

Implementation of scaffolding in teaching writing skills in an ESL classroom: A study of practices and problems of Bangladeshi tertiary level ESL teachers



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practices and problems of Bangladeshi tertiary level ESL teachers

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.



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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

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DEDICATION

The dissertation is dedicated to my beloved family whose support and encouragement always motivate me to achieve the goals of my life.

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Abstract

Scaffolding is a popular pedagogical method that occurs when teachers provide a particular kind of support to the learners as they learn a new concept or skill. In terms of teaching English writing, lots of studies have been done regarding implementation, effectiveness and perception of scaffolding in different countries of the world. However, study on the implementation scaffolding in teaching ESL writing is scarce in the context of Bangladesh. So, this paper aims to investigate the practices and problems of implementing scaffolding tertiary in teaching writing in a tertiary level ESL classroom. This is a qualitative research for which I adopted case study as the research design that includes- class observation and semi-structured interview, as means of collecting data. The study was conducted in a private university of Dhaka, Bangladesh. The findings of this study revealed that the ESL teachers prefer product-based approach in teaching writing where they commonly use scaffolding techniques like- modeling, bridging, contextualization and building schema. Varying merit levels and needs of the students and their unwillingness to write or perform turned out to be the major issues while teaching writing in an ESL classroom. The teachers expressed the ways they deal and solve problems in the classroom. At the end, a mixed approach of process-product writing was recommended to be experimented with to improve the teaching of writing.

Key-words: Writing skills, ESL writing, Scaffolding, Teaching approaches, Problems in ESL writing

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Chapter One

Introduction

Background of the Study

Writing skill is one of the most important language skills but surely one of the most complex skills to develop too. According to Graham and Perin (2007) in Vonna et al. (2015), writing has two complementary roles- 1) it is a skill that needs the use of strategies to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence and 2) writing is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning a subject matter (p. 227). The significance of writing skill increases when it comes to developing writing skill in the English language, as it is extensively used for global communication. Hyland (2003) in Fareed et al. (2016) suggested that performance in language development is subject to improvement in writing skills (p. 81). According to Hadley in Singh and Rajalingam (2012) in Vonna et al. (2015) writing is a continuum of activity starting from mechanical aspects to more complicated actions of composition writing as the final stage (p. 227). Despite all the importance of writing skill, students struggle to correctly translate their knowledge or ideas into written texts and the struggle is more intense when it comes to ESL writing skill development. Fareed et al. (2016) pointed out that “writing is often considered merely a part of teaching and learning grammar and syntax” which results in underestimating the importance of writing (p. 81). Moreover, Nunan (1989) Fareed et al.(2016) argued that “writing is an extremely difficult cognitive activity which requires the learner to have control over various

factors” (p. 82). Therefore, in an ESL classroom when teachers are focusing on helping learners in developing writing skills, they should ensure that the learners are aware and can consider various factors of writing.

In order to ensure a better teaching and learning of ESL writing, teachers’ implementation of scaffolding techniques to aid students in their process of completing writing tasks can be a potentially effective way. Scaffolding, a term originated from Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, can be regarded as “a powerful instructional tool to help learners extend their level of understanding and complete tasks successfully” (Yildiz, Y., & Celik, B in Yong, 2022, p. 828). Scaffolding is a “practice of providing appropriate support to help learners engage in tasks that are beyond their current level of proficiency” (Zhang, M., & Quintana, C. in Yong, 2022, p. 828). However, implying scaffolding techniques in a Bangladeshi secondary level ESL classroom to carry out writing tasks or activities isn’t easy due to various governing factors. In this paper, the researcher intends to explore practices and problems teachers face while implementing scaffolding while teaching writing in a task-based classroom.

Problem Statement

Over the years, studies have been done on the implementation of scaffolding techniques to teach ESL writing, its effects on developing writing skills, benefits and challenges teachers’ face due to using this technique and teacher and student perceptions regarding it. Vonna et al. (2015) conducted a quasi-experimental study to investigate the effect of scaffolding techniques on students’ writing ability. In order to conduct the quasi-experimental research to investigate the effects of scaffolding in developing writing skill, the researchers Vonna et al. (2015) a Non-Randomized Control Group Pretest-Posttest designs. The result of the analysis says that implementation of scaffolding techniques in the experimental group could increase the student

writing achievement compared to the control group that didn't receive the treatment (Scaffolding). Therefore, the implementation of scaffolding techniques into writing instruction is a success to decrease the students' writing apprehension level. Gagné & Parks (2013) investigated how children in an elementary level Grade 6 class for ESL scaffold each other while carrying out cooperative learning tasks. From the study they discovered that children are capable of engaging in "linguistically oriented scaffolding" (p. 188). Requests for assistance and other-correction are two of the scaffolding strategies that are the mostly used ones by the students (Gagné & Parks, 2013, p. 188). Hosseinpour & Koosha (2016) through their study try to extend the scope of TBLT though SCT as they investigate the effects of teacher-led whole-class scaffolding as pre-task on the writing proficiency of EFL learners. The results of their study reveals that "the trial of pre-task improves the writing performance in such areas as content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary" (Hosseinpour & Koosha, 2016, p. 495), showing the positive impact of scaffolding. Widiana & Sabiq (2021) describe the challenges teachers face in implementing scaffolding as they investigate the scaffolding strategy in teaching and writing recount text. The outcomes of this research showed that the teacher used a scaffolding strategy to develop students' critical thinking and high-level thinking skills. The process consisted of four curriculum cycles, such as field development, modeling, joint construction, and independent writing. This research also found that the teacher encountered some challenges, such as various levels of students' academic achievements, the lack of interest among students in engaging classroom activities, student's lack of vocabulary, and the difficulty of motivating them. However, the teacher tried to respond to the challenges by looking at students' ZPD on previous assessments, making ice breaking, encouraging students' engagement, and facilitating them to use the dictionary effectively (Widiana & Sabiq, 2021, p. 30).

In the Bangladeshi context, Afrin (2016) in her study explored “writing problems of non-English major undergraduate students at a private university in Bangladesh” (p. 104). Afrin (2016) expressed that even after finishing their secondary and higher secondary level education where the students studied English as a compulsory subject, they fail to show their expected competency in the tertiary level (p. 105). The proficiency level of most students is very low due to their educational backgrounds and most of the time the non-English major undergraduate students are busy worrying about their other core courses (Afrin, 2016, p. 105). Akter (2022) in her study of writing challenges in the EFL context of Bangladesh, emphasized on the lack of efforts from teachers contributing to the students’ struggle in learning writing (p. 34). Although in universities students were supposed to achieve more sophisticated writing skills, the lack of senior teachers and lecturers negatively impacted the learners’ writing skill development (Akter, 2022, p. 34). Sultana (2021) investigated the factors that impede the English writing skills of tertiary level learners and the findings are use of deductive approach, rote learning, memorizing vocabulary, lack of writing practice, no opportunities for creative writing, no feedback on writing activities, large classroom, anxiety in writing activity, lack of ideas to elaborate a topic, no identification of students’ needs, lack of motivation and lack of support at home. The major concern behind Sultana’s (2021) study revolved around the fact that the lacking in students’ English writing learning in high schools negatively impacts their writing performance at tertiary level. Moreover, it is indicated that these universities have responsibilities regarding equipping students with appropriate tools to aid their transition into qualified candidates in the job market or higher studies. Emphasizing on the fact that tertiary level students from different cultural and social background have different needs as learners, Aziz (2018) urged that language teachers should diagnose the learner needs and plan their teaching strategy according to that. Being aware

of the learners' needs was supposed to help teachers in properly assisting students' learning process as per Aziz (2018). Hasan (2011) proposed an integrated approach to teach English writing to university students as he discussed the strengths and weaknesses of three approaches- product, process and genre in the context of Bangladesh. He argued through this study that instead of rejecting one approach in favor of the other the ESL teachers can opt for a combination of the mentioned approaches for better teaching and learning experience (Hasan, 2011). Uddin (2014) conducted a study on teacher's pedagogical belief and its reflection on their practice in teaching ESL writing, emphasizing on the belief that what teachers think and believe reflect on their classroom practices. Upon investigation the findings revealed a "marked discrepancy" between teacher belief and practice and the reasons were- large classrooms, exam-oriented culture, syllabus completion on time, low level students and time constraints (Uddin, 2014, p. 58). Ahmed and Karunakaran (2013) analyzed the writing tasks used in a particular private university by generally discussing the definition of writing, components of writing and different stages of writing. Upon analyzing the course contents of ESL courses and four types of controlled writing tasks, the researchers suggested task modification techniques devised by Raimes (1983). Patwary and Sajib (2018) explored the present scenario and the reasons of the challenges in writing by investigating the writing practices of the learners in the classroom. Based on the writing deficiencies of the students, the researchers suggested some strategies for learners to improve their writing skills.

So, it is quite evident that in Bangladesh plenty of studies have been on the problems in ESL writing and the major factors causing them. Apart from that, they are studies on the importance of knowing learners' needs to appropriately to teach writing, approaches used in teaching writing, pedagogical beliefs and practices of ESL teachers in teaching writing, analysis of

writing tasks, strategies to improve learner's writing skills etc. However, studies regarding writing skill development techniques at the tertiary are fewer compared to the studies on problems in ESL writing and specifically, the study of the involvement or use of scaffolding in writing skill development is very rare in the context of Bangladesh. Besides, teachers' problems and practices in terms of applying scaffolding in an ESL classroom have hardly been discussed in Bangladeshi Tertiary level institution context.

So, in this paper, I am going to investigate the implementation of scaffolding in ESL writing to teach tertiary level students who struggle to develop efficient writing skills in the context of Bangladesh. Tertiary level ESL teachers can benefit from it as they will become aware of the practices and problems they face in use of scaffolding in ESL classrooms in more depth.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study will be to explore the prevailing practices and problems in the implementation of scaffolding in ESL writing classroom of Bangladeshi ESL teachers at tertiary level educational institutions. Defining the main phenomena of the paper it can be said that, Scaffolding is a “practice of providing appropriate support to help learners engage in tasks that are beyond their current level of proficiency” (Zhang, M., & Quintana, C. as cited in Yong, 2022, p. 828). It originated from Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development and can be regarded as “a powerful instructional tool to help learners extend their level of understanding and complete tasks successfully” (Yildiz, Y., & Celik, B as cited in Yong, 2022, p. 828).

Research Questions

Since, in this study I want to investigate the practices and problems Bangladeshi ESL teachers face while implementing scaffold to teach writing, the research questions will be-

- What teaching approaches do the tertiary level ESL teachers of Bangladesh imply while designing the writing activities/ tasks in the classroom?
- How does the teacher scaffold writing activities for the betterment of the learners?
- What problems do they face while using scaffolding strategies to help students to accomplish writing tasks and how do they solve those problems?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Since this paper focuses on the teaching of ESL writing with the use of scaffolding in a Bangladeshi tertiary level classroom, it is mandatory to look back at the various studies conducted regarding the terms involved in this research. In this chapter, the researcher goes through the topics like-ESL writing skill, problems in ESL writing skill in the context of Bangladesh and other countries, the teaching approaches for ESL writing, Scaffolding and its use in teaching writing.

Writing skill and ESL writing skill

Among the language skills, writing skill is very important for communication and also very complicated to develop. Writing is an essential aspect of “academic and communicative competence” in the present world (Rani, 2015, p.1). Writing is not a naturally acquired skill rather as Rani (2015) suggested, it is a process which is to be taught, practiced, and assessed (p. 1). At its basic level writing was defined by Nunan (2003) in Afrin (2016) as the “physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium” and also “the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs” which will be clear to its reader (p. 105). Zamel (1992) in Suvin (2020) pointed out about writing that it is a purposeful analytic and exploratory process to create meanings (p. 66). Emphasizing on the point that a writer must be a reader, Akter (2022) stated that a student will not be able to create a sophisticated piece of writing if he or she doesn’t think about the impact his or her writing might have on the readers (p. 31).

Learning to write in English in an ESL (English as a Second Language) context has been a necessity for many years now as English is a global language. Describing the importance of

writing in ESL, Ismail (2011) depicted that writing was an important element of learning English as a second language as it reinforced grammatical structures, vocabulary and idioms of English language that are taught to students (p. 73). He further added that writing should get more attention in ESL classes as it prepares “learners to cope with the communicative demands of real life situations” (Ismail, 2011, p. 73). Learning to produce a well-structured piece of writing which was recognized and accepted in their academic departments was supposed to be one of the goals of ESL students (Ismail, 2011, p. 73). Varghese (1990) in Rani (2015) stated that the English writing learners has not only to cope with the mechanical problems connected with the written language but also with the problems regarding fluency of expression, grammatical and lexical accuracy and the appropriateness of the style of writing as per the text type (p. 2).

In Bangladesh, English is taught as a compulsory subject from the primary level to higher- secondary level. Most of the private universities nowadays apply EMI (English medium instruction) in their classrooms. However, Hoque (2011) in Afrin (2016) pointed out about the bad state of Bangladeshi student by saying that “Despite the considerable amount of time devoted to English instruction, the general proficiency and achievement of the majority of the students graduating from high schools is unsatisfactory and disproportionately low” (p. 105). In the next sections the writing problems in different contexts and teaching strategies for ESL writing are discussed.

Problems in ESL writing

Writing is undeniably the most challenging aspect of learning English as a second language. Kellogg (2001) in Fareed et al. (2016) emphasized that writing was a cognitive process that appraised memory, thinking ability and verbal command to appropriately express the ideas; because skilled composition of a text indicated successful learning of a second language (p. 82).

ESL students face several types of difficulties at different stages of learning writing and Haider (2012) and Hyland (2003) in Fareed et al. (2016) classified them into “linguistic, psychological, cognitive and pedagogical categories” (p. 82).

Regarding the problems ESL students face in developing learning writing various studies have been done all over the world. Mo (2012) conducted a study on the teaching of ESL writing in five universities in China in order to investigate the reasons behind the poor performances of the students (p. 118). Mo’s (2012) findings from this study is divided into two sections- teachers’ difficulties in teaching and college students’ problems (p. 120). Discussing about the difficulties of teaching, Mo (2012) revealed that teaching ESL writing skill has been neglected in China for many years for many reasons and one of the prominent reasons is the belief that in English teaching, reading, speaking and listening are more important than writing as students would not need to write in English that much in their future works (p. 120). Some teachers allocated less classes for teaching writing in a semester, some of them didn’t get the motivation due to limited class time and lack of training. Therefore, the lack of effort resulted in the students’ lack of interest in learning writing. On the other hand, one of the major reasons behind the students’ poor performance in English writing, according to Mo’s (2012) findings, was their dislikeness towards learning ESL writing (p. 121). Doing lots of errors and getting poor grades despite doing drafting and revising their writing a lot served as a discouragement for the students (Mo, 2012, p. 121). Boring instructions and teachers spending lesser time in teaching writing added to the discouragement of the students in learning writing (Mo, 2012, p. 121). Moreover, students struggled to use the right words and phrases to express the intended meaning in their writings as they spend very little time practicing writing (Mo, 2012, p. 122). Liu (1999) in Mo (2012)

revealed about Chinese students that they rely heavily on L1 strategies in L2 writing and their way of thinking sometimes has strong negative transfer on English writing (p. 122).

Ismail (2011) conducted a study at United Arab Emirates University where he investigated students' perceptions regarding writing, learning styles, writing ability and the Academic writing course which served more as general writing course rather than an ESP course (p. 74). The rationale behind the study was that even after taking the ESP courses many students failed to meet their college requirements in producing an appropriate piece of writing which is both "linguistically and communicatively" valued by all the academic departments of the University (p. 74). While inspecting how students perceived writing in English, Ismail (2011) found that ESP students were aware of their needs to improve their ESL writing proficiency (p. 77). The departments the students belonged to influenced their perception about writing as those belonging to Humanities put more effort in learning English writing then the students belonging to Education (Ismail, 2011, p.77). Moreover, when the students were interviewed about their perceptions regarding their own writing skills, they expressed that they thought their ESL writing was good since they could successfully do the assignments of different courses in English and teachers hardly pointed out any error in their writing skills (Ismail, 2011, p. 79). Depicting this situation Ismail (2011) indicated that the students might falsely have concluded that they had mastered ESL writing (p. 79).

Singh et al. (2017) in their study presented the grammatical mistakes made by tertiary level students in their writing. The researchers elucidated on the fact that despite learning English in primary and secondary schools, students in the higher learning institutions tended to make "grammatical errors in their writing" (Singh et al., 2017, p. 16). The researchers pointed out nine types of error ESL students make- subject-verb agreement, verb, tense, noun,

preposition, adjective, article, pronoun, adverbs and conjunctions (Singh et al., 2017, p. 25). From the content analysis, the researchers found that Subject-verb agreement was the grammatical item the students mostly made error on with use of verb tense being the second and conjunction being the least (Singh et al. 2017, p. 21). The study revealed that those students have poor command on English language and explaining the reason behind it Richards (1973) in Singh et al. (2017) emphasized that the errors made by students are the result of their overgeneralization and ignorance of rule restrictions (p. 25). Ashrafzadeh and Nimehchisalem (2015) in their study analyzed a group of tertiary level students' written samples to diagnose the main areas of difficulty in their writing business report summaries (p. 286). Upon the inspection of the samples of students' writing, the researchers found that the students struggle in terms of organization and use of vocabulary (Ashrafzadeh & Nimehchisalem, 2015, p. 286).

Fareed et al. (2016) conducted a study to investigate the problems in Pakistani undergraduate ESL learners' writing and factors that hindered their writing skills (p. 81). According to the findings, the problems ESL learners faced while writing are- lack of knowledge about appropriate vocabulary, difficulties in grammar and syntax, make errors in subject-verb agreement, pronouns, tenses, articles, prepositions and basic sentence structures and lack of ideas (Fareed et al., 2016, p. 85). Upon the analysis of the students' writing samples it was found that they mostly made grammatical errors with syntax being the common one. They used incorrect word forms and made many spelling errors. Coming to the factors responsible for ESL learners' writing problems, Fareed et al (2016) identified writing getting less importance than speaking as one of the reasons that led to writing skills of students not getting flourished at "academic and social level" (p. 86). The other factors are- writing does not get maximum instruction, examination system didn't support creative writing rather encouraged memorization

and plagiarism, writing anxiety hindered production of well-organized text, L1 interference in L2 writing, untrained teachers and ineffective teaching method (Fareed et al., 2016, pp. 86- 87).

Afrin (2016) in her study explored the writing problems of non-English major undergraduate students at a private university in Bangladesh. Afrin (2016) expressed that even after the completion of their secondary and higher secondary level education where the students studied English as a compulsory subject, they failed to show their expected competency in the tertiary level (p. 105). She mentioned that in Bangladesh many private universities offer different English language courses along with the core courses but “the outcome is not satisfactory” (p. 105). The proficiency level of most students was very low due to their educational backgrounds and most of the time the non- English major undergraduate students were busy worrying about their other core courses (Afrin, 2016, p. 105). As the researcher went through the writing samples of the students she identified eleven categories of grammatical mistakes- spelling, tense, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, fragment, preposition, number, pronoun, misuse of words, articles and capitalization (Afrin, 2016, p. 108). Spelling errors turned out to be the most common grammatical mistakes indicating that students have the tendency to spell words as per their pronunciations (Afrin, 2016, p. 108). Another most common mistake was the misuse of tense as the students were unaware about mixing of both present and past tense in the same sentence or paragraph (Afrin, 2016, p. 109). Students made several mistakes when it came to subject-verb agreement as they did mistakes like using a plural verb with singular subject (Afrin, 2016, p. 109). Apart from grammatical mistakes, the researcher elucidated on the learners’ organizational problems in writing, Afrin (2016) from the content analysis of the students’ descriptive paragraph sample found that there were lack of “structure, unity and irrelevant ideas” in their writings (p. 109). Plagiarism and repetition were also major issues in their writings.

Akter (2022) in her study of writing challenges in the EFL context of Bangladesh, emphasized on the lack of efforts from teachers contributing to the students' struggle in learning writing (p. 34). Although in universities students are supposed to achieve sophisticated writing skills which required deep understanding of some related issues, the lack of senior teachers and lecturers negatively impacted the learners' writing skill development (Akter, 2022, p. 34). With junior teachers having very little experience it was difficult for them to determine what standard writing was or which problems can be expected in an answering script even if that script is free from grammatical error (Akter, 2022, p. 34). Afrin (2014) focusing on academic backgrounds of students impacting on the learners' writing development said that some schools would reflect shortage in accomplishing the objectives of the curriculum, therefore students missed some sort of educational competency (p. 45). Afrin (2014) revealed the reasons behind a students' poor foundation of English writing skills which were - missing school, educational competence of students in the previous stages, lack of qualified teachers who were capable of teaching students, and difficult curriculum and also, the unstable state the teachers in the teaching profession (p. 45).

Teaching ESL writing

Akter (2022) expressed the teacher's role being essential to develop writing skill as he/she will point out "what's needed to develop a writing style" and "show the impact of using different synonymous words, the impact of different sentence formation styles, or the like" (p. 32). Rahman and Sarkar (2019) in Akter (2022) pointed out regarding teaching ESL writing that- "Teachers need to execute different interactivities activities for making an English writing class more interactive instead of the rule-based and traditional approach. Effective teaching techniques like group work, pair work, crosschecking of each other's copy, etc. must be used to develop

students' writing skill to a maximum level and manage a large classroom. Although it is tough to check every student's copies and give them individual feedback based on their needs for a large classroom, teachers can do a regular assessment and provide feedback weekly to minimize this issue" (p. 32).

Selvaraj and Aziz (2019) in their paper presented a systematic review of the previous published research works on writing approaches implied in ESL classrooms. Hasan and Moniruzzaman (2010) in Selvaraj and Aziz (2019) put forth some approaches "identified by practitioners for ESL learners they are such as product, process, genre approach and process genre approach" (p. 455).

a) Product-based approach

Product-based approach involves a writing process "which aims to see the end product" (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 455). In this approach in the writing classroom, the teacher provides the students with demonstration or model or sample and then students produce a similar composition based on the models (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 455). Steel (2004) in Selvaraj and Aziz (2019) mentioned four steps that should be taken care of while applying product approach in the ESL writing classrooms-

- Students need to read the model composition and take note on the distinctive features of a composition which are organization of ideas, the use of language and mechanics of writing;
- Students perform controlled practices to exercise the elements outlined in the model text;
- Students attempt to mimic the model essay by organizing a collection of pre-set thoughts to suit the mode &

- Students perform the task by using their skills, sentence structures and various levels of vocabulary in order to compose the anticipated composition (p. 456).

Use of pattern-product methods in writing composition could be effective especially in writing narrative, descriptive and persuasive essays and improvement in students' grammatical awareness are some of the advantages of product-based approach (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 456).

b) Process- based approach

Unlike product-based approach, process-based approach is focused on the process of achieving the end product (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 456). Planning, drafting, revising and editing - are the four processes involved in the writing process (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 456). Process based approach enables the learners to “move back and forth to improve their writing” (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 456). Process approach gained popularity due to its benefits-

- It promotes creativity when the writers create their own composition as it stresses on thinking process;
- Students can enhance their writing abilities in the classroom as scaffolding occurs and
- Feedback is given by teachers and peers, so it gives the opportunity for students to become a better writer (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 456).

However, the process-based approach has some disadvantages such as- it consumes a lot of time and focuses on the process of writing instead of structures and grammatical structure (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 456).

c) Genre-based approach

Selvaraj and Aziz (2019) implied that genre-based approach “give importance to various

types of writing and text types and intertwined with social needs” (p. 456). Elashri (2013) in Selvaraj and Aziz (2019) said regarding genre-based approach that learners must be “exposed to many examples of the same genre to develop their ability to write a particular genre” (p. 456). Moreover, Tuan (2011) in Selvaraj and Aziz (2019) emphasized that this approach is concerned about teaching students about using language patterns to “accomplish coherent, purposeful prose writing as every writing has its purpose to the readers” (p. 456). Some advantages of this approach are- it exposes students to different types of text types or genre, it is suitable for beginners as model text is given to assist learning and reduces the anxiety among the learners and it scaffolds writing (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, pp. 456- 457). The limitations of this approach are - students lack knowledge of language structure and grammar to reach the target audience and learners basically focus on the product rather than the process (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 457).

d) Process-genre based approach

Process-genre based approach is a combination of process, genre and product based approach as it focuses “on the process of writing, taking account knowledge of social context and purposes of text in genre writing and observes features of texts as in product-based approach” (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 457). Some popular strategies like- modeling, shared writing, guided writing, and interactive writing are implied in a process-genre based approach (Lan et al. in Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 457). This approach is more suitable for the secondary level students. Some of the limitations of this approach are- it needs careful and tedious planning and it consumes a lot of time in planning and teaching (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 457).

e) Process-product based approach

Process-product approach is a combination of process approach and product approach. The purpose of this approach is to “develop students' writing skills by mastering product approach prior to process approach” (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 457). In this approach the students are to master the mechanics of writing and get familiar with sample texts or model compositions and go through the stages in process writing –“prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing to compose a own generated story” (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019, p. 457). However, its complexity and impracticality in terms of time and cost are the limitations of this approach.

Brown (2000) presented Communicative Language Teaching approach explores pedagogical means for real life communication in the classroom (p. 42). The goals of CLT approach are focused on the components of communicative competence such as- grammatical, discourse, functional, strategic and sociolinguistic (Brown, 2000, p. 43). The language techniques in CLT are designed to “engage pragmatic, authentic and functional use of language for meaningful purposes” (Brown, 2000, p. 43). Fluency is given more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners “meaningfully engaged” in language use (Brown, 2000, p. 43). Students in CLT classrooms have to learn to use the target language productively and receptively even outside the classroom. Therefore classroom tasks must prepare the students with necessary skills to use the language in those contexts. Brown (2000) implied that in CLT students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an “understanding of their own styles of learning” (p. 43). Moreover, this method gives the opportunity to develop appropriate strategies for autonomous learning. Teacher plays the role of facilitator or a guide in this

approach and “students are encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others” (Brown, 2000, p. 43).

Scaffolding & its role in language learning

The pedagogical term Scaffolding originated from the idea of scaffolding as a “temporary structure that is put up in the process of constructing or repairing a building” and is removed when construction of the building is finished (Gibbons, 2015, p. 16). Bruner (1978) in Gibbons (2015) defined scaffolding in a metaphorical sense as “the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some tasks so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in the process of acquiring” (p. 16). So, scaffolding is the temporary support through which a teacher helps a learner while doing a task so that the learner can later be able to complete a similar task all by himself. Scaffolding is closely related to Lev Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as ZPD refers to the “distance between the actual development 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” (Yong, 2022, p. 829). Emphasizing on the strong relationship between the ZPD and scaffolding Walqui (2006) in Yong (2022) claimed that “scaffolding only occurs within the ZPD” and Ellis suggested that students develop their ZPD through scaffolding and can thereby influence learning development (p. 829). Despite having many different types of definitions, some common characteristics regarding Scaffolding are noticed in those definitions which are contingency, fading and transfer of responsibility (Pol et al., 2010, p. 4- 5). Scaffolding is contingency as the teacher’s “support must be adapted to the current level of the student’s performance and should either be at the same or a slightly higher level” (Pol et al., 2010, p. 4- 5). Another common characteristic of scaffolding is fading which means “the gradual withdrawal of

the scaffolding” when the learner eases into the task on hand (Pol et al., 2010, p. 5). Finally comes, transfer of responsibility, the third common characteristic of scaffolding where when the contingent or support fades, “responsibility for the performance of a task is gradually transferred to the learner” (Pol et al., 2010, p.5).

Involvement of scaffolding in teaching second language, allow teachers to help students build on prior knowledge and internalize the new information or concept (Colorin Colorado!, n.d). According to Walqui (2006) Yong (2022) there are six types of instructional scaffolding techniques that could be applied to assist second language learners’ performance: modeling, bridging, contextualization, building schema, re-presenting texts, and developing metacognition (p. 829). Yong (2022) has defined each technique-

- a) Modeling: Refers to directly showing students what to do in the activities or tasks;
- b) Bridging- Refers to the teachers’ employment of learners’ prior knowledge to teach new concepts and enhance engagement;
- c) Contextualization: Refers to introducing language in meaningful contexts and with authentic objects;
- d) Building schema: Refers to combining new information with pre-existing one to help students understand the connections;
- e) Re-presenting text: Refers to engaging students in activities requiring them to transform linguistic constructions from one genre to another and;
- f) Developing metacognition: Refers to students monitoring and adjusting their language learning process (p. 829).

The interaction that takes place when students get scaffolding during their collaborative activities and other activities, gives them an authentic environment to go through the process of

second language acquisition. As scaffolding never looks the same in different situations and it is not a technique that can be applied in every situation in the similar way, teachers can adjust or modify or even figure out new scaffolding techniques to meet learners' needs and task type- reading, writing, speaking and listening (Pol et al., 2010, p.2).

Summary of the Literature Review

Keeping the importance of ESL writing in the focus the researcher discussed related aspects such as problems in ESL writing in the text of Bangladesh and other countries and ESL writing teaching approaches. By reviewing the studies of Bangladesh and other countries, some of the major ESL writing problems found are- students' poor performance in ESL writing in the tertiary level despite being taught English as a compulsory subject throughout their life, grammatical errors, problem in organizational writing and developing ideas, lots of memorization, repetition, weak in creative writing, not being able to use right words to express thought into writing etc. The possible factors that contribute to the problems in ESL writings are- educational background of the students, untrained school teachers, ineffective instructions, more focus on grammatical correctness and less focus on creative writing and developing ideas, less importance in teaching and learning writing, students' personal interests etc. Different ESL writing approaches are explained such as- product based approach, process based approach, genre based approach, process-genre based approach, process-product based approach and communicative language teaching approach. The definitions and concepts of scaffolding are explained in detail. Moreover the relation between Scaffolding and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is emphasized on. Six types of instructional scaffolding techniques- modeling, bridging, contextualization, building schema, re-presenting texts, and developing meta-cognition.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Research Approach

The study aims to explore the practices and problems of the ESL teachers of tertiary level educational institutions of Bangladesh as they implement scaffolds to teach ESL writing. To conduct this study I have opted for a qualitative approach. According to Punch (1998), “Qualitative research is an empirical research where the data are not numbers” (p. 4). The most common types of qualitative methods are- participant observation, in-depth interviews and focused groups, each method is appropriate for attaining “a specific type of data” (Mack et al., 2005, p. 2). As my paper is a qualitative research, case study is the research design I have applied to conduct the study. Widiana and Sabiq (2021) conducted a study to investigate the scaffolding strategy in teaching recount text and also inspect the challenges teachers’ face while implementing scaffolding and the way they deal with the problems during teaching writing recount text. This was a qualitative research where the researcher did a case study as they used observation, interviews and documentation (Widiana and Sabiq, 2021). Crowe et al. (2011) suggested that “The case study approach is particularly useful to employ when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an issue, event or phenomenon of interest, in its natural real-life context” (p. 1). Crowe et al. (2011) further added that it is an established research design that is used extensively in a wide variety of disciplines, particularly in the social sciences (p. 1). Since, my research has taken place in a real ESL classroom context; case study seemed to be an appropriate design to collect the data.

Settings and Participants

The setting where I have conducted the study is a private university of Dhaka, Bangladesh where I have observed five classes of two ESL courses and interviewed two ESL teachers. The interview is semi-structured. The participants of study are the ESL teachers whom I have interviewed and also the teacher and the students of the classes that I have observed. The teachers I have interviewed are tertiary level ESL teachers and the classes of the courses I have observed are eventually ESL classes where I have explored what scaffolding techniques the teacher used to teach L2 writing. Since the time-frame of study is quite short, I could only observe total five classes of two ESL courses and take interviews of only two teachers. Moreover, the place of the case study is in an urban setting, making it accessible to me.

Data Collection Method

Since my research is a case study, I opted for a class observation of tertiary level ESL classes and semi-structured interview to collect data that are to answer the research questions of this study. Teacher's practices while the implementation of scaffolding in ESL writing classroom and the used teaching approaches are investigated through classroom observation. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews of the ESL teacher have helped me to collect data regarding the problems they face as they implement scaffolding along with the applied teaching approaches to teach ESL writing and how they react to the problems. The tools I have used to collect the data are the Zoom meeting app and have taken field notes using time-frame based observation check list in order to report the observations.

Class Duration:						
Activity	Length of Activity (time duration)	Teacher's role	Students' role	Materials	Use of Scaffolding ((Modeling, bridging, contextualization, building schema, Re- presenting text, developing metacognition)	Type of Scaffolding (Teacher scaffolding or Peer scaffolding)

The data collected from the interviews of the teachers will be transcribed and interpreted.

The questions used for the semi-structured interviews are presented in the appendix at the end.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis

In this chapter, the data collected from the classroom observations and teacher interviews are presented. The findings from the data are presented in two sections- findings from observations and findings from interviews. Then a discussion is there based on the findings from the collected data.

General description of the course

I have observed classes of two CLS (Centre of Language Studies) courses of a private university – Academic English I and Academic English II. In total 5 classes are observed. Both of the courses are fundamental courses that focus on the students' reading and writing skill development. This is a compulsory General Education course which is offered to first year undergraduate students of all programs. The lessons, activities and materials are designed to aid the undergraduate students to accomplish the basics of academic reading and writing skills.

Findings from Observation

As I have presented the reports of the five classes of two ESL or CLS (Centre of Language Studies) - Academic English I and Academic English II, of a private university, certain information related to teaching writing skill and use of scaffolding in doing so are retained. Here I have interpreted the class observation data through some distinguished aspects which I have already presented in the literature review of this paper- Teaching approaches in teaching ESL writing, Problems in ESL writing and Use of scaffolding in teaching ESL writing.

❖ Teaching approaches applied in teaching ESL writing:

The courses I have observed are academic reading and writing courses and so the ESL writing related topics I have come across are- argumentative essay, opinion paragraph, summary, paraphrasing, formal and informal e-mail. To accomplish all these forms of writing, students should possess adequate knowledge on use of vocabulary, grammatical structure and skill of developing ideas and maintain cohesiveness in writing. On the other hand, to teach the mentioned forms or types of writing the teacher has to carefully design the activities, use effective teaching methods, techniques and materials based on the merit and proficiency level of the students.

The teacher in the classes that I have observed started with asking the students about the topic before going into the actual lesson. For example, in Day one of the observation, before discussing argumentative essay, the teacher asked the students what they understand by the term opinion and in order to make the topic more relevant he brought forth the context of football world cup games. In this way, he made the topic relevant enough for the students to engage in the lesson. Then when students were clear about the term then he formally introduced the term along with examples and visuals. They were instructed for an individual activity where they wrote down their opinions on topic and then were asked to explain them. So, it can be seen that the teacher firstly elicits the students' pre-existing knowledge through questions, prompts and discussions based on authentic context and then he actually gives the definition of the term, its structure and its use. Therefore, the teaching is happening inductively. In the observed classes, the teacher has introduced and did the discussion on the mentioned writing lessons in almost the same way. Another notable observation was the use of examples and samples to make the students understand the structure, layout and language in the writing texts. In every writing class

after discussing the writing topics with rules and structures, he would provide the class with adequate samples to make their understanding more concrete. The teacher have explained the samples and responded to the students' queries. The students are expected to follow the sample and shape their writing according to it. For example, on Day Five, the students were shown a sample of a formal e-mail and then were instructed to write a formal e-mail as a home-work. However, when it comes to in-class writing activity the time restriction and the number of students and their different merit levels seemed to cause disruptions. For example, on Day Two the teacher while teaching the students paraphrasing solved an exercise with the students where he helped the students by showing them how to paraphrase sentences by using synonyms and then instructed them to paraphrase a short paragraph by using the same technique. Since, the class duration was almost ending, the teacher has asked the students stop writing and share whatever they wrote so far. But except for a few students, almost every student couldn't complete task. When the teacher has tried to get their responses, they gave excuses like- they were still thinking, couldn't find the right synonym to paraphrase, need more time etc. Apart from that, the in-class writing activities mostly involved controlled practices like- writing down three positive opinions and three negative opinions, identifying subjective and objective claims, paraphrasing, developing formal sentences etc. The teacher tried to elicit answers from most of the students and give them feedback.

All in all, it can be said that the teaching approach that the teacher is leaning more on to teach writing is, product-based approach. The students are provided with a model or a sample of a writing text and are instructed to follow the structure, organization, use of language and mechanics of writing. Controlled practices took place in the class where the students used their skills and knowledge in grammatical structure and vocabulary to compose writing.

❖ Use of scaffolding in teaching ESL writing:

From my observation of five classes of two CLS courses I found some techniques that teachers use to scaffold the writing activities. I have mentioned them below-

1. **Bridging:** Bridging happens when teacher employs students' prior knowledge to teach new concept and enhance student engagement. From my observations, I discovered the teacher has used this technique in every class before discussing a new topic. For example- Before starting the discussion on argumentative essay, he asked the students about their idea of the term opinion. Here elicited the student's prior knowledge about opinion before discussing the role of opinion in an argumentative essay.
2. **Contextualization:** Contextualization takes place when language learning takes place in a meaning context with authentic objects. From the observations the teacher for example brought forth the topic of online shopping and asked the students to come up with three positive opinions and three negative opinions about online shopping. As the students are quite familiar about online shopping and its positive and negative aspect in the Bangladeshi context, they could easily relate to it and come up with responses.
3. **Building Schema:** Building schema takes place when the teacher combines the new information with students' pre-existing information to help them understand the connections. For example, the teacher while teaching opinion paragraph, combined the students' pre-existing knowledge on presentation structure with the new topic of opinion paragraph structure by drawing connections between them.
4. **Modeling:** Modeling takes place when the teacher is directly showing the students how to do a task. The ESL teacher whose class I have observed on Day two helped the students in paraphrasing sentences by using synonyms of words and then instructed the

students to paraphrase a short paragraph by applying the same technique as him. Moreover, while teaching different types of writing like- argumentative essay, opinion paragraph, formal and informal e-mail and summary, the teacher not only just provide samples of them but also explained the structures, organization, writing techniques through them.

From the scaffolding techniques discussed above, it can be understood that almost all of them are being used at the pre-writing stage, where the students are in the process of adding or relating the new concept to their pre-existing knowledge and getting familiar with the type of writing by trying to understand the structure, language use etc. through samples and explanations. I haven't come across any class where the students were made to write a complete or part of an essay or paragraph to get data regarding the use of scaffolding during a writing activity. However, when the students have done individual activities like writing down three positive and negative points on online shopping or paraphrasing or matching sentences, they received feedback from the teacher and even got help from the teacher when needed during the activities.

Findings from Interview

The next section of findings contains data collected through interviews with ESL teachers of a private university. For this research, I have interviewed two ESL teachers from the focal private university. Both of them take the classes of academic reading and writing courses. Here I have presented the data from their interview under sections like- teaching approaches, use of scaffolding and problems in teaching ESL writing. I have addressed both teachers as –Teacher A and Teacher B.

❖ Teaching approaches implied in ESL writing:

In order to elicit from the ESL teachers about the teaching approaches they imply to teach ESL writing, I have asked them some questions that give us some information regarding their way of teaching. When the teachers were asked about their preparation before taking a writing class both their answers indicated that their lesson plan majorly relies on the content or topic and the understanding level of the students. Depending on these aspects, the teachers plan their discussion, activities and materials. As Teacher A depicted her preparation for writing classes, she said:

if I am teaching summary writing, then I may ask my students what do they know about summary writing, I would elicit responses and then I would like to add to the gap that was there. And then I would tell them why summary writing is important, because I always start with answering the question why, why they are doing this. That way you know they kind of find the relevance, know about what they are learning, feel motivated.

Moreover, Teacher A told regarding the preparation of selecting materials which she ensured that is relevant to the writing lesson and helps students to understand the lesson. The materials that she prepares for the writing lesson are used in the class as samples or guidelines to aid students' learning as she implied:

whatever handouts I have I share with them and ask them to read and then come back and then the class ends. And then next class I would ask them to read it and have a discussion. And then we may have a lesson on summary writing, like write it and then feedback.

Like Teacher A, Teacher B also revealed that the lesson preparation depends on the type of content he intends to teach. Depending on the type of writing he would teach he prepare the activities and materials as he explained that:

if I am about to teach paragraph writing in a language course so prior to the class what I do that I come up with proper paragraph structures, samples and I do come up with visuals that will help my students to learn about the type of paragraph that I am going to teach.....So for writing class we do take quite a bit of preparation with sample write up, writing task that has been previously performed but by different group of students.

Teacher B further added about the importance of assuming that while teaching writing they have to start from scratch and cannot declare that the students already possess the necessary skill to learn academic writing, as he emphasized that:

One of the basic philosophy of taking a language course is, we have to anticipate the student doesn't have any idea on the topic which we will be teaching

When designing a lesson plan- deciding on an appropriate method or methods, materials and activities, there are some aspects the teachers need to take into consideration. From the response I got from both teachers, it was clear that one common thing they prioritize is the understanding levels of the students. Describing about the aspects she takes into consideration, teacher A told that they often take diagnostic tests at the beginning to find out the students' needs but most of the time it is difficult meet those needs:

For example a section can have students coming from mostly English medium schools, students who are good in English already and couple of students not good. So the question will definitely will be based on the level of the students. But always that can be maintained. So what can be done in the assessment, while we do assessments we do it according to the level actually.

Teacher B too indicated that due to the different educational background of the students, their different merit levels, it is important to consider their knowledge and skill level while teaching writing. He also prioritizes making the students talk in the ESL classroom. Therefore, he suggested some techniques he implies to meet the needs of different students:

so the things is I have to come with topics that I am teaching go along with the interest of the students. So the thing I take into consideration one of the primary things is I need to make them speak and I need to give them a comfort zone so even if they don't understand they still need to come with question and queries to clarify their confusion. All the students will not perform equally, so at the beginning of the class I always say one thing that if I am teaching a group of thirty students the initial discussion on a certain topic twenty of them are successfully understanding what I have taught. But I am concerned about the remaining ten. And my responsibility is to help them.

From the interview I found that Teacher A and Teacher B have different techniques when it comes to motivating the ESL students to participate in the classroom. Teacher A emphasized on the importance of positive feedback in order to motivate students' learning in the classroom as she said:

I think it's my feedback, while I give feedback I don't intend to demotivate students even if somebody's (doing) poor, I call them towards me and then talk to them in details and tell them, try to understand what is going wrong and then give my observations about the things I think they should work on and of course give them suggestions. So I think that kind of motivates them.

Teacher B on the other hand strongly suggested that he doesn't judge students based on the quality of their writing rather he focuses on their progress as a writer. His main agenda is to make his students write in the class. Putting the focus on student performance in the class he stated:

What I am more concerned about is making you write and I will actually judge you on the basis of your progression as a writer or a student. I am not comparative of your improvement for example one of classmate does so well so why you didn't perform as per the mark, this is not I deal with the (problem), I actually emphasize the individual goals, individual development then I, you know pushing them to bring out their best.

So from the information retrieved from the interview, we can see how they design and conduct their writing classes keeping in mind about the diverse nature of their students due to different schooling background. We are aware that they rely on samples or model compositions to help the students in understanding the nature, structure, organization and language use of particular type of writing. This way of teaching indicates to the use of product-based approach in ESL classes.

❖ Use of scaffolding in ESL writing

In the previous section it was already presented that Teacher A and Teacher B prefer preparing and bringing both authentic and course book samples or models and guidelines to teach students a certain type of writing. Regarding using samples in teaching writing Teacher A said:

I choose the things that will be useful for them, that will help them to understand the topic better and always try to show them samples, and through the sample I ask them questions to elicit how much they've understood.

Similarly, Teacher B described how he prepares or selects relevant samples for the lesson and utilizes them in teaching the students the overall structure and organization of a writing text:

I will actually come with situation on which the students will be writing and then I will show them sample, two types of samples- one of the sample is actually written by students of previous term and then one sample from the book which might prove to be an ideal step sample.

So here we can see that **Modeling** as a scaffolding technique is taking place in both teachers' ESL writing classrooms. They are showing their students samples of writing texts to give them a representation about how to write and organize the ideas and accomplish writing tasks.

Another technique we can notice in the teachers' interview that they apply is easing the students into a new topic or concept by eliciting their pre-existing ideas on the topic and connecting them to the new ideas. Regarding the way of introducing a new topic Teacher A described that:

if I am teaching summary writing, then I may be ask my students what do they know about summary writing, I would elicit responses and then I would like to add to the gap that was there. And then I would tell them why summary writing is important, because I always start with answering the question why, why they are doing this. That way you know they kind of find the relevance, know about what they are learning, feel motivated.

Teacher B emphasizes on catching the interest of the students introducing or discussing a lesson through interactive or interesting topics. It will encourage the learners to be involved in the lesson:

purposefully we supposed to come up with material that are interactive in nature so that we make them talk. So, there's one thing I might come up with a very interactive topic or very interactive handout but if the topic of the handout is not preferred or liked by the students then they don't speak up, so the things is I have to come with topics that I am teaching go along with the interest of the students.

So, both the teachers in their own ways are trying to help students connect to the lesson so that they understand the relevance and importance of lesson and be involved in the classroom activities. This technique is a way of scaffolding called **Bridging**. Bridging occurs when the teacher employs the students pre-existing knowledge to introduce a new topic.

❖ Problems in teaching ESL writing:

Writing is a complicated skill to learn so problems arising while teaching ESL writing is a common occurrence. In the context of Bangladeshi private university, problems in teaching ESL writing can be caused by many governing factors. Therefore, for the successful learning of the

students, the teachers always need to be prepared to face the difficulties and find ways to tackle them. Teacher A and Teacher B have talked about the sort of problems they faced. Regarding the problems in ESL writing Teacher A implied:

a very common problem that before going into the structure we have to start with the basic things, say for example if we are going to teach an essay, I should not be telling them what topic sentence is, what is the structure of academic essay. What I should be doing is act as facilitator I should guide them, may be help them to go to another level. But they lack the basic knowledge about academic writing so before diving into the main topic we have to spend one or two classes just helping them to build up the base. So, that's time consuming.

So, lacking in the basic knowledge and skills of writing creates problems in teaching ESL writing as the teachers often have to start from the scratch and that slows down their process of completing the syllabus. Teacher B on the other hand pointed out some different problems like students' unwillingness to perform in the classroom and them caring more about their scores rather than their progression as a writer. He explained that:

One of the major problems I face is students are reluctant to write even if we give them a very good topic to write I just feel that they just don't want to write, their unwilling to write is one of the challenge. one thing I find very sad in Bangladeshi education is most of the students are very materialistic. Even if I return the quiz and midterm scripts they only check the score they hardly take a look at the feedback.

Despite twelve years of education, there is a great lacking in students' English language skills and teacher B claimed that it is very difficult to fill that gap within three months.

Describing the factors causing Teacher A blamed the poor schooling of the students. Expressing that how the students struggle with the basics of ESL writing Teacher A said that:

As university teachers we should not be teaching them what subject-verb agreement is which students of class four or five should be taught in school. But because they don't know the use of it, they just know the rule. But they don't know how to apply that.

Teacher B also brought forth the topic poor schooling of the students that cause disruptions in the ESL classrooms:

When they get into the advanced level they struggle hard to write good term paper, assignments because they don't have that skill and knowledge of English from which they can structure a good paper. And what we believe after having twelve years of education it is very difficult for us to make them fit within just three months considering the lacking that they have on the last 12 years.

Coming to the topic of how they topic of how they tackle the problems, the responses from Teacher A and Teacher B suggest that despite the difficulties teachers can try handling them using appropriate tactics. Teacher A suggested that the way tackling problems completely depend on the type of problem, the complexity of the situation:

even one class I can have different level of problems so it is very difficult to put that in a sentence and say that. There are multiple layers of problems a teacher has to deal with. So a good teacher is he who kind of knows how to deal with different kind of problems.

Teacher B shared how he improvised or tackled any problematic situation through some examples like:

we explain the topic multiple times, we give them different topic, we often bring changes in the topic. And if we find that students do not feel willing to learn then we make pair or groups and make them write in a group, in a pair because when students are writing in a group they are under pressure to perform.

It is quite clear that problems arise due to various reasons and many times the problems are unforeseeable. At those times the ESL teacher has to be efficient enough to come up with an effective improvisation to his lesson or activities or materials.

Discussion

From the findings (combining the observation and interview) as can be seen I have retrieved information related to aspects like- Problems in teaching ESL writing, teaching approaches for ESL writing and use of scaffolding in ESL writing. Through both the class observation and interview, a clear picture of the teaching approach and techniques is presented, whereas most of the information related to the use of scaffolding came from the class observation and problems in ESL writing was discussed in detail in the teacher interviews.

According to the findings, the varying educational backgrounds of the students turned out to be a major issue in an ESL writing class. As the teachers implied the interview that it becomes difficult to cater to the varying needs of all students due to their different backgrounds. Afrin (2016) also explained in her paper how even after the completion of secondary and higher secondary studies where the students were taught English as a compulsory subject, they still fail to write efficiently in the higher level (p. 105). Afrin (2014) in her study revealed the reasons behind a student's poor foundation which are- missing school, educational competence of students in the previous stages, lack of qualified teachers who were capable of teaching students,

and difficult curriculum and also, the unstable state the teachers in the teaching profession (p. 45). As per the interview, it is also found that due to the lacking in the students' English education, the students know the rules of grammar but cannot apply them appropriately. Richards (1973) in Singh et al. (2017) explained the reason behind the students' poor command in English as he stated that the errors made by students are the result of their overgeneralization and ignorance of rule restrictions (p. 25). Grammatical errors in the students' writing are common issue according to Singh et al. (2017). From the interview another major issue we came across is the unwillingness of the students in the class to write or perform in the activities and even to ask questions. They seem very less interested to write despite given a good topic according to the teacher interview. The CLS courses I have observed are offered to the students all program, so dealing with the diverse students and their diverse interests is a major struggle. Afrin (2016) claimed that most of the time the non- English major undergraduate students were busy worrying about their other core courses, which prevents them from focusing on learning English skills which they find less important (p. 105). As per interview, the apprehension or hesitancy of the students to perform in a writing class is related to their fear of performing bad and getting embarrassed in the class. Mo (2012) had found that one of the reasons behind the students' poor performance in writing English was their dislike-ness towards learning ESL writing and doing lots of errors and getting poor grades despite doing drafting and revising their writing a lot served as a discouragement for the students (p. 121). In the class observation, it was noticed that students struggled paraphrase a short paragraph and upon asking the reason to not complete their task was- they were still thinking, they couldn't come up with right words, they cannot figure out how to paraphrase it in the short time etc. Mo (2012) in his study had mentioned that students struggled to use the right words and phrases to express the intended

meaning in their writings as they spend very little time practicing writing (p. 122). Moreover, upon the inspection of the samples of students' writing, Ashrafzadeh and Nimehchisalem (2015) found that the students struggle in terms of organization and use of vocabulary (p. 286).

Coming to the teaching approaches used for teaching writing in the ESL classes, I have come across some common techniques and methods applied by the teachers from both class observation and interviews. The findings suggested that the ESL teachers preferred showing samples or examples of a writing text to the students so that they can understand the grammatical structure, organization of ideas, use of language in the writing text. However, before showing the sample ample discussion is done by the teachers on the particular topic with lots of explanations with examples. After the discussion when the students see the sample it becomes easier for them to identify or locate different aspects of the writing. Reading the sample is followed by controlled practices in the class according to the observation and interviews. The teaching strategies used by the teachers, according to my findings, reflect the implication of product-based approach in teaching writing. According to Rashtchi et al. (2019) a product-based writing class refers to “a traditional one where standard model texts are used to guide students to write similar texts” (p. 118). Selvaraj & Aziz (2019) implied that product-based approach involves a writing process that aims to create an end product. Hasan and Akhand (2010) in Rashtchi et al. (2019) suggested that in such type of writing class the students are required follow a sample to compose a new product (p. 118). Explaining the benefits of a product-based approach for teaching writing, Tangpermpoon (2008) in Rashtchi et al. (2019) claimed that it is effective in the learning of “rhetorical patterns, using appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and developing awareness of the writing structures” (p. 118). According to Selvaraj and Aziz (2019) students are to read the sample or model and take note on the distinctive features of a composition which

are organization of ideas, the use of language and mechanics of writing. Then the students perform controlled practices in the class following the outline of the sample and produce a similar writing. As they write, they use their skills, sentence structures and various levels of vocabulary in order to compose the anticipated composition (Selvaraj and Aziz, 2019, p. 456).

In terms of investigating the use of scaffolding strategies in writing classes, which is the main focus of paper, I have found some scaffolding strategies commonly used in the most classes from the class observations of the ESL courses. As Gibbons (2015) suggested scaffolding is used as “temporary assistance” through which a teacher helps a learner while doing a task so that “the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone” (p. 16). Scaffolding is a pedagogical term which originated from the idea of scaffolding as a “temporary structure” that is put up in the process of constructing or repairing a building which gets removed when construction of the building is finished (Gibbons, 2016, p. 16). I have discussed six scaffolding strategies in the literature review from which I could distinguish four strategies- modeling, bridging, contextualizing and building schema. I have discussed in my findings in detail about how the scaffolding techniques are used by the teachers. The six scaffolding strategies suggested by Walqui (2006) - modeling, bridging, contextualizing, re-presenting text and developing meta-cognition were mentioned and explained by both Yong (2022) and Yildiz and Celik (2020) in their respective studies. From the interviews it was found that the teachers keep in mind the understanding level and merit level of the students while designing lesson plan, applying teaching methods, selecting materials and assessing the students. While introducing a new concept, I have observed that the teacher discuss the concept through a real life context and ask questions to the students in an attempt to elicit their pre-existing ideas, which is followed by the teacher actually introducing the topic with explanations and examples. So, here figuring out the

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) of the students is an important part in directing the writing class. Emphasizing on the strong relationship between the ZPD and scaffolding Walqui (2006) in Yong (2022) claimed that “scaffolding only occurs within the ZPD” and Ellis (2003) suggested that “learners construct their ZPD through scaffolding and can thereby promote learning development” (p. 829). Scaffolding has three characteristics that define it- contingency, fading and transfer of responsibility (Pol et al., 2010, p. 4- 5). Scaffolding is contingency when the teacher’s support is adapted to the present level of the student’s performance and should either be at the same or a slightly higher level (Pol et al., 2010, p. 4- 5). Scaffolding refers to fading when the gradual withdrawal of the scaffolding happens as the learner eases into the task on hand (Pol et al., 2010, p. 5). Then finally, the third common characteristic of scaffolding is where when the contingent or support fades and the responsibility for the performance of a task is gradually transferred to the student (Pol et al., 2010, p.5). The two characteristics of scaffolding that could be clearly identified from the findings, specifically from the observation findings are- contingency and fading. When the teacher explained using real life contexts, connecting their pre-existing ideas to the new concept, showing a sample composition, he used scaffolding that posed as contingency. Then when he made the students do controlled practices the support was gradually fading.

Since, the writing class was product-based where it is all about following a model and doing controlled practices to produce a piece of writing and there was a limited duration of class with students of varying merit levels, the use of scaffolding in writing turned out to be limited. Almost all the identified scaffolding strategies took place during pre-writing stage of the lessons. So, from the observed classes I couldn’t retain how the scaffolding techniques used in their pre writing stage helped during their actual writing process.

Recommendation

From the interpretation and discussion of the findings it is found that the teaching approaches applied by the teacher to teach ESL writing mostly agreed with product-based approaches and implementation of some scaffolding strategies were also identified which mostly took place during the pre-writing stage. The scaffolding was implemented by the teacher and from the class observation it is found that the teacher did the most talking although he kept trying to include the students in the discussion through different ways. The teacher mostly brought forth interesting topics relating real life context to attract the students and make them talk and perform in the classroom but still many times a few attentive and confident students would participate in the discussion or activity and the rest remain silent or don't perform either for shyness or fear or unwillingness or inattentiveness.

Considering the context of the ESL classes of a Bangladeshi private university that I have observed, product-based writing approach seems to be a reliable option. From the interviews, we know that how the teachers have to deal with students of varying merit levels and comprehension levels and select and design teaching methods, activities and materials according to that. Moreover, they have to try filling the gap in the students' knowledge and skill regarding English language within the limited time of three months. So, in this situation product-based serves as an effective option as it is less time-consuming and the students get familiar with the structure and content of writing through a sample.

As I have already mentioned the observed scaffolding techniques in the data analysis, mostly occurred during the pre-writing stage- getting familiar with the type of writing,

understanding the structure, organization and language use in the writing, doing controlled practices etc. I couldn't get data on the use of scaffolding during a writing activity.

Unlike product-based, process-based approach prioritizes the process of writing. As Rashtchi (2019) suggested process-based approach of writing involves different tasks and skills such as- “planning, collaborative discussion and drafting” and learners knowledge of grammar is matters less (p.118). In this approach, learners get opportunity to learn writing in stages and go through different “techniques and strategies while using their teachers’ or peers’ assistance” (Rashtchi, 2019, p. 118). So, there will be use of teacher and peer scaffolding in teaching writing.

In order to teach students writing by giving them an opportunity to experience the process along with getting familiar with a type of writing, I would like to recommend a mix of both process and product writing, the process-product approach. According to Selvaraj and Aziz (2019), in this approach, students master the mechanics of writing and get familiar with the sample texts and proceed with the process of writing- prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, final draft and evaluating (p. 457). Pasand and Haghi (2013) in Rashtchi (2019) in their research used a process-product approach and concluded that completing an incomplete model instead of copying it improves learners’ writing ability (p. 118). Therefore, it could be suggested for further studies, to conduct an experimental research of implementing process product approach to teach ESL writing.

Limitations

As I have conducted this research, I came across some limitations. The major limitation was the short time-frame of the research. The semester was shortened so I had less time to collect data and so I could only managed to observe five ESL classes and take interviews of two teachers. Moreover, when I started observing classes, it was post-midterm and the teacher was in rush to complete the pending assessments and the syllabus at the same time. So, it was difficult to get enough to data on the use of scaffolding in teaching writing. My research covered only a few classes of one private university and only two ESL teachers were interviewed, so it is rather a small-scale research. So, to further examine or confirm the results of my research, a large-scale study can be done on the same topic by covering larger samples as data.

Chapter five

Conclusion

Writing is one of the most important yet complicated skills which are often neglected students' language education. It results in students failing or struggling in the higher level studies where students are supposed to write academically. In Bangladesh, we know there are varying sorts of educational institutions, majorly- Bangla medium, English medium, English version and Madrasa. Despite English being a compulsory subject and taught in every type of educational institution, the level of teaching is not the same. While English medium are learning everything in English language and are given English medium instruction, they have more practice in using English language. Whereas, the Bangla medium educational institutions (that has the majority number of students), do not give enough effort in teaching English, they are more about deductively teaching grammar and rules of English. So, most students pass twelve years education by only learning the rules of English language, grammar, memorization etc.

Scaffolding is a pedagogical tool that is provide to the students by the knowledgeable others or teachers or peers. According to past studies, scaffolding can proved to be a useful technique as teacher use scaffolds to assist the ESL writing learning of the students and then gradually the students learn to produce writings on their own. In my paper, I have focused on the scaffolding techniques used for teaching writing in tertiary level ESL classroom and what problems teachers face while teaching writing and how do they tackle them. Based on the data analysis, four types of scaffolding techniques were identified- modeling, bridging, building schema and contextualization, within a product-based ESL writing classroom. Moreover through teacher interviews, it was indicated that even though the teachers want student to perform more,

be more engaged in the activities and understand the process of writing, they opt for product-based writing approach to teach the students with varying merit levels and varying needs within the allocated duration of the course. While talking about the problems in teaching ESL writing, teachers identified some of major ones- Diversity in students' comprehension and proficiency levels and needs, unwillingness to participate, more focused on scores than the quality of their writing, shyness or anxious to perform and participate in the discussion etc. However, as per the interviews, the teachers prepare themselves to face such situations in the classroom and come up with necessary improvisations to help the students.

Finally, I have suggested process-product writing approach to enhance the learning of the ESL writing students by being more involved in the process creating a new piece of writing. this process will also give a scope to the occurrences of teacher and peer scaffolding in teaching writing.

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Appendix

Observation checklist

Class Duration:						
Activity	Length of Activity (time duration)	Teacher's role	Students' role	Materials	Use of Scaffolding ((Modeling, bridging, contextualization, building schema, Re- presenting text, developing metacognition)	Type of Scaffolding (Teacher scaffolding or Peer scaffolding)

Interview Questions:

- How do you prepare yourself before taking a class?
- What aspects do you take into consideration as you design the writing activities in your lesson plan?
- What do you do to ensure maximum learning in writing classes?
- What strategies/techniques do you imply to motivate your students to engage in the lesson and activities?
- To what extent your chosen teaching methods, activities and materials meet the students' and the course's needs?
- What sort of problems do you face while teaching ESL writing?
- What do you think could be the factors behind those problems?
- How do you tackle those problems in the classroom?

