From Struggle to Structure: Scaffolding Genre Writing for Emerging Writers

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine (1) the impact of scaffolding techniques in genre-based instruction on the writing quality of low-proficiency English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, (2) the effectiveness of different scaffolding strategies during genre writing tasks, and (3) learners' perceptions of scaffolding and its usefulness in improving writing performance. The sample consisted of 20 first-year university students enrolled in a foundational English writing course. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on placement test scores indicating low writing proficiency. The instruments used for data collection included writing tasks (pre-test and post-test), classroom observation checklists, and semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The findings revealed that students significantly improved in genre structure, organization, and coherence after scaffolded instruction. Effective scaffolding strategies included teacher modeling, joint text construction, use of graphic organizers, and guided peer feedback. Additionally, students reported increased confidence, reduced anxiety, and greater clarity in understanding genre conventions. These results support the role of structured scaffolding in enhancing writing development among low-proficiency ESL learners.

Keywords: Scaffolding; Genre-based instruction; ESL writing; Low-proficiency learners; Writing pedagogy; Systemic functional linguistics

Introduction

The evolution of scaffolding who write gender for emerging writers drew greater attention in writing education, especially as educators seek to improve pedagogical practices. Previous research highlighted the positive effects of scaffolding on gender-based writing instructions, especially for English students as a foreign language (EFL). As Nguyen & Truong (2024) found that scaffolding significantly improves student writing performance, providing structured support adapted to specific gender conventions. However, challenges persist in effectively implementing these strategies in various classroom environments. Widiana et al. (2021) have noted that while theoretically scaffolding arises, practical difficulties usually arise, indicating a gap in robust implementation strategies.

Current knowledge gaps remain in relation to the beliefs and practices of gender -based scaffolding educators. Nguyen et al. (2025) explored how EFL's Vietnamese teachers perceive scaffolding in their writing instructions but identified inconsistencies between these beliefs and classroom practices. Such discrepancies highlight a critical need for further investigation into effective teacher education.

In addition, the role of teachers in increasing gender -based writing through scaffolding is underrated. Kuiper and Smit (2022) pointed out that teacher learning processes during design-based research projects reveal valuable information that can inform future scaffolding approaches. Consequently, understanding these dynamics is essential for the development of enhanced pedagogical structures that support emerging writers, thus completing the gaps in education writing and promoting more effective learning environments.

This research paper presents an investigation into the impact of scaffolding within genre-based writing instruction for low-proficiency EFL learners, with a particular focus on how teacher-led scaffolding practices influence writing performance. Drawing on both theoretical frameworks and classroom-based evidence, the study aims to bridge the gap between pedagogical theory and practical application by exploring effective scaffolding strategies and learners' responses to these supports.

Research Objectives

1. Investigate the impact of scaffolding techniques in genre-based instruction on the writing quality of low-proficiency ESL learners.

2. Examine the effectiveness of various scaffolding strategies during genre writing tasks.

3. Explore learners' perceptions of scaffolding and its role in improving their writing performance.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Genre-Based Writing

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) profoundly influences genre -based writing pedagogy through the teaching and learning cycle (TLC), particularly increasing effective communication and promoting literacy development. In essence, SFL postulates that language works to convey meaning in specific social contexts, making it particularly relevant to understanding writing as a situated social practice. In a gender -based structure, writing is not simply a mechanical act, but a purposeful activity adapted to meet the expectations of specific audiences and contexts.

TLC provides a structured approach to systematically writing teaching. It comprises stages of modeling, joint construction and independent construction, each integral part of the development of students' writing resources. Nagao (2019) emphasizes that the SFL gender-based approach helps students discern the typical linguistic and structural characteristics of various genres, which later inform their writing practices. In engaging with authentic samples, students develop an understanding of how different genres serve different communicative purposes. For example, they learn to distinguish between narrative, expository and persuasive writing, which cultivates not only their writing skills, but also their critical thinking and analytical skills.

In this context, the application of TLC facilitates a deepening of awareness of gender and linguistic knowledge among students. During the modeling phase, teachers elucidate the conventions of a specific genre, demonstrating how language choices transmit intended meanings. After that, during joint construction, students actively participate in the creation of texts with guidance, promoting collaborative learning. This collaborative aspect is crucial as it allows students to negotiate meaning and experience language in a support environment. The independent construction stage enables students to apply their knowledge acquired autonomously, increasing their confidence and written competence.

The integration of SFL into gender-based writing pedagogy through the TLC promotes comprehensive literacy development. In focusing on the relationship between language, context and function, educators can significantly improve students' writing skills, allowing them to communicate more effectively in various academic and social contexts. The synthesis of these

elements emphasizes the importance of adopting pedagogical strategies informed by SFL to support students to become proficient and adaptable communicators.

Scaffolding in Second Language Writing Instruction

The concept of Vygotsky in the proximal development zone (ZPD) underlines the importance of social interaction in learning, in particular in the acquisition of the language. Effective scaffolding methods, such as modeling, joint construction, guided practice and feedback, play a crucial role in improving the teaching of the second language writing. For example, modeling provides learners with clear examples, while joint construction encourages collaboration efforts that align on the ZPD of learners Guided practice allows learners to apply new skills with support, which is essential in writing development (Damanhouri, 2021). In addition, feedback, in particular peer feedback, considerably improves writing skills by offering learners various perspectives on their work, strengthening the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (Zahid, 2024). Thus, the integration of these scaffolding techniques can effectively improve the results of writing the second language.

Challenges Faced by Low-Proficiency ESL Learners in Writing

ESL learners with a low responsibility are faced with significant challenges in writing, in particular in gender –based tasks that require adherence to specific linguistic and organizational conventions. These challenges are exacerbated by linguistic barriers which affect the use of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy (Nur & Bintang, 2025). In addition, organizational difficulties often arise while learners find it difficult to structure their writing appropriately, which has an impact on their ability to transmit coherent ideas (Nurdianingsih et al., 2024). The cognitive challenges, such as limited metacognitive consciousness, more hinder their writing process (Startzell, Calumpang & Bacang, 2025). To support these learners, educators can implement targeted strategies such as scaffolding teaching, reauction of peers and explicit gender teaching, thus resolving the challenges with multiple facets inherent in the drafting of ESL with low strengthening (Nur & Bintang, 2025).

Effectiveness of Scaffolding in Genre-Based Classrooms

Scaffolding in gender-based classrooms has become a significant pedagogical approach to improve writing competition among EFL Thai students (English as foreign language). The research suggests that the implementation of scaffolding strategies, both through interventions led by teachers and activities backed by peers, can lead to improvements in the writing structure, coherence and grammatical precision. For example, Supan (2023) emphasizes the effectiveness of

a gender-based learning writing evaluation model, which encourages students to reflect on their writing processes and results, which subsequently leads to improved levels of competition.

Empirical studies have illustrated the effectiveness of peer feedback in gender-based writing contexts. Prompan and Piamsai (2024) discovered that self -regulated learning together with peer feedback substantially improved the essay writing skills of the students of the Thailand University of EFL. The collaborative nature of peer support not only encourages a sense of community among students, but also improves their critical thinking and editing skills. In contrast, the scaffolding by teachers tends to provide a structured orientation, essential for students who may have difficulties in independent learning. The research carried out by Siangsanoh (2023) highlights the role of the directed feedback of teachers in assistance to secondary students higher than the elaboration of personal statements, offering a clear framework to continue that increases the coherence and structural integrity.

In addition, it has been shown that the use of collaborative evaluation strategies, such as group dynamic evaluation, significantly benefits students. Sawetsiri (2024) demonstrates that such approaches can create a rich learning environment in which students participate collectively in the writing process. Finally, the systematic review of the literature carried out by Hitimala et al. (2024) supports the notion that a gender -based approach facilitates the development of personalized feedback, which indicates that the quality of writing of the students improves when the scaffolding is effectively integrated.

In general, combining the scaffolding by teachers and supported by classmates within the classrooms based on the genre is crucial to raise the writing capabilities of EFL Thai EFL students, creating a holistic educational experience that addresses several facets of the writing instruction (Tajik et al., 2024).

Teacher Roles and Strategies in Scaffolding Genre-Based Writing

The role of teachers in writing based on the genre of scaffolding is essential to improve English writing skills as foreign language students (EFL), particularly in the context of Asia. In Thailand, where the educational panorama is marked by various students' needs, the implementation of differentiated instruction and receptive teaching strategies is essential. This document aims to analyze the strategic roles of teachers in writing based on the scaffolding genre while maintaining a balance between providing the necessary support and promoting the autonomy of the student.

Differentiated instruction implies adapting teaching methods to accommodate the various skills and learning styles of students. In gender-based writing, teachers can use this approach to offer personalized writing tasks that meet the individual needs of students. Insuwan and Thongrin (2025) claim that empowering students through a gender -based approach not only cultivates critical thinking, but also improves writing skills by involving students in adequate tasks for their levels of competence. By recognizing the different starting points of each student, teachers can facilitate a more inclusive class environment that promotes various writing expressions.

Complementing differentiated instruction, receptive teaching plays a fundamental role in writing scaffolding. This method emphasizes the importance of adaptability in teaching practices based on the comments and immediate needs of students. Nguyen and Truong (2024) highlight how scaffolding, as an instructional strategy, significantly affects the performance of EFL students in gender -based writing. In actively responding to students' challenges, educators can provide appropriate support that facures students to address writing tasks with confidence. In this context, it becomes essential for teachers to improve their observation skills and response capacity in real time, (Tseng & Lin, 2024) thus ensuring that support is aligned with the evolutionary abilities of students.

Yet, the roles and strategies of teachers in writing based on the genre of scaffolding in Thailand require a multifaceted approach that combines differentiated instruction, receptive teaching and the promotion of student autonomy. By understanding and addressing the unique needs of students, teachers can implement effective scaffolding that not only improve writing performance, but also prepare EFL students to prosper as independent writers in various genres. The interaction of these aspects is essential to improve the quality of the writing of education in Thailand and promote a new generation of qualified writers.

Conceptual Framework

This research is a research study that aims to examine the effects of scaffolding techniques within genre-based writing instruction on the writing development of low-proficiency EFL learners. The researcher defines the research conceptual framework based on the concept/theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which underpins genre-based pedagogy, together with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, specifically the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which supports the use of scaffolding in teaching and learning processes. Scaffolding techniques, informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory,

significantly increase the writing development of low proficiency students. Nguyen and Truong (2024) emphasize that these methodologies provide essential support for students, promoting engagement and improving performance.
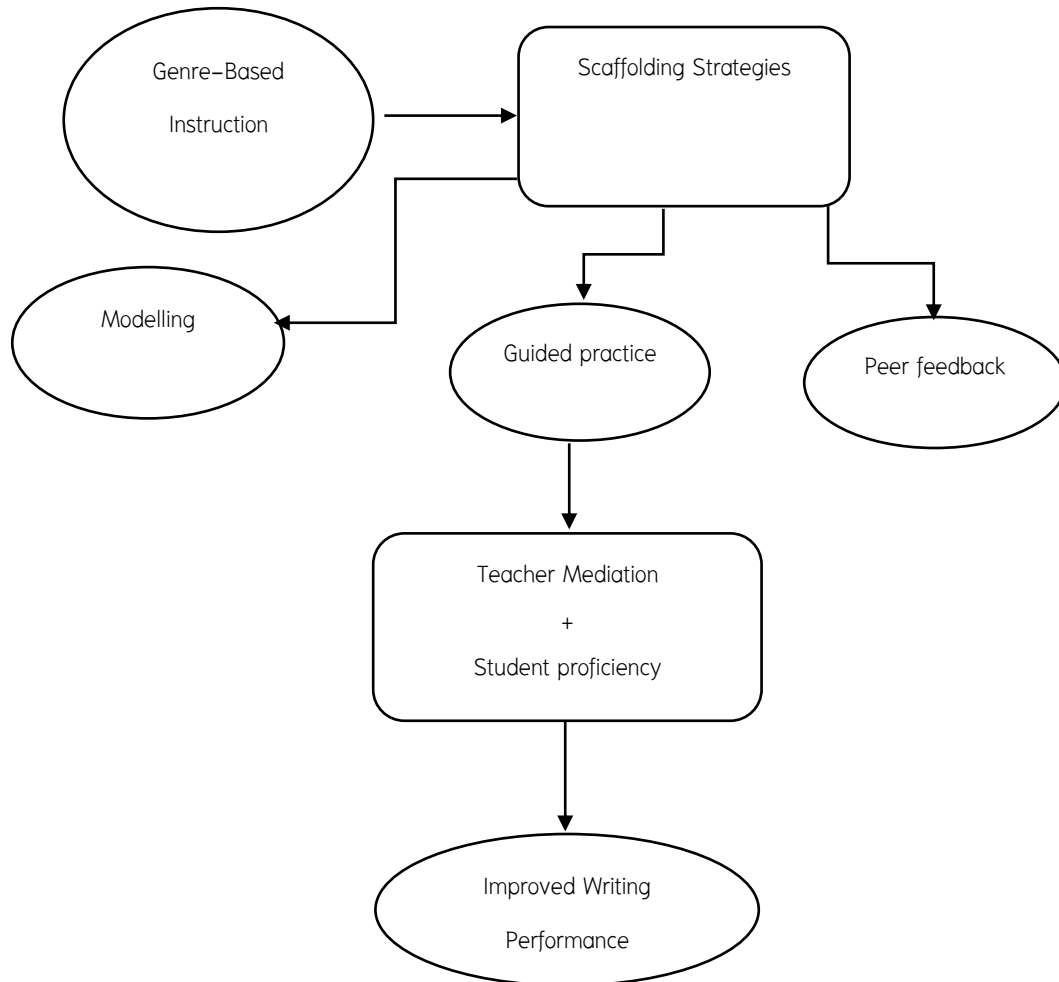

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to gain both quantitative and qualitative insights into the impact of scaffolding within genre-based writing instruction. A classroom-based action research design was adopted to allow for systematic observation and reflection on instructional practices over time. The participants consisted of 20 low-proficiency English as a Second Language (ESL) learners at the A1–A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), enrolled in a foundational writing course at the university level. Data collection instruments included pre- and post-writing tasks to measure improvements in genre-specific writing skills, observation checklists to document teacher scaffolding techniques,

and semi-structured student interviews to explore learners' perceptions of the support they received. Writing samples were assessed using rubric focusing on organization, coherence, grammar, and adherence to genre structure. The intervention spanned a period of four to six weeks, during which students received genre-based writing instruction incorporating structured scaffolding strategies such as teacher modeling, guided practice, and peer collaboration.

The cohort reflects an intact class typical of classroom-based action research, maximizing ecological validity and feasibility. Because the primary quantitative test is within-subjects (pre–post), statistical power is higher than in between-group designs; with n = 20 and α = .05 (two-tailed), the design is sensitive to medium effects on the difference scores while also supporting qualitative depth. For the qualitative strand, 20 participants allow theme saturation for classroom-bounded phenomena and enable meaningful triangulation with observational data.

In terms of rubric reliability, two trained raters, blind to time point (pre vs. post), scored all writing samples using the analytic rubric (Organization, Coherence, Grammar, Genre Structure; 1–5 scale per dimension). Rater training included anchor papers and calibration rounds until agreement thresholds were met. To estimate inter-rater reliability, 30% of scripts were double-scored. We computed (a) two-way random-effects intraclass correlation coefficients with 95% confidence intervals, and (b) quadratic-weighted Cohen's κ as a robustness check for ordinal ratings. Agreement was considered acceptable at ICC ≥ .75 (good) and excellent at ICC ≥ .90.

Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated for the rubric dimensions at each time point (and for the pooled set) to assess the internal consistency of the analytic rubric; α ≥ .70 was treated as adequate. Disagreements between raters were resolved by discussion with reference to the rubric descriptors, and consensus scores were used for the primary analyses.

Research Results

The study involved 20 low-proficiency ESL university students, primarily female, aged 18–21, with A1–A2 English levels and mostly from Humanities and Social Sciences fields (see Table1). Students showed significant improvement in genre structure, coherence, and grammar post-instruction. Their self-reported confidence and understanding of genre conventions also increased substantially after scaffolded support (see Table 2).

Teacher modeling and feedback were consistently observed in all sessions. Joint text construction, graphic organizers, and peer feedback were also frequently employed, reinforcing student engagement during genre-based writing tasks (see Table 3).

Learners expressed that scaffolding improved their writing confidence, reduced anxiety, and clarified genre structure. Collaborative tasks and guided support were particularly appreciated, with many requesting similar approaches in future classes (see Table 4)

Table 1 Participant Demographics (n = 20)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	8	40%
	Female	12	60%
Age Group	18–19	10	50%
	20–21	8	40%
	22+	2	10%
CEFR Proficiency Level	A1	9	45%
	A2	11	55%
Field of Study	Humanities/Social Sciences	14	70%
	Science/Technology	6	30%

Table 2 Summary of Writing Performance and Perception Results

Measure	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Improvement Observed
Genre Structure (max score = 10)	4.2 (1.1)	7.8 (0.9)	Significant improvement
Organization & Coherence (max score = 10)	4.5 (1.3)	8.1 (1.0)	Significant improvement
Grammar Accuracy (max score = 10)	3.9 (1.4)	6.7 (1.2)	Moderate improvement
Student-Reported Confidence (5-point scale)	2.1 (0.7)	4.0 (0.6)	Increased confidence
Understanding of Genre Conventions (5-point scale)	2.4 (0.6)	4.2 (0.5)	Greater clarity reported

Table 3 Frequency of Scaffolding Strategies Observed During Instruction

Scaffolding Strategy	Frequency Observed (Sessions)	% of Total Sessions (n = 12)	Notes
Teacher Modeling	12	100%	Used at beginning of each genre cycle
Joint Text Construction	10	83%	Frequently applied during guided writing
Graphic Organizers	9	75%	Used to plan and structure writing
Peer Feedback	8	67%	Emphasized in revision stage
Sentence Starters/Frames	7	58%	Helpful for students with low proficiency
Teacher Feedback (Oral/Written)	12	100%	Provided throughout writing process

Table 4 Learner Perceptions from Interviews

Theme	Representative Student Quote	n = 20
Increased Confidence	"Now I feel more sure how to start and organize my writing."	16
Better Understanding of Structure	"The teacher's examples helped me see how to use each part of the essay."	17
Value of Peer Collaboration	"When I worked with my classmate, I could fix my mistakes better."	12
Reduced Writing Anxiety	"I was less nervous because the teacher showed steps and gave time to practice."	15
Desire for Continued Support	"I hope we continue to use scaffolding in future writing classes."	14

Discussions

The Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), that includes Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) into genre-based writing instruction, provides a pedagogical framework that promotes literacy development and attends to the various demands of EFL learners, specifically in the Thai setting. SFL-based education enables students to understand the language and structural requirements of many genres, which is essential to their writing growth, as explained by Nagao (2019). From the perspective of TLC, where students' awareness of writing as a situated social practice is scaffolded by modeling, shared creation, and independent production, this is particularly important.

In line with various prior studies, the significance of scaffolding in enhancing second language writing is equally emphasized by Damanhouri (2021), and Zahid (2024). Their study confirms the influence of modeling, collaborative construction, and feedback in matching instructional assistance with students' zones of proximal development (ZPD). When combined with TLC, such scaffolding can effectively tackle both cognitive and emotional challenges encountered by learners with low proficiency. This study also holds significant importance within the Thai EFL

context, where students frequently face difficulties with vocabulary, grammar accuracy, and text structure (Nur & Bintang, 2025; Nurdianingsih et al., 2024; Startzell et al., 2025) highlight that these challenges are intensified by limited metacognitive awareness and anxiety, emphasizing the need for emotional and instructional assistance. Scaffolding serves as a solution for these intricate challenges, allowing students to manage the complicated requirements of writing assignments.

Empirical research supports the importance of scaffolding in classrooms focused on specific genres. In line with Supan (2023) who highlights the significance of a genre-focused assessment model, whereas Prompan and Piamsai (2024) demonstrates the enhancement of writing skills through peer review and self-regulation. These results correspond with the collaborative principles of joint construction, additionally confirming the application of TLC in practice.

Teachers' strategic roles in scaffolding are central to the success of genre-based instruction. Differentiated instruction, as advocated by Insuwan and Thongrin (2025), allows teachers to tailor tasks to student readiness levels, thereby promoting inclusivity. Receptive teaching, which emphasizes responsiveness to student needs, is equally important. Nguyen and Truong (2024) highlight how real-time adaptation of instructional support enhances learners' ability to manage genre-specific tasks.

A balance between support and autonomy is essential. Wiboonwachara and Charubusp (2022) argue that scaffolding should lead to self-regulated learning, enabling students to independently apply genre conventions. The ability to transfer knowledge across contexts is further supported by Na et al. (2024), who stress the importance of teaching students to recognize genre features in various writing situations.

Collectively, these studies indicate that effective genre-based writing instruction in EFL contexts relies on a well-structured scaffolding system grounded in SFL principles, a responsive teaching philosophy, and a commitment to fostering learner autonomy.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrating Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) through the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC) with scaffolding techniques significantly enhances low-proficiency ESL learners' genre-based writing skills. The combined approach supports students' understanding of linguistic and structural conventions while promoting collaborative and independent writing development. These findings highlight the importance of tailored, scaffolded instruction in fostering effective communication and literacy growth among EFL learners.

Suggestions

The study was conducted within a specific Thai university context, focusing on low-proficiency undergraduate EFL learners. Therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to learners in other educational settings or cultural contexts. Besides, the current study focused on specific academic or factual genres (e.g., recount, report). Other genres, such as argumentative or reflective writing, were not explored, which restricts the breadth of the study's implications. Future research may consider replicating this study in varied educational and cultural contexts to examine the generalizability of scaffolding strategies based on the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Since the current study was limited to low-proficiency EFL learners within a Thai university setting, investigating learners from different proficiency levels or institutions could provide comparative insights into the adaptability of genre-based pedagogy.

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