The Impact of Scaffolding on the Iranian EFL Learners’ English Academic Writing

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Abstract: The present study described how a group of university students were guided through the process of scaffolding according to Vygotskian sociocultural theory, to produce their first academic essays in English. The researcher tried to teach the students how to generate ideas, structure, draft, and edit their essays within the scaffolding principles such as, contextualizing, modeling, negotiating, contingency, constructing and handover, within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in order to solve the problem of academic writing among students of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Islamic Azad University of Mashhad. Therefore, 60 out of 90 students were randomly assigned to two groups, one control and one experimental, 30 students in each and scaffolding was provided as a treatment to the experimental group but the control group did not include in the treatment. At the end of the treatment period an independent sample t-test was performed to compare the post-test mean scores of two groups on the TOEFL test. The result of the analysis showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group at 0.05 level of significance. So the researcher concluded that the application of scaffolding could greatly improve the writing performance of students at university.

Keywords: Sociocultural Theories, Scaffolding, Academic Writing, Writing.

INTRODUCTION

Writing, which was once considered the domain of the well-educated, has become an essential tool for people of all walks of life in today's global community (Weigle, 2002). The importance of writing is highlighted in Robinson's (1995) argument that "without writing there would be no history". It is one of the least understood language-production tasks, which both professional and nonprofessional writers often lament that the process of writing is arduous and complex. (Kelleher, 1999)

The ability to write effectively is also becoming increasingly important in our global community, and instruction in writing is thus assuming an increasing role in both second and foreign language education (weigle, 2002) than it occupied twenty or thirty years ago. There is an active interest today in new theoretical approaches to the study of written texts as well as approaches to the teaching of second language writing and how they can support their students to attain this goal. (Hyland, 2009)

Recently the researchers pay too much attention to academic writing because it causes some problems for students who have to write in L2 especially for academic purposes. (Khuwaileh and Al-Shoumali, 2000). Academic writing has usually one of two purposes: to provide information which a teacher has requested or to advance an argument about an issue related to the subject you are studying. In other words, academic essays are generally written in either the informative rhetorical mode or in the persuasive rhetorical mode (Soles, 2005). An informative essay presents complete and accurate information about a specific topic. The purpose of a persuasive essay is, in part, to present information to your reader but, primarily, to convince or persuade your reader that your views on a particular controversial topic are valid and legitimate (Soles, 2005).

Writing in college often takes the form of persuasion. It is a skill you practice regularly in your daily life. You persuade your roommate to clean up. In college course assignments often ask you to make a persuasive case in writing. You are asked to convince your reader of your point of view. This form of persuasion is what Gabrielatos, (2002) portrays as the one-shot accuracy-based and error-corrective tradition, hugely de-emphasized in academic setting because of weak basis in a plausible
theory (P.C). The slim literature on product-based literature may be due to the under-representation looming upon that because of the contrast with process-oriented in a ubiquitous dichotomy. As Aghili, (1997) spotlights, this dichotomy divides grammatical form from communicative content in closer zooming as an indicant of Product and Process writing, respectively traditional and message-oriented (p.13). Yet, there is no unanimous agreement on the choice between the two among the scholars. Ansari, (1997) observes that students expectation and orientation in Iran is set more towards Product-based approach (p.55). This should be taken into account as a factor pertaining learner-centeredness that attracts practitioners today. While the notion of recursiveness is interesting, the difficulties of implementing process writing should be regarded. In the same vein, Hadley, (2003) observes that the writing process of students is not outlined and does not always come smoothly in 'stages' of writing in composition manuals, at least in the chronological sense (p.319).

There is plenty of literature review on How's and why's of process approaches, while this is not true about its counterpart "productive writing". Productive writing is one those traditional, intuitive, a-theoretical approaches, like grammar-translation. Product and process approaches were depicted below in figure 1.

**One Shot → Selecting a topic & Begin Writing an essay:**

![A model of process writing (White and Arndt, 1991)](image)

While every act of writing is in a sense both personal and individual, it is also interactional and social, expressing a culturally recognized purpose, reflecting a particular kind of relationship, and acknowledging and engagement in a given community. This means that writing cannot be distilled down to a set of cognitive or technical abilities or a system of rules, and that learning to write in a second language is not simply a matter of opportunities to compose and revise (Hyland, 2009).

Recently, teachers at all levels of instruction have become more and more interested in how they can support their students in learning to write academically. One useful metaphor for this support is scaffolding. The concept of scaffolding owes much to the work of the Russian social psychologist Lev Vygotsky and his many followers who have researched the social basis of human learning and development through interaction. In addition, his concept in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emerge early in 20th century (Stuyf, 2002).

Vygotsky proposes it is zones between what he calls 'actual' development (what the learner can do independently) and 'potential' development (what the learner can do in the future, with the help of others now). Every act of learning occurs within a ZPD, building on what the learner already knows and can do, and is first interspsychological (social) before it is intra-psychological (psychological) (Benedict Lin, 2006). In the view of ZPD, the role of teachers is to provide assistance or support to students with tasks that are just beyond students' current capability. When students' gradually develop their mastery, teachers start the process of 'fading', or gradual removal of the temporary support (Benson, 2004).

Wells, (1998) has argued that scaffolding should not be confused with"collaborative learning" as he claims some has done (e.g. Anton and Dicamilia, 1998). According to Wells, the scaffolding label is misapplied unless (1) it refers to a conversation involving one participant who is more expert than the others; (2) it is applied to situations where the primary objective is to teach someone something; and (3) it is carried out with the expert participant's intention of making the novice participant self-sufficient in managing the task at hand, it is this restricted sense of the term that is adopted for use here.

In this study the researcher investigated the function and importance of applying scaffolding to English Academic Writing among Students of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Islamic Azad University of Mashhad through ongoing students' interaction. There was a gradual process of internalization whereby an externalized social practice becomes an internalized cognitive practice (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995).

To sum up, the purpose of this study was to determine whether applying scaffolding principles such as contextualizing, modeling, negotiating, contingency, constructing and handover within Zone of Proximal
Development (ZPD) can improve the EFL learners' English academic writing. Therefore, the following was the research hypothesis tested in this study:

\[ H_0: \text{Scaffolding does not have any significant impact on EFL learners' English academic writing.} \]

**Method:**

**Subjects:**

The subjects participating in this study were university students who were studying at bachelor level in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Islamic Azad University of Mashhad. The subjects were both male and female with the average age range of 23. The subjects were taking the Essay writing course which is usually presented in the fifth semester of their education. First, it should be mentioned that Preliminary English Test (PET) was piloted with 30 subjects with the same characteristics as the subjects in the target sample. After that, 90 students attended in the piloted PET language proficiency test for homogenization in the main study. Then 60 out of 90 subjects with the scores of one standard deviation above and below the mean were randomly assigned to two groups, one experimental and one control group, 30 subjects in each.

**Instrumentation:**

In order to fulfill the purpose of the study, the researcher applied certain instruments to measure the subjects' abilities in terms of language proficiency and writing ability.

1. **Language proficiency test:**
   To homogenize the 90 subjects, the reading and writing sections of PET (Preliminary English Test) were used in this study. After administration of this test, 60 out of 90 subjects whose scores fell between one standard deviation above and below the mean were randomly assigned as the subjects of the target study.

2. **Test of academic writing prior to the treatment:**
   A test of academic writing was administered to all 60 subjects in both experimental and control groups prior to the treatment to check any significant difference between the two groups. The subjects were asked to write about 150 words in 20 minutes on a topic from TOEFL test.

3. **The writing posttest:**
   After the completion of the treatment during a course of seven weekly sessions each two hours, in the last session a writing performance test (TOEFL) was administered as a post-test to both control and experimental groups in order to measure their writing performance after the treatment. The subjects were asked to write an essay about 250 words in 30 minutes on the topic from TOEFL.

4. **Rating scale:**
   Because of the fact that scoring of writing is highly subjective, Jacobs, Wormuth, Harfiel, and Hughey, (1981) writing rating scale, an analytic rating scale, was used in this study. In this scale, scripts are rated on five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The five aspects are differentially weighted to emphasize first content (30 points) and next language use (25 points), with organization and vocabulary weighted equally (20 points) and mechanics receiving very little emphasis (5 points) which totally equal to 100 points.

5. **Textbooks:**
   The assigned textbook for this course was “Paragraph Development” by Arnaudet and Barret, (1990). This is mostly a product-oriented textbook which mainly deals with product-related issues, such as the format of a one-paragraph essay, topic sentences and supporters, coherence and cohesion, and different types of paragraphs. For the purpose of this study, in addition to this textbook, another textbook entitled “Process Writing” by White and Amrldt, (1991) was also chosen which clearly and comprehensively presents a step-by-step procedure for teaching writing strategies through a process-oriented approach.

**Procedure:**

**Subjects selection and homogenization:**

In order to homogenize the subjects a language proficiency test (PET) was administered to 90 subjects in terms of their English proficiency level. In this language proficiency test, the students had to answer the reading and writing questions in the allocated time, then with regards to the subjects' scores distribution, 60 out of 90 subjects whose scores fell one standard deviation above and below the mean were chosen as the main subjects of the study and were randomly assigned to two groups, one control and one experimental, with 30 students in each.
The inter-rater reliability of writing section was calculated as well. To do so, the writing section was rated by the researcher and another trained instructor and after making sure of the internal consistency between the two raters, the obtained score of each subject was considered as the average of the scores given by the two raters. It is worth mentioning that the researcher and the other rater were trained in using the same rating scale through teamwork in order to decrease subjectivity of making pieces of writing and increase the amount of inter-rater consistency.

As the next step, a test of academic writing was administered to all 60 subjects in both experimental and control groups prior to the treatment to check any significant difference between the two groups. The subjects of both groups were asked to write an argumentative essay about 150 words in 20 minutes on the topic of "People attend college or university for many different reasons (for example, new experiences, career preparation, and increased knowledge). Why do you think people attend college or university? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer." After scoring their essays, their scores were put into an independent sample t-test in order to make sure that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of their essay writing ability prior to the treatment. It is worth mentioning since the subjectivity was the major problem in marking the writing samples, two raters scored the writings in this study. Both assessors used the same rating scale which was Jacobs, Wormuth, Harfiel, and Hughey, (1981).

**Treatment:**

The conditions of the two groups was the same including gender, average age range of 23, the number of sessions, hours, the time of test, the PET questions and also the writing topics of TOEFL. The argumentative essay writing with the TOEFL topics was held seven sessions once a week and each session lasted two hours (a total of 14 hours).

In the control group, first the teacher started with the book "Paragraph Development" through which the teacher introduced the introduction part in which the students became familiar with the process of stating their claims as a thesis statement and then in the body part they learned how to support their claims in the introduction part and in the last part including conclusion, they must have got the purpose of the essay. The teacher also taught the students from the book of "process writing" how to generate ideas, structure, draft and edit their essays. The students went through all this process in a traditional way. Every session the teacher explained the lesson and provided a list of topics which were written on the board and asked the students to select one from a variety of topics. They should have finished it in the specified time. The students were sitting like an exam session, thinking and jotting down sentences on and off. Some were observed randomly and if they had any questions, they could silently ask the teacher and the teacher commented on their work. The finished essay was presented as read aloud for the students in the class and they could do further revisions at home and hand the final fair essay next session to teacher. The teacher emphasized correct spelling, appropriate use of grammar and lexicon, and a good range of vocabulary as the elements of good writing product. The condition of the control group was exactly like the experimental group but the students in the control group did not receive scaffolding as a treatment in all process of essay writing in the classroom. They did not do any team or group work in the writing process in the classroom and wrote individually.

In the experimental group like the control group, first the researcher started with the book "Paragraph Development" to teach the students how to write a five paragraph academic essay which must be argumentative, in which the students learned that an argumentative essay includes introductory section in which they must have stated their claim as a thesis statement, then in three other paragraphs they must have provided the reader with evidence to support their thesis statement and in the last paragraph including conclusion they must have indicated that the essay’s purpose had been fulfilled. Although the researcher only considered their final product writing for assessment, but she paid special attention to the writing process so the researcher also used the book of "process writing" in which she applied four different stages according to Raimes, (1991) and White and Arndt (1991): a) Generating ideas (brainstorming), b) Structuring (outlining), c) Drafting (writing/revising), d) Editing (reviewing/evaluating/proof reading). The researcher with specific regard to the aforementioned four stages of writing formulated six principles of scaffolding according to Leo Van Lier, (1996):

**In Contextualizing Stage:**

A whole section was devoted to building students' understanding of the context in which the target text was used. This could be a crucial step for learners in Foreign Language Learning or new migrant contexts who may have little idea of the cultural and situational aspects of the genre. Here teachers established the purpose of the text, the roles and relationships of those who used it and generally built an understanding of the social activity in which it was used. Although teaching and learning is essentially a social activity, writing is often regarded as a solitary chore involving high stress and low gain (Tsui, 1996) thus, when inducting students into writing, the teacher needs to create a supportive but challenging environment, set the overall goal and direction, and clearly explain the rational for such writing, demonstrate the procedures. This was done at the start of writing cycle, and
was aimed at stimulating the students' interest in the tasks in hand. (The role of teacher is as initiator / guide/ resource and motivator).

**During Modeling and Deconstruction Stage:**

The teacher's role was again strongly directive as he or she presented examples, identifies the stages of the text, and introduced activities to practice salient language features. Learners' attention was drawn to the structure and language of the genre through the different stages of language scaffolding tasks, moving from consciousness-raising through model manipulation and controlled composition exercises. Here, then tasks assisted students to learn the grammar they need in the context of relevant and purposeful teacher-directed activities. (In this stage generating idea and different techniques of it was demonstrated and introduced. After explaining brainstorming, a model of topic sentence, organization, supporters, outline, unity and coherence, draft and edit, was provided on a selected topic and was written on the board by teacher, and then the students were asked to participate in creating them and a teacher-students conferencing feedback was provided for them. (The role of teacher here was as an instructor/ guide/ controller).

**In Joint Negotiation Stage:**

The teacher began to relinquish responsibility to the students as they gained control of the genre and confidence in writing. Students' growing understanding allowed them to create a target text in collaboration with the teacher and their peers. They were guided through all steps of generating, structuring and drafting process, developed a text together through writing heuristic tasks and teacher questions which shape the text ( e.g., where did we go first? What did we see? Where did we go next? Then what happened?). (First of all the students were got into groups of 4 or 5 and a topic was given to the students and was asked them to collaborate with each other in creating all these stages. The teacher controlled and observed them directly in writing and asked to provide each other with peer feedback. The group members engaged in exploring talk (mercer, 1995), building on each other's ideas to work towards a target goal. They make a draft (within- group revisions face to face). The structure of the course thus obliges students to collaborate intersubjectively, and the teacher responsibility was to create a harmonious atmosphere that facilitates the students, as far as possible, to be thinking along the same lines. Negotiated procedural issues were clear evidence of natural flow in a free give-and-take written 'conversation'. In this type of environment students helped each other in small group settings but still had some teacher assistance (Hartman, 2002). (The role of teacher was prompter, resource)

**In Contingency Stage:**

The teacher scaffolded the students learning by monitoring their written drafts in progress. The teacher responded and provided assistance, raised or lowered the scaffold according to the needs of them. Contingent scaffolding was also provided in the face-to-face tutorial sessions: to provide extra assistance and practice in the skills taught during lectures, to answer questions, suggest ides for strategies, maintain focus and motivation, and deal with any problems that arise. In these ways, elements of the writing process were added, deleted or adopted for individuals, groups, or the whole class according to their progression through the ZPD. (The role of teacher is Monitor, Responder and supporter).

**During Independent Construction:**

Stage, the scaffolding was removed to allow students to create texts by themselves, students individually constructed the genre, based their drafts on notes and summaries they had made in researching a topic, worked through several drafts consulted the teacher and peers only as needed, and evaluated their progress in terms of the characteristics of the texts they had studied. The teacher no longer directly intervened in learning but withdrew to a more encouraging and monitoring role, advising, assisting, and providing comment on their drafts. (The role of teacher was observer, responder, and assessor)

In the last stage which is called Handover, the co-constructed drafts were edited and proofread by teacher. Once this had been done to their general satisfaction, they made final adjustments to their essay and the teacher provided feedback by giving comments on their draft. Each draft had a marking sheet, based on both lower-level concerns (punctuation, synta) and higher-level (structure, organizational) aspects that the students had learnt. In most cases, the students had attained at higher level of writing proficiency and this ZPD was closed. (The role of teacher is editor and providing feedback)

**The Writing Post–Test:**

After receiving seven-week sessions instruction in writing in both control and experimental groups and receiving treatment in only experimental group, all the subjects in both groups had to write an argumentative essay about 250 words in 30 minutes on the TOEFL topic of "some people think that they can learn better by themselves than with a teacher. Others think that it is always better to have a teacher. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons to develop your essay. ", Which was given as a post-test to both groups preceding the end of the
semester to compare the performance of the two groups in order to measure the effect of the treatment and test the null hypothesis of the study. The scores were obtained through the ratings of the students' performance on the post-test by two raters that were trained in some sessions and through a team work they rated some samples in order to increase the amount of inter-rater consistency. The raters used the same writing rating scale which was Jacobs, Wormuth, Harfiel and Hughey, (1981). The average score given by two raters to each subject was considered as the final score of each and every individual.

Results:

In order to investigate the impact of the independent variable (Scaffolding) on the dependent variable of English Academic Writing, different descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the obtained data which comprised of the subjects' scores on the PET proficiency used for homogenizing the participants and an academic writing prior to the treatment and finally their scores on the TOEFL writing posttest. In this study, gender might have been an intervening variable due to the unbalanced number of males and females in control and experimental groups and language proficiency was the control variables due to the fact that the researchers homogenized the participants with respect to their overall language proficiency.

Homogenizing the subjects:

The researcher used the PET test to calculate the descriptive statistics of the homogenizing PET test with a group of 90 subjects.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the PET language proficiency test used for homogenizing the subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>proficiency</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>52.00</td>
<td>42.0222</td>
<td>.68568</td>
<td>6.50493</td>
<td>.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table depicts, the obtained value for the mean was 42.02 with the standard deviation of 6.50. Accordingly, since at least 60 subjects were needed for the main part of the study, the subjects whose scores on test were between the mean plus or minus one standard deviation were selected. Therefore, those subjects with scores between 35- 48 were chosen for the main study.

The researcher also examined the reliability of the PET language proficiency test. As it was indicated, the reliability was about 0.81 which is acceptable. It showed that the test had internal consistency and was highly reliable. The performance of the subjects on the writing test was rated by two raters using the analytic rating scale by Jacobs, Wormuth, Harfiel and Hughey, (1981), and inter-rater reliability was estimated to be 0.96 which indicated there was a high correlation between two raters.

Table 2: Calculating Inter-rater reliability of the PET Language Proficiency Test Correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rater1</th>
<th>rater2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.957**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.957**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although a very narrow band score (35-48) was selected to ensure homogeneity, In order to further verify whether the subjects in both groups were homogeneous in terms of their writing ability, the mean scores obtained by each group on the writing test were compared by means of an independent t-test. To do this, a test of academic writing was administered to 60 subjects in both experimental and control groups prior to the treatment to check for any significant difference between the two groups.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics prior to the treatment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>experimental</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31.3667</td>
<td>8.79845</td>
<td>.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.6000</td>
<td>8.56456</td>
<td>.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (list wise)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To check this normality of the distribution of each group as a prerequisite to conducting a t-test, the statistic of skewness was divided by the standard error of skewness; the results were 1.30 (.56/.43) for the control group and 1.49 (.64/43) for the experimental group. Because values were between – 1.96 and +1.96, it was concluded that the scores were normally distributed in each group.

### Table 4: The T-test prior to the treatment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental And control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>-.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it was illustrated in Table 4, the result of Levene’s test of homogeneity of variance also proved t-test legitimate (F= 0.003, P= .95>.05) as the other condition for t-test, i.e. homogeneity of variance was met.

Since the Sig. (2-tailed) value (0.58) is larger than 0.05, it could be concluded that there was not a significant difference between the groups mean scores on the homogeneity test. The two groups were homogeneous in their writing ability prior to the administration of the treatment.

**Writing Posttest:**

When the treatment period was finished, the researcher administered writing post-test from a sample TOEFL test and calculated the students' writing post-test descriptive statistics in both experimental and control groups. As the tables indicated the mean for experimental group was 75.40 with the SD of 11.07 and for control group the mean with the SD of 10.88 was 65.47. The inter-rater reliability was 0.98 which was high. Therefore it showed that there was a high correlation between raters.

### Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the academic writing post test scores of control and experimental groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experimental</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.4000</td>
<td>11.07529</td>
<td>-.772</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65.4667</td>
<td>10.88097</td>
<td>-.274</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rater1</th>
<th>rater2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.985**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Testing the Null Hypothesis:**

To investigate the null hypothesis of the study the researcher conducted an independent samples t-test. Prior to this, the normality of the scores distribution within each group had to be checked. The skewness of the control group divided by its standard error was - 0.63 (-.27/.43) while that of the experimental group was -1.79 (-.77/.43). Both values fell below -1.96 and +1.96, which meant they were both normal distributions and thus running a t-test was legitimized. An independent t-test was performed to compare the mean scores of both experimental and control groups on the TOEFL post-test to check the impact of the treatment on the experimental group.
Table 6: T-test of the two groups' post-test mean scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posttest Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

based on the above table, the Levene's test indicated the existence of equal variances among groups (F=.04, p=.83>.05). Considering the obtained results (t=2.18, df= 58, p=.002< α=.05), it can be claimed that teaching scaffolding did have statistically significant effect on the EFL learners' English academic writing in the view of the fact that the p value (.002) is lower than (.05).

Discussion:

At the university level in particular, writing is seen no just as a standardized system of communication but also as an essential tool for learning (Weigle, 2002) and since writing has always been a difficult skill for learners to master, educational practitioners have been searching for new methods to improve learners' writing ability. The idea of an innovative method in this concern which was the use of Vygotsky's theory in sociocultural which was called scaffolding principles were brought into focus in this study.

A null hypothesis was put forward to find out whether using scaffolding in the classroom would have any impact on the subjects' writing. It was speculated that the subjects in the experimental group might improve in their writing performance more than those in the control group who did not receive treatment period. The results of the analysis of the data led to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

The statistics revealed a prominent difference between the mean scores of the two groups. The mean score obtained by the students of the experimental group on the writing test was 75.40, higher than the total mean score of those in the control group that was 65.47. So the results showed that there was an improvement on the students' writing in the experimental group that was absent from the control group.

Conclusion:

The results indicated that the subjects, who had the opportunity to receive scaffolding principles, outperformed the subjects with the lack of scaffolding. Writing effectively is one of the most important skills for EFL learners especially in academic contexts. However, finding ways and means of improving the writing abilities of EFL learners seems to have been the preoccupation of language teachers. Since the studies found a strong relationship between scaffolding and EFL learners English academic writing the researcher taught and practiced scaffolding principles as the treatment for the experimental group. The subjects in the experimental group were more involved in the process of instruction than those in the control group. In contrast, some of the control group subjects were passive and followed traditional structures in performing assignments. As a final point, the statistical analysis indicated that scaffolding did have a significant impact on the EFL learner’s English academic writing.

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