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# **Instructional Scaffolding Strategies for Teaching Writing to Junior High School Students of a General Public School**

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Learning a language is intended to help everyone to express their selves clearly and concisely utilizing the target language in oral and written composed forms. Hence, it is not enough that a student knows how to articulate their ideas orally but to communicate their thoughts and feelings expressed in writing effectively [1]. Educators exhaust strategies to assist students to achieve the learning goals particularly in writing, from their actual to their most potential capabilities, where the use of scaffolding strategies can contribute specially to developing skills in writing. This study aimed to explore the instructional scaffolding strategies employed by teachers in an urban public school and to describe the implementation of scaffolding strategy used by teachers in their writing class. The following research questions were answered through a survey form of 5-point Likert- scale and open-ended questions: 1) What instructional scaffolding strategies are mostly used by teachers in teaching writing? 2) How do teachers implement instructional scaffolding strategies in teaching writing? and 3) What are the implications of scaffolding in teaching? Twenty-four junior high school teachers from the public school voluntarily participated in the study. Data were examined using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The study revealed that the instructional scaffolding strategies used by teachers are activating student's schema, visual aids, graphic organizer, open-ended questioning, modelling, breaking down topics into chunks, outlining, peer discussion, peer

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feedbacking, sentence stems, and quick writes. Also, the study described the important terms that are needed to consider in the implementation and the implication of employing this strategy in the pedagogy as a support to develop student's writing skills.

*Keywords: Scaffolding; writing; skills; strategies; teaching; support.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scaffolding in Teaching

Educators presumptuously think and believe that students already know how to write successfully by the time they are in the upper elementary classes, and most definitely by the time they are in secondary settings [2]. However, there is no opportunity and support in school to help them to effectively express their creative ideas into writing. Writing is a skill that can be harness through practicing and no students was born know how to write effectively and coherently. It is essential that a teacher give support to students to develop their writing through scaffolding.

Scaffolding is the support given by a teacher to students for learning and problem- solving that may involve clues, encouraging words, giving illustrative examples, and modelling leading to learner's autonomy [3]. According to Weinstein & Preiss [4], scaffolding is a temporary and supportive framework that an educator creates in an educational setting to assist students in completing a task that they would otherwise be unable to accomplish in a timely or effective manner. If the progress perceived, the teacher should gradually withdraw help from students, as their learning progresses can be observed [5, 6, 7, 8].

The amount of learning that pupils can absorb when receiving assistance from someone who are more competent than they are referred to as "scaffolding" [9], [6]. Scaffolding has drawn a lot of attention as an effective instructional strategy [10] because it encourages student engagement in learning and improves learning outcomes. The scaffolding teaching approach is based on Vygotsky's notion of how people learn. Scaffolding gives students direction and counsel they need to advance their understanding and skills and move closer to the desired mastery level.

Cognizant to how teachers facilitate the class using scaffolding, Harmer's theory identified (as mentioned in [11] the nine roles for teachers in the process of teaching and learning: These includes a teacher as administrator, teacher as

organizer, teacher as evaluator, teacher as prompter, teacher as tutor, teacher as an observer, teacher as a resource and lastly teacher as a teaching tool. These have implications for the teaching process when using scaffolding strategies in the classroom.

### 1.2 Scaffolding in Writing

Teaching English as a foreign language with scaffolding can come in variety of forms and it has favorable effects on students' English literacy. Additionally, scaffolding fosters students' independent learning, which makes students more self- assured and accountable in their education and proper usage of language [12]. Scaffolding can help students to organize their essay, to use new words appropriately, support their opinions with examples, gained confidence in writing Tabib, [13]. As emphasized by Vygotsky [14], the role of instructors and others in scaffolding instruction are to help and offer the necessary support systems for students to go to the next stage or level. There are numerous ways to use scaffolding with English language learners. Modeling, bridging, contextualizing, schema building, re-presenting material, and fostering metacognition are some of the most important instructional scaffolding strategies [8].

Writing is a skill that can be used actively and productively, it dictates academic accomplishment, and it is a skill practiced by both academics and professionals. The majority of EFL settings teach writing using a classic practice-examination focused strategy centered on summative assessment, which aims to gauge student success in meeting preset learning targets [15]. In addition, [16] demonstrated that graphic organizers are visual displays that can provide young L2 writers with an organizational structure that encourages their autonomy. These displays can also depict information in a variety of ways.

In addition, writing in English as a foreign language is evidently difficult which makes students feel hesitant to write voluntarily. Cognizant of how writing is regarded as a complicated process which requires expertise,

talent, and imagination, scaffolding must be made available to students. This support can take the form of hints, encouragement, and providing students a real-world experiences and modeling [3]. In the study conducted by Padmadewi and Artini [12], the study aims to examine how writing classrooms use scaffolding activities to increase elementary school students' literacy rates. The study showed that teachers used different scaffolding strategies to improve their student's English proficiency, scaffolding also affected the students' attitudes towards writing not only student's quality of writing and lastly it contributes to students writing skills.

Consequently, realizing the challenges students face, scaffolding must be made available to students to improve and address the difficulties in writing resulted from lack of basic skills in writing. Scaffolding is an aid for learning and problem-solving may include cues, examples and modeling that help students to develop learning independence [3]. The perceived difficulty of writing in English as a second language makes students hesitant to write voluntarily and primarily see it as school requirement. Limited language vocabulary was seen as one of the contributing factors that created students' difficulty in writing Alqahtani [17].

The curriculum cycles in Scaffolding instruction in relation to writing instruction have been simplified by Dewi [18] into four stages, building the field, modeling, collaborative construction, and writing independently. Predominantly, research in the past have focused primarily in employing scaffolding methodologies to improve a certain communicative ability [19,20, 21,22].

### **1.3 Zone of Proximal Development**

The sociocultural theory and theoretical basis of Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) concept is the basis for scaffolding instruction as a teaching approach.

The objective of scaffolding is to complete the task at the student's higher ZPD level. Vygotsky was the first person to use the concept of ZPD. Vygotsky and Walqui, (2006) defined ZPD as the "distance between the actual development level of the learner, as measured by independent problem solving, and the level of

potential development, as measured by problem solving under teacher guidance and/ or interaction and collaboration with more capable peers."

Six types of instructional scaffolding are encompassing in the [8] pedagogical framework: re-presenting text, modeling, bridging, contextualization, schema building, and metacognition enhancement. According to the evidence, educators model classroom tasks to promote understanding. Second, teachers help students make connections between new information and their actual lives, which help them increase their content knowledge. Their best course of action comprises in contextualizing the errands in concentration to make the scholastic language more available and appealing to students. Fourth, teachers make it possible to find connection of meanings to information and comprehension. Last but not least, educators involve students in meaningful language learning activities and classroom discussions. At this stage, teachers create analogies and metaphors based on student's autonomy. Self-monitoring is recommended among students in the interim.

### **1.4 Research Gap**

Researchers discovered that students needed a lot of direction or scaffolding when writing using English language. According to Kaur et al. [23], scaffolding could be provided in a variety of methods to aid the teaching and learning of writing abilities. Numerous studies have examined the impact of scaffolding on students' writing abilities, and it has been found that scaffolding significantly affects students' writing abilities. Although many empirical studies on scaffolding have been done, most of them used adult students or pupils who have completed elementary school [24, 25, 26].

According to Mahan [27], there are still a variety of conceptualizations and interpretations of instructional scaffolding. Scientists and educators have not yet arrived at a bound together comprehension of framework as a part of a student learner-support in learning. Mahan [27] wanted to know which scaffolding strategies were most frequently used in the CLIL classroom and which ones were used more frequently than others. The use of scaffolding strategy in the writing classroom needs to be made clear to EFL instructors through training sessions [28].

Also, research to analyze on how teachers decide and determine the instructional scaffolding strategies that is appropriate to the students' needs has not been much conducted yet, and hence require additional research. The main purpose of this study is to investigate how scaffolding was implemented in teaching writing, what instructional scaffolding strategies used by teachers to develop the writing skills of the students and how do teachers implement the strategy in their own context. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature on scaffolding which will open new ways of problematizing the issue.

### 1.5 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What instructional scaffolding strategies are mostly used by teachers in teaching writing?
2. How do teachers implement instructional scaffolding strategies in teaching writing?
3. What are the implications of scaffolding in teaching?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

Mixed-method design was utilized in this research since the data is quantitative and qualitative in nature. In an embedded mixed method design quantitative and qualitative data are both collected, but one of the data stands as a supplementary within the overall design [29]. The purpose of mixed method is to draw the extent of both qualitative and quantitative approach to answer the question presented in this research study. The main objective of this study is to discover the scaffolding strategies that have been utilized by teachers and how teachers implement and utilized scaffolding strategies in teaching writing. The study's quantitative component was on the survey instrument using 5-point Likert scale and the qualitative component was obtained thru the responses of the respondent in the survey using open-ended questions.

### 2.2 Research Participants

The researcher purposively chose 30 tenured teachers of English in Junior High School

handling writing classes and utilized scaffolding strategies in teaching writing. In this study, a total of 30 respondents were initially targeted for data collection. However, due to various reasons such as respondents' busy schedules and time constraints, only 22 respondents were able to provide complete responses using Google Form within the given time frame. Despite the reduced sample size, the data obtained by the researcher still offers valuable insights into the research topic. The research locale was in the urban Integrated High School in National Capital Region. The schools were in a 1st class highly urbanized city in the National Capital Region. These teachers were all handling writing classes in their respective schools and have been teaching in Public Schools for more than three (3) years.

### 2.3 Research Instrument

Survey instrument was used to collect the data for the study, the researcher used 10 items for open-ended questions which includes the five-point Likert scale in rating the responses of the respondents about the instructional scaffolding strategies used in teaching writing. The survey instrument was composed of 4 questions for respondents' personal details, a Likert-scale on which of the scaffolding strategies in teaching writing they always utilized and one follow-up question if they used another scaffolding strategy that is not included in the list, to further exhaust all the strategies used by an English teacher. On the latter part is 5 open-ended questions to further explore their perception in implementing and the benefits brought by utilizing instructional scaffolding strategies in teaching writing. The instrument was validated by three language expert who have been taught for more than ten years. The researcher revised some items for the improvement of the questionnaire.

### 2.4 Research Procedure

The researcher sought an approval from the Division Office as part of the protocol in conducting a survey. After the researcher received an approval, the researcher submitted the letter to the Division Supervisor in English to allow the researcher to forward the letter to each school through subject coordinators via messenger group chats. The survey was forwarded to each subject coordinators and forwarded the survey in Google Form in the target respondents. The researcher informed the

respondents to answer the survey during the vacant period or after class to avoid them to rush answering the survey because the questions are open-ended and there is a Likert-scale. To ensure that respondents were able to answer the survey they sent a receipt of Google Form to the researcher, and for an easy tracking if all respondents were able to answer the survey. Unfortunately, the responses got by the researcher were only 22 because the time that the researcher conducted the survey was also the time that teachers are all busy in accomplishing their school forms, computation of grades and preparation for attending seminars.

## 2.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was composed of two phases. For the quantitative phase, the researcher calculated the descriptive statistic, particularly Mean, to perceive the most instructional scaffolding strategies used by teachers in facilitating their writing class. For the qualitative phase the researcher transcribes the open-ended responses of the respondents and performed

thematic analysis by reading through the responses of the students and identifying the recurring themes or patterns, coded the data and calculated the frequencies of each theme to summarize the qualitative findings. In addition, the researcher also used voyant- tools.org in analyzing some of qualitative data, using the word cloud, links, and trends.

Before the conduct of the study, the respondents were informed about the nature and purpose of the study and voluntarily participated. The researcher also explained to the respondents how their data was securely stored and protected to ensure confidentiality.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Most prevalent Scaffolding Strategies utilized by English Teachers in teaching writing

The instructional scaffolding strategies that are mostly utilized by teachers are summarized in Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. Scaffolding strategies that are mostly utilized by teachers in their writing classes



### 3.3 Implementation of Instructional Scaffolding Strategies in Writing Classes

Fig.3. shows teachers responses on how they implement instructional scaffolding strategies in their writing classes. Most of the responses discussed the teaching of writing, writing skills, learners in writing and scaffolding in writing. The top five most frequent terms that are stated below are essential in implementing the instructional scaffolding strategies in writing classes. Moreover, these terms in clouds: learners, writing and scaffolding are important elements in the process of teaching writing. The teachers shared in their experience in the open-ended questions that in implementing scaffolding strategies in teaching writing, goal should be clearly defined at the beginning of the lesson, clarifying objectives can help to create appropriate plan to address the gaps and difficulties of students in writing such as limited vocabulary, generate ideas and paragraph structure. However, there is an argument that scaffolding can be case to case basis which cannot be applied in all situations or one-size-fits-all technique. In this situation a teacher should tailor scaffolds depending on the level of

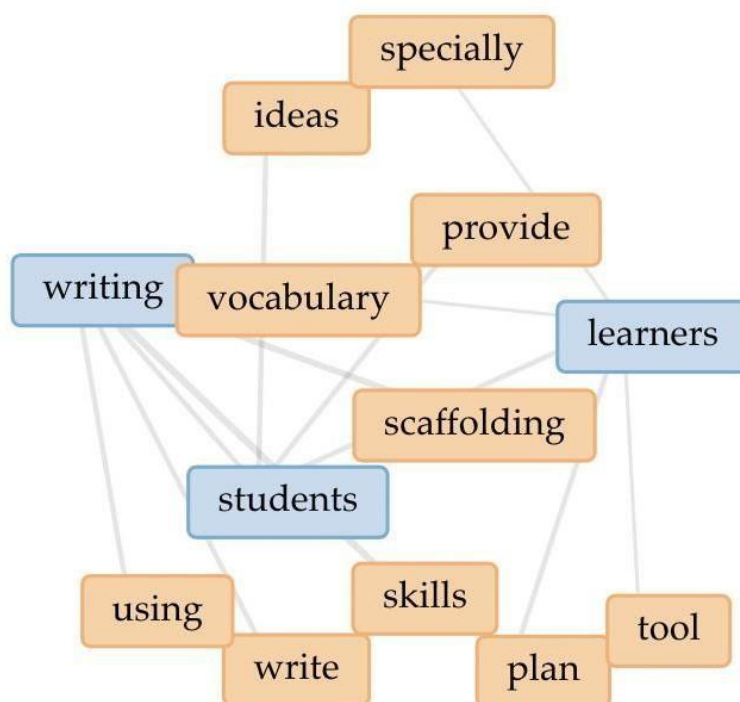
competence of students [31]. In some of studies conducted, researchers discovered that pupils needed a lot of direction or scaffolding while writing English papers to aid the teaching and learning of writing skills, through scaffolding [23].

### 3.4 Writing skills

Writing in English is challenging to some of the students, some requires sufficient vocabulary, grammar, organizing ideas, and developing critical thinking skills. There are studies reported investigating the significant effect of scaffolding to writing ability of the students. Teacher-Respondent 3 inscribed that:

*“Students writing skills can be develop by expanding the learner’s vocabulary I let my students use dictionaries for them to check the correct words to use and it is an effective way to enhance their writing skills.”*

It indicates that in the implementation of scaffolding strategies, one of the challenges that a teacher wants to address is the vocabulary knowledge which is viewed as crucial, might be a barrier for successful communication [17].



**Fig. 3. Interrelationship and extended links in implementing scaffolding**  
 Most frequent words in the corpus: writing (15), students (12), learners (7), write (6), and scaffolding (6)

### 3.5 Writing Process

Writing process is important in the implementation, through which a teacher adds supports for students to help students to master the skills, in learning the task independently. For instance, Teacher-Respondent 19 shared that:

*“I introduce first the steps on how to write an essay. I ask students to prepare an outline and gather information that are related to their topic. I ask them to utilize sources especially in making an academic paper/writing to make their evidence credible. Moreover, I group my students to share their ideas or have brainstorming.”*

In the implementation, the teacher believed that collaboration and social interaction in learning could have a good effect [8]. Also, writing process should be implemented prior to integration of scaffolding in teaching.

### 3.6 Instructional Planning

Establishing the specific learning objectives is essential in planning the appropriate scaffolding to help the students. Like what Teacher-Respondent 6 stated:

*“Determine the specific learning objectives for the writing task or unit. Clearly define what you want your students to achieve in terms of content, skills, and overall writing proficiency and plan scaffolding activities.”*

The success of scaffolding strategy varied on how the instructor handled the assistance provided to the pupils. This method of giving students support subscribed the constructivist school of thought which explains how pupils build understanding via reflection and experience based on those encounters.

### 3.7 Writing Strategies

Scaffolding strategies help teachers to teach writing as part of writing strategies to help students to provide support and to develop student autonomy to accomplish the task independently without the support.

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### 3.9 Writing Strategies

Scaffolding strategies help teachers to teach writing as part of writing strategies to help students to provide support and to develop student autonomy to accomplished the task independently without the support provided by the teacher. Teacher -Respondents 1, 2, 3 and 5 inscribed the following strategies they practiced in their writing class.

*“Give clear instruction. Give appropriate example. Make sure to breakdown difficult ideas to simpler thought.”*

*“Know the prior knowledge of the student. Apply a good visual aids or strategy for the given topic and talk about the lesson they learned.”*

*“Teaching the lesson into chunks or mini lessons is helpful in teaching writing since I*



*can still teach prior lessons before I actually teach the main topic."*

*"The use of graphic organizers is also helpful in my classes as learners as it helps them to easily remember and grasp concepts."*

These examples are strategies utilized by teachers to assist student's learning and to assist them in their ZPDs. Other strategies that are research-based are developing topic understanding through text reading, model writing, advance organizers, and tasks that are done before writing [32, 5, 33].

### 3.10 Pedagogical Implication of Scaffolding

In Fig. 4. the word cloud shows and describes the implication of scaffolding in the pedagogy. The top 5 repeated terms are yes (18) which means majority of the respondents agreed that scaffolding strategy is effective in their writing class, writing (9), students (9), helps (7), effective (5).

Fig. 5 emphasize the relationships between the frequently occurring terms, it is more realistic to use link or a collocates graphs. The trends show the linked keywords indicate how they are clustered together in the text (thicker lines signify higher occurrence), it indicates underlying themes. Findings suggest 10 emerging implications of scaffolding in teaching writing. The emerging terms were helps, effective, easily, strategies, guide, systematic, understand, process, skills, ultimate. The emerging terms shows that instructional scaffolding strategies are effective in helping and giving support to student to fully understand the systematic process in writing, moreover the teacher can construct guides and strategies to help the student to achieve and improve ultimately the writing skills of the students. The mentioned terms together with some actual quotations from the individual responses:

*"Yes, it helps my learners produce a good writing composition."*

*"I find it effective as scaffolding helps in meeting the objectives of the lessons and it helps in discovering the strengths and points to improve of the learners."*

*"Yes, instructional scaffolding strategies are highly effective in a writing class. They provide*

*support and guidance to students as they develop their writing skills, ultimately helping them become more proficient writers."*

*"Yes. We have diverse learners. Scaffolding is a strategy which you can see the end product - that is they learn little by little. The result is rewarding for the teacher."*

Other researchers have also demonstrated the benefits of scaffolding in the teaching and learning process [34,26,24,25]. All studies supported the effectiveness of scaffolding in enhancing students' writing skills. Using the concept "learning how to mean" used by Haliday in McKay (2006) to characterize learning how to use the language, pupils are helped by the management of scaffolding tactics in the classroom [35].

**Table 1. Teachers' implementation of instructional scaffolding strategies**

Constructs (Themes)	Code(s)	(f)
Writing skills	Writing	15
	students	12
	learners	7
	write	6
	skills	3
Writing process	understand	1
	Scaffolding	6
	Activities	6
	Teaching	7
Instructional planning	Support	1
	Make	5
	Ideas	5
	Incorporate	4
	Lessons	3
	Provide	2
	Instructions	2
	Utilize	1
	Task	3
	Objectives	2
	Strategy	3
	Visual	3
	Skills	3
Organizers	2	
Writing strategies	Model	2
	Graphic	2
	Aids	1
	Tool	1
	Steps	2
	Brainstorming	2
	Breakdown	1
	Drills	2



they employed in their class which they regarded as scaffolding strategies were templates, handouts, and demonstrations that are obviously examples of modelling. The researcher also investigated how these teachers implemented instructional scaffolding strategies in their class, the written responses of the respondents revealed that writing skills, writing process, instructional planning and writing strategies are important constructs that a teacher needs to remember in the process of implementation. The meaningful data from the respondents shows that instructional scaffolding strategy is effective in improving students writing skills.

Finally, certain limitations of this study must be noted: First, this study was conducted with limited respondents, second the goal of the researcher is just to explore on the scaffolding strategies used in writing and how teachers implement this in their writing class having diverse students. Third, the scaffolding strategies that was mentioned in the study are the noted strategies used in Junior High School. Hence, future studies may explore other levels and classroom context also, to test the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in different forms of writing, moreover in writing research paper which scaffolding strategies is very promising instructional strategies.

## CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

The researcher sought approval from the Division Office in the locality before the implementation of the study and submitted the notice to the school head for distribution of survey.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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