling changes and spelling variants

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Designing online tasks

Centre for Teaching Excellence (2019) revealed that there are many questions that should be posed before designing and implementing online tasks. They can help teachers think about the objectives of the online tasks, the most appropriate technology for building them and how students receive feedback and be assessed on their learning and work. The questions can be

- 1-What is the objective or intended learning outcome of this task?
- 2-How long should the learning take? This depends on the objective or intended learning outcome of this task.
- 3-Will the task be individual, collaborate or both? Although teachers tend to manage students working alone at their computers, students often tackle their online tasks in pairs or trios. So, two or three heads can be better than one.
- 4-Which media or technology should be used? The overwhelming range of tools and media options available can make it challenging to choose how to best design and deliver an online task.
- 5-How will the learners get feedback on what they have learned? When providing individual feedback is impractical, modern answers or links to helpful resources can be provided automatically and immediately.
- 6-How will be the learning assessed? Both formative and summative assessment can be part of a learning task depending on the objective or intended learning outcome of this task.
- 7-How will teachers provide students to participate in the task? If the task is perceived as valuable to students and integrated into the course, students will be more motivated to do the task.
- 8-How will the learners communicate with each other and ask the instructor questions? Providing opportunities for students to ask questions about the learning task in class or through online frequently discussion boards can help create a supportive environment for learning to take place.

On the other hand, there are many tips that should be followed to improve online writing as follows:

- 1-Understanding the writing style expectations for each type of online assignments; students' ability to write appropriately for the assignment context will positively influence their class performance.

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2-Considering the use of one device in one place , exclusively for academic writing; compartmentalizing class work to a device and location can help students focus on academic writing.

4-Actively scheduling time to write for an online class ; it is important to limit the time for implementing online writing tasks.

5-If the class allows, someone would trust proofread written work. When having written work proofed ,it is key to finish the draft in enough time to receive feedback. At minimum, students should complete their writing with enough time to re read it multiple times prior to the submission deadline (Fuster, 2016).

Instructional stages

Some researchers attempted to identify the teaching steps of online tasks.

Yeh(2003) used the following steps for implementing online tasks :

Stage 1 : Pre online chat It includes short lecture and discussion to gather students ‘ opinions about the topic.

Stage 2: Voice conference with students It involves introducing the topic . Students take turns in asking questions or posting their comments and opinions.

Stage 3: Offline post chat activity

It contains asking students to reflect and think of a situation that they have experienced . Students also are asked to plan and write . he written work can be printed out or uploaded in the class yahoo

Solman (2003) presented the five stage model for scaffolding during online collaborative learning tasks as follows:

1-Acess and motivation ; include setting up the system, accessing ,welcoming

and encouraging students to work actively.

2-Online socialization ; involves sending and receiving message , familiarizing

and providing bridges between cultural, social and learning environment.

3-Information exchange ; contains searching , personalizing software,facilitating

tasks and supporting the use of learning materials.

4-Knowledge construction; includes conferencing and facilitating process.

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5-Development ; deals with supporting , responding and providing links outside closed conference.

As for online writing tasks ,Al Jarf (2017) identified the following steps:

1-Oriantation :instruction can proceed in the following steps

- Introducing students to the online course or online discussion
- Posting a sample website or task and showing students what they are supposed to do, how and where to respond.
- Telling students what is expected of them
- Showing students how they can search google for writing websites targeting writing by selecting specific search terms.

2- Pre task phase:

Teacher checks the websites and sets goals for a particular task and introduces the websites and the writing skill . S/ he posts written instructions on how to perform the task and tells students what they need to do and focus on.

3-Task phase :

Students perform the tasks on their own before or after a class session . They can be performed individually ,in pairs or in groups . They can be performed interactively or collaboratively synchronously or asynchronously . Students post their written output online. To help students make most of online tasks , they should do interactive exercises in which they take an active role. While doing the task, students should be required to engage and participate , respond to and be actively involved in the task

4- Post task phase

Student discusses and comments on each other's paragraphs and essays . S/ he can clarify or help with problematic areas in student's writing. S/ he can perform post instruction assessment tasks.

Role of Instructor

There is a belief that teacher's role is not important in teaching online tasks. But ,s/he is the key to put knowledge , technology and for students (Santos, 2018). Teacher has four main roles as follows:

- 1- Pedagogical role : creating discussions that focus energy on critical concepts, principles and skills
- 2- Social role : fostering a friendly social environment to promote learning and sharing

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- 3- Managerial role : clarifying discussion, objectives ,time and procedural rules
- 4- Technical role : making students comfortable with the learning management system ,tools and software (Berge2018).

Rossen (2017) stated that teachers should fashion tasks that emphasize student collaboration and de- emphasize the traditional role of the instructor . That is to say they are the central figure in the pedagogical play. They also try to provide rules and protocols that facilitate learning . They find ways to give students the benefits of their expertise and guidance. So, Al Jarf (2017) as stated the instructor serves as a facilitator .His/her guidance is crucial in facilitating the use of online tasks to improve students‘ writing skills. S/he creates a positive and supportive online learning environment that is secure for making mistakes while writing.S/he praises good performances and encourages the inadequate one. S/he stimulates students to respond to and comment on each other’s paragraphs or essays. S/he encourages error correction by peers and responds to students’ needs .

Disadvantages

Online writing tasks instruction has numerous disadvantages such as the following

- 1- Lack of personal touch of classroom writing instruction
- 2- Students can not have face to face interactions with fellow writers
- 3- Having no instructor feedback in classroom
- 4- Stopping students and teachers talk to each other about the subject.

Students need to ask teacher questions to understand the material .They also need to talk about the topic to help them remember and fully understand it(Colling, 2019).

Challenges

Following the advent of technology enhanced learning in language teaching, a number of challenges have been identified . Key areas that relate directly to task based learning principles include participation, group dynamics , negotiation of meaning during interaction and questions regarding focus on form components. All these challenges can negatively affect online tasks in task based learning(Veson,2015) .

Task based learning calls for teachers and students to forget where they are and why they are there and the difficulty of classroom nature and environment. Other challenges are laid on student’s passive learning

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styles and overreliance on teachers which weaken the implantation of the tasks in sociocultural contexts . In addition ,the crowded and cramped classrooms, mixed proficiency levels in classrooms and students' avoidance of the use of the target language in fulfilling the communicative tasks are obstacles that hinder online tasks. Besides, online tasks require self discipline which is hardly available for all students Blockchain(2019).

Despite teachers' positive perspectives, few of them prefer to apply using online task based learning . Moreover, there are teachers who deny the potential of computer and its companion. So., it is vital to overcome factors that have held teachers back from implementing online task based learning and training them on using software and online tools

.Third : Critical writing

The nature of critical writing

Since early 1980, a number of alternative approaches to the study of human beings have emerged, such as critical psychology, discursive psychology, deconstruction and post structuralism. The idea behind these approaches is “ a critical stance toward taken for granted ways of understanding the world and human being”. This idea is now often referred as social constructionism and opposes to what is known as positivism and empiricism (Abegglen, Burns and Sinfield, 2016).

The English word criticism comes from the ancient Greek verb ‘krinco’ meaning to judge . A critic therefore in Greek was a judge who made decision. Thus, writing critically means actually thinking about what a piece of literature means and finding a way to express what it says. So, students must consider the word from opinions about what they have read, and think about how the ideas in the work connect to the world. In addition , they should provide analysis of specific points and explain how the events (quotes, actions , examples) demonstrate themes and ideas (Fuller, 2018).

Critical writing and thinking

Critical writing can lead to better critical thinking . Writing can enhance critical thinking because critical writing process requires an individual to make his / her ideas explicit to a given audience. S/he should evaluate among tools the most necessary one for effective communication. When writing, there is an opportunity to think through argument. It cultivates an awareness of a given perspective and allows for an examination of the validity for consolidation of concepts , ideas ,

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facts and opinions. When critically writing, knowledge is restricted, and complex problems can be worked together (Quitadamo & Kurt, 2007).

On the other hand, critical writing depends on critical thinking. Students' writing involves reflection on written texts through critical reading. So, their critical reading of a text and thinking about it enables them to make the argument. They make judgments and interpretation of ideas, argument and claims of others presented in the text they read (Goldrick, 2016). In addition, critical writing inspires students to think critically. They are directed to be able to express their own opinion based on logical thinking in the form of writing. So, students can inspire things that may have never been thought of before. Students do not only know about a particular thing but also understand about it. Thus, critical writing can be seen when a person can have a different way of thinking from the other (Valentin, Ananthi, and Muliasari, 2018).

Critical writing and Essay critique

There is interpretation and interference between critical writing essay (the target of the present study) and essay critique. So, the difference between them will be discussed and elaborated clearly in more details in the following:

Critical writing essay usually expresses either a positive or a negative point of view of a particular topic or a subject. On the other hand, essay critique evaluates an essay after reading it and is a sort of feedback to the author of the essay. Although they have few similarities, they are different in

- 1-While writing a critical essay, the writer has to research to find facts and examples associated with the subject to form an opinion on the subject and thereby have a strong point of view on the subject. As for critiquing essay, one of the main sources of information is the essay itself since writers have to read it repeatedly with great attention to details to form an opinion and provide feedback to him/her. It examines the argument in a text, the rhetorical strategies used, the use of logical fallacies and evaluation of the quality of the argument (Mohsene 2018)
- 2-In writing a critical essay, writers have the flexibility to choose a topic of their interest, but in essay critique there is limited opportunity of choosing the topic.

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- 3-A critical essay uses facts and examples to support the writer's point of view , whereas a critique essay allows direct commenting on the essay being critiqued.
- 4-When writing a critical essay ,the writers have to make sure that the essay's thesis statement is clear and is mentioned in the introduction of the essay. They should be more generous while analyzing the essay and statements that they focus on the point of view that the author expressed throughout the essay(Bestcustom writing ,2012).

Characteristics of effective Critical Writing

Cottrell (2003) identified characteristics for influenced critical writing as follows:

- 1- identifying the significant points of what happened,
- 2- evaluating the strengths and weaknesses attributed to something,
- 3- evaluating certain information against other research and the theories that are prevalent with the topic area,
- 4- discussing the relevance of theory in relation to the topic,
- 5- identifying exactly why the methods are useful for the certain type of research aims and questions.
- 6- clearly identifying outside effects.
- 7- critically comparing and contrasting each theory ; which one is the most relevant to the research and essay question.
- 8- drawing well defined and concise conclusion that reflects and summarizes the content of the essay and argument, and
- 9- clearly developing the link between each theory considering the effect of this understanding on the topic area .

Cottrell (2011) indicated that the characteristics of good critical writing are

- 1-Content: background information/ description is minimal. It analyses the evidence presented by expert writers and uses the it to build argument.
- 2-Selection of points: A good critical writer knows which aspects of the topic are the most debated and cover the range of opinions. This relies on critical reading of the correct sources.
- 3-Clarity of language: Points should be presented clearly and obviously so that the reader can understand the significance. Good writers should check their writing several times through editing their products.

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- 4-Structure: Students discuss similar viewpoints and analyze them before looking at alternative viewpoints. This is more logical for the reader.
- 5-Linking of points : Critical writing is planned out well so that the most important points stand out clearly.

Features of critical writing

The most characteristic features of critical writing are the following:

- 1-A clear and confident refusal to accept the conclusion of other writers without evaluating the arguments and evidence that they provide.
 - 2-A balanced presentation of reasons why the conclusions of other writers may be accepted or may need to be treated with caution.
 - 3- A clear presentation evidence and argument , leading to conclusion.
 - 4-A recognition of the limitations in evidence argument and conclusion.
- (wwwSunny dutches 2016)

Richards and Jack(2016) added other features of critical writing as follows:

- 1-Writer must be open minded and objective.
- 2-Disputing findings : presenting balance arguments with reasons as to why students agree or disagree with the conclusions of other writers.
- 3-Providing alternative approaches .
- 4-Avoiding quotations without showing how they are related to the research.

Reflection stages of critical writing

Zewcryn (2002) stated that reflection is the main basic of critical writing as reflection involves the following :

- 1- Description: It includes What is the stimulant for reflection? What are they going to reflect?
- 2- Feelings : It involves What are their reactions and feelings?
- 3- Evaluation: It deals with What is good and bad about the experience? They should make value judgments.
- 4- Analysis : What sense can they make of the situation? They should bring ideas from the outside experience to help them know ;What is really going on?
- 5- Conclusion: It contains What can be concluded in general sense from these experiences and the analysis they have undertaken.
- 6- Personal action plans: It includes What are they going to do differently in this type of situation next time ?What steps are they going to take on the basis of what they have learned?

Critical writing skills

Developing critical writing skills not only improves students' thinking skills but leads students to write better essays that include the following critical writing skills:

- 1- identifying issues and assumptions
- 2- recognizing important relationships
- 3- evaluating evidence or authority
- 4- making correct inferences
- 5- deducing conclusions (Abegglen , Burns, and Sinfield, 2016)

When students use critical writing , they need to

- 1- organize and evaluate evidence
- 2- make comparisons between materials
- 3- analyze why something did not work
- 4- apply their own judgments
- 5- make links between areas of knowledge
- 6- weigh up alternatives (Academic Skills Center2015)

Standard 4 critical writing stated the following as the critical writing skills

- 1- Introducing precise , informed claims and distinguishing them from alternative or opposing claims.
- 2- Organizing claims and evidences in a way that provide a logical sequence for entire argument.
- 3- Providing the most relevant evidence to develop balanced arguments using credible resources.
- 4- Using words , phrases , clauses and varied syntax to connect all parts of argument and creating cohesion .
- 5- Including a concluding statement that follows logically from the information presented and supports the argument(<http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites> 2017).

Components of critical writing

Critical writing should include

- 1- Finding academic voice: When students engage in critical writing , they are developing the academic voice. A claim is a writer's voice as it indicates the writer's viewpoints. Students need to use academic language for reporting and connecting ideas .
- 2- Stringing together of quotes: It is important to interpret the quotes to the readers and to explain their relevance , discuss their validity and show how they relate to other evidence.

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- 3- Strategic use of paragraphs : A paragraph break can provide a brief pause for readers within a longer argument , giving them the opportunity to make sure they are keeping with reasoning process.
- 4- It is worth telling why students describe some evidences relevant to the argument .They need to explain to the reader why it is relevant. The logic of explanation contributes to the critical component of their writing.
- 5- Line of argument : For maximum effectiveness, students' product of writing needs to have a line of argument running through it from the introduction to the conclusion . The aim is to lead the readers carefully through the thread of argument.
- 6- Using citations verbs: Students can use citations verbs to introduce information into the text such as : state, argue , claim and point out. The choices of the citation verb reflects students' attitudes to the information they are using (Wellington 2005) and University of Leicester2009).

Structure of critical writing

According to Abegglen, Burns and Sinfield (2016) ,the structure of critical writing can be broken into five sections in order as follows:

- 1-Introduction: The final sentence provides room for including the thesis.
- 2-Main body /thesis : it includes description of theory , background information , analysis of evidence and evaluation of what it all means. The thesis should both define the scope and make an arguable claim.
- 3-A summary of relevant parts of the text being studied : The purpose of the summary is not to restate the text only pertinent passages or features should be included . The primary aim is to provide the evidence that will be used to form the argument.
- 4-An argument: It uses the text and supports the thesis . The argument forms the largest portion of the critical analysis , comprising at least several paragraphs . Each paragraph should make a specific point and only one point that advances the argument.
- 5- Conclusions: There are several approaches to write a conclusion. It may summarize the main points , explain how the thesis affects the reader, call the reader to an action or present a new question that the essay raises.

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In addition, Sonima(2017) stated that the five parts for a critical writing essay are the following :

1-Introduction : informs the audience of the topic of discussion in advance . According to the topic , there are different types of introduction as follows:

a- Introduction inquisitive : introduces the topic through questions

b-Introduction paradoxical : presents the topic through using contradictory statements to arouse the curiosity of the audience.

b- Introduction preparatory : is unusual mode of developing the topic.

c- Introduction corrective : is used by correcting the wrong notions regarding that topic.

d- Introduction narrative : deals with how to introduce a story

2-Statement of fact: it tells the audience the circumstances needed for understanding the topic. It must be simple and easy to understand.

3-Confirmation : This is the main part of critical writing in which the main

argument is presented and proven. The arguments must be arranged in the increasing order of their strengths .

4-Refutation: Writers try to break the arguments that are against the argument that they want to establish. If an opposite argument is received well before presenting an argument, it is better to present refutation before confirmation.

5-Conclusion: According to Aristotle, conclusion should restate facts and

arguments, inspire through one's character (ethos) .In addition, it can weaken the opponents arguments and rouse appropriate emotions in readers or listeners. This emotional appeal is the strongest part of a conclusion.

Stages of good critical writing essay

Baherjee (2016) stated that the different stages that needed to go through to write a good critical essay are the following ;

1- Decoding the essay title : Students should clarify the title with their teacher. The title contains basic instructions as students should ask themselves how the title relates to the module they study and already know.

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- 2- Planning the essay: Planning starts with understanding the task, the number of words students have to write and what direction they are going to take. It should include the structure of critical writing.
- 3- Researching the subject : Students develop lines of inquiry through reading generally and widely. They write lists of questions for themselves about what they read to help them select data from different resources.
- 4- Structuring the essay : It comes from their plan and helps them elaborate the argument . Students should take time on planning and structuring the essay, so they will find writing it straight forward.
- 5- Developing arguments : The argument is the statement of what students think about the questions they have been set. It is the heart of the essay . It determines the structure , evidence, reasoning and quotations.
- 6- Introducing counter arguments: Students' argument is stronger when they acknowledge other points of view and explain they are not persuaded by them. They should use good references to support their views.
- 7- Using relevant evidence: The quality of evidence students have in their essay depends on how well they have managed their reading and note taking. The way they present their evidence depends on the quality of their plan.
- 8- Developing academic writing style: Students' style should reflect the reasoned and objective tone of their argument .They are trying to persuade their reader. They can be formal and clear at the same time . As they write and read more, they will develop their own style.
- 9- Finding out how to present the work: Students should be given style guide that sets how the school expects them to present their work.

Tips for preparing and improving critical writing

Preparing for critical writing requires to consider the following:

- 1-The audience: Identifying the audience is the first step on critical writing after deciding on the topic.
- 2-Selection of data from different resources: It involves selecting the sources

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from where the writers gather information . This includes the knowledge of how to evaluate various sources of information . While selecting resources, writers must not allow personal interests. So , what the writer writes is more important than how much s/he writes.

3-Sequencing of arguments: The selected arguments are to be organized

properly . In building an argument, students not only summarize and paraphrase what the experts say but also note down their thoughts.Thus,

they use this evidence to prove what they believe. Building an argument is called a line of reasoning . When they recognize a line of reasoning , they evaluate it. This is what the teachers want them to do when they read and make notes. They can then decide how to use them in their writing (Sonima 2017).

The following five simple tips are recommended by Conyers(2010)for improving the quality of one's critical writing :

1-Read-observe how -others write :One of the best ways to learn how to write well is to read other people 's work and note their styles of writing.

2-Plan the work: It is essential to plan one's paper . If one starts writing without some sort of plan , there is a little chance of producing a well argued paper.

3- Allow sufficient time to write and re write : Individuals vary greatly in terms of the ease with which are able to write and thus the amount of time. One should therefore allow sufficient time for writing and be prepared to revise what one has written at least once.

4-Get help with editing : Individuals who find writing particularly difficult are advised to find someone to help edit their work and to allow time.

5-Practice: Practice makes perfect . In critical writing , some students are likely even to become perfect. However, practice will undoubtedly improve one's performance significantly (Conyers, 2010).

Students' role in critical writing

Students' role in critical writing varies as they can do the following :

- 1- Writing a topic sentence to give one limitation/drawback of the theory /model . This answers " What.....? question
- 2- Adding a couple of sentences to explain this limitation and giving some details plus citations from the literature . This gives evidence to support the writer's claims . It answers When....? and What?questions
- 3- Finding a sentence or two to say what the implications of the limitation are. This shows that the writer is able to make intelligent hypotheses and talk about possible consequences of events.
- 4- Giving a specific example . Claims will be stronger if they are supported by evidence , which can take the form of specific examples.
- 5- Adding another limitation .The writer moves on a new sub- topic , relating to what happens once negative information has been published.
- 6- Suggesting a potential solution or alternative.The writer links the real world examples with what the theories say and answers How.....? question
- 7- Writing one or more sentences to say what the effect of the suggested change would be(Lancaster University , 2017).

When engaging in critical writing, it is necessary for students to think and ask the following questions mentioned by Quitadamo& Kurt (2007):

- 1-What is the purpose of their thinking and writing?
- 2-Are their ideas or arguments suitable to the topic ?Are they valid and defensible?
- 3-Are their positions of the issue rationale and reasonable?
- 4- Do they delve deep into the topic?
- 5-What precise questions are they answering , or trying to answer or explore?
- 6-What perspectives are they using?
- 7-What resources are they using and what sorts of information are they presenting?

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8-How are they interpreting the information ?Are there other equally valid interpretations?

9-What assumptions are they making?

10-What conclusions are they coming up to? What are the premises of those conclusions?

Maximum of critical writing

In critical writing, students are writing with a definite purpose . The purpose is to answer the question that has been set. Part of answering a question is convincing the readers that their answers are the correct one. In order to be convinced, they need to persuade and present evidences. So, critical writing has four maximums as follows:

1-maximum of quality

This maximum states that students should be truthful. The issue of adequate evidence needs students to make their argument believable. Students need to take evidence from different resources and synthesize them, this adds weight to their argument.

2-Maximum of quantity

Students should stick to the point and keep their language clear and comprehensible. So, they should not write too much or too little. They write the idea and support it.

3-Maximum of relevance

Students should stay focused on what are writing .They do not include information that does not contribute to answer of the question that has been set.

4-Maximum of manner

It includes four parts. Firstly, students avoid obscurity of expression . Secondly, they avoid ambiguity. Thirdly, they should avoid unnecessary words. Fourthly, they should be ordered. By presenting the steps in their line of reasoning in a logical order, their work will be easier to read and understand(University of Wolver Hampton, 2018)

Evaluation of critical writing

Critical writing engages in a range of formative assessment strategies that inform students about their progress and aid them as they develop as critical writers .One of these strategies is periodic timed essays designed to improve students' ability to write quickly , well and thoughtfully in time sensitive situations. Other strategies include self directed placement and ongoing self scripts that help students and their teachers identify the level of meta cognition through what students already understand and

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transfer what they learn to new writing situations (University of Pennsylvania, 2018).

Evaluating critical writing should be standardized under certain criteria as follows:

- 1-Cohesive, coherent development and logical organization; including well structured paragraphs with clear points and compelling specific support and evidence.
- 2-Effective sentence, syntax, suitable style appropriate; helping in understanding the materials and subjects.
- 3-Identifying significance and creating appropriate conclusion.
- 4-Intellectual strength and persuasiveness of the main claim and ensuring the argument.
- 5-Paraphrasing of sources, work cited and format.
- 6-Strength and clarity of hypotheses or focus.
- 7-The depth and complexity of the topic; including the recognition of conflicts and contradictions (Baherjee, 2016).

Rubrics can be used to assess critical writing. This leads to greater independence. In addition, through peer review, students regularly review their peers. Critical writing assessment rubric includes:

- 1-Thesis: The essay contains a clear and relevant thesis.
- 2-Organization: The paragraphs are logically ordered with the essay
- 3-Argumentation: The essay provides good reasons for accepting the thesis
- 4-Critical reflection: The essay acknowledges objections to the thesis and provides appropriate replies.
- 5-Clarity: The essay presents ideas and arguments with clarity and precision.
- 6-Grammar and mechanics: The essay uses correct grammar, punctuation and spellings
- 7-Style: The essay is written in an engaging and interesting manner that appropriately integrates elements such as vocabulary, phrasing and voice (University of Colorado, 2018).

Problems of critical writing and Solutions

Essex (2013) assured that the following factors make critical writing a difficult task in classroom:

- 1-Student struggles: critical writing requires effort and intent. This demands focus and control. Students struggle with simply restating facts

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much less evidencing an understanding of deeper meaning. They do not know where to start and organize the information

.2-Students have trouble with verbiage or what the question is asking of them (what is inference, analyze ,evaluate).They did not have much practice with critical writing.

3-As critical writing is a multiple step brain process, it requires students to make connections. So, some students have more life experiences than others ,they have more trouble making connections when they are asked.

4-Teacher issues: Teachers shy away from teaching critical writing because it is challenging to teach. They become frustrated by the lack of enthusiasm of their students . Teachers are not sure exactly what all can be defined as critical writing . Time also can be a problem , so teachers try to work critical writing into every class time and instruct students to learn how to write fewer words with deeper content.

Solutions

The following tips can be the solutions to overcome and face the challenge of critical writing whether for teachers or students as mentioned by Essex (2013) and Mar (2016) :

- Creating an environment that encourages critical writing,
- Modeling and practising critical thinking,
- Promoting thinking for understanding,
- Realizing that critical writing does not require an entire class period and can be accomplished in a multitude of ways,
- Giving students the tools they need and
- Providing examples of exceptional work
- Allowing students to make connections from the lesson, real world and personal experiences .

Challenge of critical writing

Many researchers found that being a critical writer is a difficult task. That is due to the student's weakness and lack of

- confidence in presenting his/her own judgment,
- investigating the evidence for and against different ideas,
- testing the evidence through cross examination,
- presenting alternative arguments and explanations,
- reaching an informed opinion in the light of evidences and
- giving reasoned arguments for the conclusion reached(Mar,2016).

Generally, the difficulty of critical writing lies not only in the need to read widely and gather as many different opinions as possible ,but also in

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comparing and contrasting different views. Critical writing involves considering evidence to make reasoned conclusions. A mistake many beginning writers make is to use only one source to support their ideas . The problem with using only one source is what if this source says one thing , but most other writers say something completely different. So, student needs to consider more than one viewpoint (Smith, 2015).

Another mistake is to use several sources but to string quotes together without really analyzing what these writers say. In critical writing, students need to evaluate and analyse the information from sources rather than accepting it as being true. This leads to the second part of the simple definition which is critical writing evaluates and analyses the information from different sources. It contains evidence from other writers. Evaluating this evidence means identifying the strength and the weakness of the evidences , whether the source is reliable , relevant, up to date , accurate . On the other hand, analyzing means giving reasons why the conclusions of these writers should be accepted or treated with caution. Finding the right sources can be a challenge and students often find themselves at fault for using unreliable sources and points of correlation between the primary and secondary sources(Learning Development , University of Leicester 2009 and Cottrel 2013).

The relationship between Scaffolding and Writing process

Many studies tried to investigate the use of scaffolding in the academic writing classroom. They verified the usefulness of providing scaffolding on genre structures and rhetorical patterns of academic writings .Writer teacher needs to be aware that scaffolding is always supporting temporarily . The purpose of using scaffolding is to help students eventually become self regulated and independent

Benko(2013)suggested that scaffolding before , during and at the end of the writing will have different characteristics and structures as follows:

1-Scaffolding through initial task selection: Teachers engage students in writing through

- ensuring that the writing task is appropriately challenging for them.
- considering ways to make the task relevant to the students . Thus, providing ownership of the task for students.
- using more familiar and popular formats in initial assignments and then moving them to more conventional and less familiar essay.

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2- Scaffolding during writing : Teachers can

- use less complex formats.
- structure tasks in way that students can learn skills and strategies that apply to the writing task.
- provide models and examples for the type of writing that students aim to achieve
- use digital tools and spaces for engaging students in thinking and developing ideas.
- provide students with graphic organizers to keep track of ideas and organize them for writing
- avoid focusing on isolated skills (grammar and usage skills) that seem disconnected from the writing task
- teach mini lessons to address issues interrupting good writing
- share their own writing with students and talk about obstacles

3-Scaffolding after the writing process. Teachers should

- be collaborative , not evaluative
- minimize students' frustration whenever possible

Instruments of the Study

1-A critical writing skills test

To ensure the progress of the participants in critical writing skills , a pre-post test for measuring the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students was designed . It consisted of six questions . It was submitted to jury members specialized in the field of methods of teaching English to test the validity and the appropriateness

To measure the reliability of the test, the test –retest reliability was counted. It was $r=0.76$. So, the test was reliable and could be used before and after the experiment. The final version of the test is shown in appendix (b)

2-Critical writing skills rubric

In order to measure the students' progress in critical writing skills, the researcher designed a critical essay writing scoring rubric as a pre- post measuring instrument . It measured the seven critical writing skills required for the participants . It was submitted to jury members specialized in the field of methods of teaching English to test the validity and appropriateness. Having done their modifications, the rubric became valid.

Method of the study

The present study followed the descriptive analytical method for reviewing the theoretical background of the study. Furthermore, the quasi experimental pre- post tested two groups ‘ design was used in the experimental part of the study to investigate the effect of scaffolding with online tasks on developing critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students .

Participants of the study .

The participants of the study consisted of 62 , 2nd year secondary school students from Al Mosheer Ahmed Ismail secondary school . They were divided into two groups (the experimental group and the control group). The reason for choosing the participants was due to their bad need of training on how to write critically and express points of views as the questions in their English language final exam include comment , judge and express points of view in writing.

Duration of the experiment

The experiment lasted for three months , two periods per a week. It started on 28th Sept., and continued to 23rd December 2017 . It is worth noting that the pre administration of the test was on 27th September while the post administration was on 25th December .The instruments of the study were used before and after the experiment for the two groups . The experimental group was taught through the scaffolding with online tasks while the control received regular instruction.

The Suggested steps for using the proposed framework

The proposed framework of the present study displayed in Appendix 4was based on using seven scaffolding techniques (modeling prior knowledge, eliciting, graphic organizer, joint construction, counter argument and rubric review) with online tasks involved in six steps as follows:

1-Initiating :
(online tasks)

Teacher asks students to visit their sites .They can see a video online presented by the teacher . Teacher asks them to answer questions . After students present their answers, students are asked to exchange their products and comment on each other .Each student should write his /her answers as an essay and selects one to write about in details. S/ he should express his/ her points of view . Students are asked to write their

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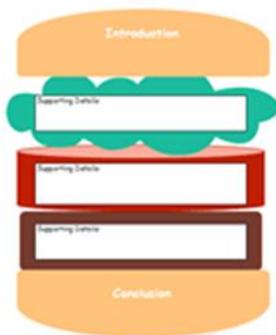
own experiences if they have .Then, they send them again to the teacher.

In some units as shown in Appendix 4, teacher asks students to read a text and analyze it with reference to facts and how the writer interprets them, find the argument to reject or refute points of views and support the claims with appropriate evidence and examples.

2-Supporting

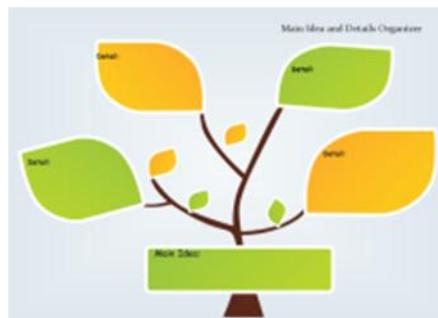
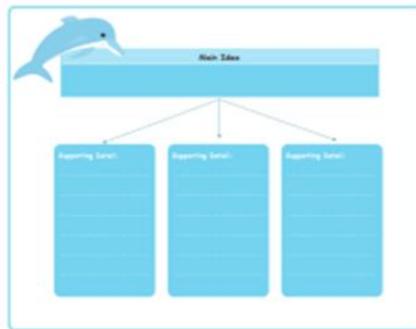
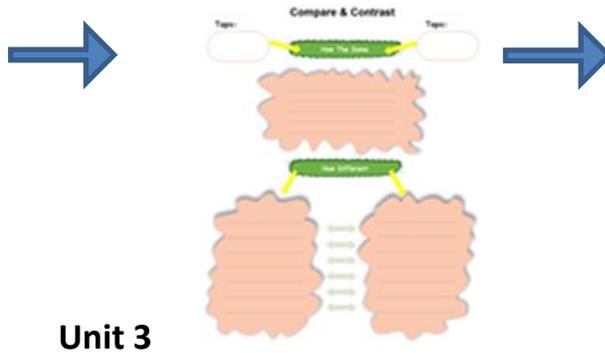
Teacher presents a model for different statements when agreement and disagreement. S/he provides them with a sheet including a critical essay model written by him/her . S/he follows step by step instructions and examples to demonstrate what students should write S/he gives them a sheet that contains sentence frames to be used while writing. Then, teacher asks students to write many sentences . Some of them express that they agree while the others reflect their disagreements. Teacher discusses with students how to write each sentence using cards , pauses at various points and breaks them up .Teacher asks students to draw what they know and share their drawing with other students through graphic organizer forms.

Unit1



unit 2

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3- Negotiating

In groups of four, teacher asks students to write a critical essay. Teacher asks students to support their writings with references and evidences through internet(using school lab or mobile) . They exchange their product and comment on each other.

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4-Arguing

In group, one of the students presents his/ her essay and other students comment and argue .If they are not persuaded by his/ her evidence, they ask him/her many questions . S/he should defend his/ her points of view using different resources.

5-Responding

Teacher co constructs with students through joint participation. Teacher guides students to continue the argument and asks questions to stimulate the writer to defend his/ her view. Then, S/he starts withdrawing his/her support taking the role of monitoring . Students take turns and each one should present his/her essay.

6-Following up (online tasks)

Teacher asks students to review their performance using rubric to evaluate their progress online .Teacher provides students with a scoring guide that is used to assess their work. Students observe the criteria they will be graded according to the rubric .Teacher motivates them to complete the assignment and self evaluate their progress. See the rubric in appendix 3.Thus, the second sub question of the study was answered.

Data Analysis and Results

The results of the study are discussed and interpreted in relation to the study questions and hypotheses mentioned earlier as follows:

1-Answering the first sub- question

To identify the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students, a checklist was designed by the researcher. The checklist was submitted to five jury members and they approved it . It included seven skills in its final version (see appendix 1) . Thus, the first sub- question of the present study was answered.

2-Answering the second sub -question

The second sub- question was answered before as the suggested steps for using the proposed framework of using scaffolding theory with online tasks as were shown before in the preceding pages. For more details, the proposed framework of the present study as a whole is shown in appendix 4 .

3-Answering the third sub -question

Answering the third sub question is related to verifying the hypotheses of the present study. So they will be dealt together as follows:

A-Findings related to the first hypothesis

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The first hypothesis stated that “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups’ students on the post administration of the critical writing skills test, in favour of the experimental group”

The critical writing skills test was administered to the control and experimental groups after the experiment. Data obtained were treated statistically . Findings are shown in table(1)

Table (1)
***t*- Value , Mean scores , Standard of Deviation of the Experimental and Control Groups on the Post Administration of the Test**

Group	Meanscore	Standard Deviation	Calculated t value	Level of significance
Control	6.41	5.73	14.07	(0.01)
Experimental	14.29	11.12		

Table (1)revealed that the calculated (*t*) value was significantly higher than tabled (T)value (2.88) with (60) degrees of freedom at the (0.01) level of significance . Thus, scaffolding with online tasks had significantly improved the experimental group critical writing skills . Hence, the first hypothesis was verified.

2-Findings related to the second hypothesis

The second hypothesis stated “there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre and post administrations of the critical writing skills test, in favour of the post administration of the test.”

The critical writing skills test was administered to the experimental groups before and after the experiment. Data obtained were treated statistically . Findings are shown in table(2).

Table (2)
***t*- Value , Mean scores , Standard of Deviation of the Experimental Group on the Pre and Post Administrations of the Test and the Effect Size**

Experimental Group	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Calculated t value	Level of significance
Pre	6.83	7.43	22.25	(0.01)
Post	14.29	11.12		

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Table (2) revealed that the calculated (t) value (22.25) was significantly higher than tabled (t) value (2.75) with (30) degrees of freedom at the (0.01) level of significance. Thus, scaffolding theory with online tasks had significantly improved the experimental group critical writing skills. Hence, the second hypothesis was verified.

3-Findings related to the third hypothesis

The third hypothesis stated that “Scaffolding is effective in developing each of the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students”

The critical writing skills test was administered to the experimental group before and after the experiment to test each critical writing skill. Data obtained were treated statistically. Findings are shown in table (3).

Table (3)

t- Value , Mean scores , Standard of Deviation of the Experimental Group on the Pre and Post Administrations of the Test in each critical writing skill and the Effect Size on Each Skill and on the Critical Writing as a Whole

The critical writing skills	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Calculated t value	Level of Significance	The Effect Size
1-providing contrastive views with rationale	6.75 14.75	7.86 14.43	5.27	(0.01)	0.87
2-finding different appropriate resources	7.5 13.5	7.31 13.75	6.14	(0.01)	0.90
3-arranging argument to reflect actual findings	5.75 14.25	2.12 11.18	4.60	(0.01)	0.84
4-making links between areas of knowledge	4.25 11.25	1.46 5.06	3.82	(0.01)	0.78
5-writing sentences that reflect starting from a reliable premise to arrive at a reliable conclusion	6.2 11.4	1.53 2.96	5.53	(0.01)	0.88
6- supporting the claims with appropriate assumptions/ examples	5.8 14.8	3.03 14.72	6.04	(0.01)	0.87
7- presenting evidences to persuade ideas	10.2 17.4	2.47 2.36	9.08	(0.01)	0.73
Total	6.83 14.29	7.43 11.12	22.25	(0.01)	0.95

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Table (3) revealed that the calculated (t) value of each critical writing skill was significantly higher than the tabled (T) value with (30) degrees of freedom at the (0.01) level of significance. Thus, scaffolding with online tasks had significantly improved the experimental group critical writing skills . Hence, the third hypothesis was verified .

Moreover, the effect size of each skill was calculated using eta square formula. It was higher than the large effect size value (0.8) as shown in table 3 . This showed that using scaffolding with online tasks had a large effect size on developing each critical writing skill for the experimental group. Thus, the third sub question was answered as shown before in table (3). In turn, the main question of the study was answered as the effect size on the critical writing skills as a whole was large (0.95) as shown too in table (3)

Findings of the study assured that the main question and its three sub questions were answered as scaffolding with online tasks had significantly improved the experimental group critical writing skills and had a large effect size on the critical writing skills as a whole and most of critical writing skills separately.

Discussion of results

The statistical analysis presented above , resulted in the verification of all the hypotheses of the study and answering the study questions. It also realized the achievement of the study main aim , which was to develop the required critical writing skills for 2nd year secondary school students throughout the use of scaffolding with online tasks.

The comparison between the experimental group and the control group showed that the improvement achieved by the experimental group in the required critical writing skills was more than that of the control group in the post tests. The researcher attributed this improvement to the following factors:

1-Providing students with a relaxed non threatening learning environment and friendly atmosphere through which they were motivated to participate in all tasks. Creating safe supportive learning environment encouraged students to take risks and try alternatives. This is consistent with Alibali (2006) and Van and Stuyf (2002) who stressed the importance of providing a welcoming and caring learning environment as one of the main principles for designing effective scaffolding in EFL classroom.

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2- The use of various online tasks that attracted students' attention and interests. They enjoyed using computer, increased their engagement , empowered students at all levels and motivated them to write critically. In addition , students received a lot of help from teacher . The responses were always very fast. So, being able to interact with teacher regularly kept students focused on carrying out the task. This led to increasing their confidence . This is consistent with Lee(2016)as he assured the benefits of using online tasks as they foster self directed learning by purposefully engaging students in the learning process. Self regulation was also enhanced as students invested their time in learning daily materials and completing online tasks in a timely manner.

3-The proposed framework was designed in a cycle form . Each step had its objectives and tasks to be dealt with. It involved the gradual release in scaffolding steps from learning together to work alone .Students began practicing critical writing skills with their teacher in groups. Teacher monitored them till reaching the target aim of the study. So, the three types of scaffolding were used. Firstly, expert scaffolding as teacher presented models for students during tasks. Secondly, reciprocal scaffolding as two learners were involved in working collaboratively on a task. This might be a problem or a situation including the learning of new content. Thirdly, self scaffolding. involving situations in which each student was able to provide scaffold for him/herself .

5-Exchanging responses , justifications and defense encouraged students to see the other side of each topic and reinforce getting continuous feedback. They were trained on using peer review for feedback .This encouraged them to improve their critical writing skills and respect the different views concerning the same topic The critical writing students had a debate with others on paper . An effective critical writing method used was to pick up a subject and see what and how other writers deal with it . Students decided whether or not they agree or not with their opinions and told reader why they do or do not agree as every writer had a different point of view on the same topic.

5-The various techniques and strategies used created a chance for satisfying students' needs and interests. The suggested framework included many steps varied to meet individual difference . The type of support also varied based on student' s progress .This view supported Zurek(2014)as he stated that to effectively employ pedagogical strategies in scaffolding, teacher must ideally understand the strengths

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and the needs of each learner. So, the researcher attempted to adjust her strategy accordingly and what level of support the individual learner needed as the learner constructed skills and knowledge. So, the researcher as an effective teacher used a range of scaffolding practices that support the students in their learning process. They supported the researcher as a teacher to make more informed decisions about how she will meet the learning needs of all students in the most appropriate way possible

6- Developing a caring and respectful human relationship and interaction with students whether inside or outside the classroom, in addition to frequent discussions were permitted with providing opportunities to cooperate and collaborate together. Through online tasks, students communicated and interacted with each other. So, different social relationships were created.

7 -Scaffolding provided students with challenge to achieve development. This idea was accepted for secondary school students as it encouraged them to take a risk At first, when students engaged in high challenge academic tasks, they complained and found obstacles . During the experiment, they realized that their teacher also provided them with high levels of support and became increasingly aware of the progress and the tools needed to attain it. They build up confidence in themselves and their own abilities. This is consistent with Jumaat and Zaidatun's (2014)opinions as they stated that scaffolding made it possible to provide academically challenging instruction for students in secondary schools. It also supported the idea that the only good teaching is that which is ahead of development.

8-The idea of analyzing and recognizing students' levels of knowledge by asking them questions and correcting them was used . Teacher gave them a model to recognize their weak points and attempt to do the task. So, the first feature of scaffolding was achieved(interaction between teacher as expert and students online). Then, students worked together in classroom, made a research about data until they found what they needed . So, the second feature of scaffolding (learning should take place in the learners ' zone of proximal development) was used .Finally, each student wrote the final product. They could ask teacher when needed .After finishing , teacher asked each student to use self rubric to correct his/ her product and sent it online .Hence, the third feature of scaffolding(the support and guidance provided by the expert is gradually

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removed as the learner becomes more proficient) was applied. This is consistent with (Hall (2008) as using the three essential features of scaffolding could facilitate student's learning

9-Teacher's role as a more knowledgeable learner who helped students solve problems within their zones of proximal development was also carried out. As the researcher created and applied tasks within the learner's zone of proximal development, she provided sufficient practice for Improving performance and giving meaningful feedback. In addition, she designed online tasks that encouraged students to construct their knowledge. That agrees with what Zurek, (2014) who assured that teachers should understand the strengths and needs of each student and adjust his/her strategy accordingly. She carefully prepared learners by setting up tasks that stimulated them to be more successful at what would be required of them. Tasks involving complex language were prime candidates for scaffolding .

10-Students' freelance in critical writing as they had a chance to express their points of views and apply their own judgments .While searching , they weighed up alternatives, organized and evaluated evidence. They also made comparisons between materials and links between areas of knowledge .They presented various perspectives on the topic. That is consistent with John and Phil's (2014) study result as critical writing required students to take a subconscious idea, expanded on that idea , connected it to other sub conscious ideas and brought that to the conscious level through the tangible act of writing .Also, students could step outside of one's daily work to view what could be taken for granted assumption through a critical lens. So , idea plus expansion of idea plus connections to other ideas equal conscious level through critical writing

11-Self correction through using self rubric. Each student corrected his/her performance online and asked teacher for help when needed . At the beginning, some students found difficulty in correcting themselves as they were not trained before on doing this. Then, they discussed with their teacher and other students how to evaluate themselves until they could carry out the task . This idea was ensured before by Lee (2016) as he mentioned that the beginning students with low language proficiency are not equipped to correct their own errors. Thus, the instructor plays a facilitative role in guiding students through the process of error correction. Teacher linguistic feedback fosters attention to form for the improvement of language accuracy.

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12-Facility provided by online tasks. Students were responsible for collecting data through one of the online tasks. They sometimes chose one of the topics/questions to write about them . This result ensured what Al Jarf (2012) mentioned about the benefits of using online tasks in EFL classroom as they enabled autonomous learners to take charge of their own learning . Learners were able to take all the decisions concerning their learning. They were provided with greater freedom and flexibility to learn at their own pace and convenience . In addition, they learned independently and learned by interacting with their classmates and instructor. They learned from other , discussed , expressed their needs and followed up their own progress.

13- Providing feedback through online tasks encouraged students to do better and accept comments without worrying . They stayed motivated and accepted criticism. Feedback was also provided in classroom. Teacher stimulated students to work in groups and praised active students. This finding was consistent with Alibali 's (2006) finding as teacher should monitor students' progress through feedback . So, they should be aware of their progress and what they had yet to complete. In addition, providing encouragement and praise through asking questions and having students explained their progress helped them stay focused on the goals.

14- The idea of presenting argument attracted students' attention . They should discuss different opinions. In addition, during counter argument, each student could persuade others and defended his/ her points of views .This increased students' confidence to write more .Self esteem also was improved as all writings were correct but students should have proved them. This ensured what Cox (2016).indicated as critical writing involved mounting an argument and that this in turn involved examining the views of others and relevant evidence. In addition, critical writing involved identifying the significant points of what happened and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses contributed to something to reach the target.

15- The idea of reflection as reflection was the first step upon what students want to write. While writing critically, students were asked about their reactions and feelings towards the topic .They could bring their personal experiences and give examples They should also add their conclusion which included new perspective for the topic . This reflection stage helped a lot in forming their personalities and expressing ideas

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freely . They faced the challenge of critical writing strongly. This is consistent with - Zewcryk 's(2002) opinion as he stated that to master critical writing is to practice. The first stage is to reflect upon what they want to write taking into account different people\ s viewpoints to the same reflection . Without reflection to writing, theses, dissertation and research papers would be meaningless.

Recommendations

In the light of the results of the present study, the following recommendations are suggested

1-More emphasis should be placed on developing students' critical writing skills in different educational stages

- 1- Students should be given opportunities to use technology through online tasks to practise language skills freely
- 2- Teachers are recommended to use scaffolding learning .which is based on graduated release development of each student .
- 3- Integrating online tasks with scaffolding are recommended to provide language in meaningful and authentic contexts.

Suggestions for further research

1-Further research is needed to examine the effect of scaffolding on developing other language skills (speaking , listening and reading) for secondary stage students.

2-Using other modern approaches or strategies for developing critical writing skills for secondary school students .

3-Further research is suggested to investigate the effect of online tasks on improving students' linguistic performance in the secondary stage and the university

4-Using scaffolding with online tasks for developing other types of writing of secondary stage students should be suggested.

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