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Language Scaffolding in Second Language Writing

■ This paper explores a kind of language instruction that facilitates student writers' learning of grammar skills through providing a carefully constructed supportive framework—language scaffolding. To illustrate, a five-step pedagogy for scaffolded instruction is proposed, including contextual-awareness building, model analysis, controlled and guided practice, collaborative construction of text, and independent writing. The author argues that when student writers are provided with flexible, systematic language guidance throughout the writing process, they will gain increasing confidence and competence in exploiting grammar as a resource to construct meaning and exercising language choices beyond the sentence level appropriate to the purpose and function of the written discourse.

Introduction

For many ESL composition instructors, a major challenge has been the extensiveness of language errors in student writings. A further challenge is that although they acknowledge that limited grammar skills can severely inhibit learners' attempts to create effective texts, they often do not know how to integrate grammar instruction in the writing classroom, or more specifically, they often are uncertain how to provide grammar instruction while engaging their students in process-based writing practices. For many of the composition instructors trained in the process strategies in particular, there is a tendency to be nervous about any patterned language practices that are reminiscent of a structural-behaviorist approach to grammar instruction, such as patterned language analysis, patterned morphosyntactic manipulation, and patterned model imitation. It is true that many ESL writing textbooks often expect writing teachers to guide their students through the writing process, such as planning, composing, revising, and editing. Yet any intentional or involuntary avoidance of form emphasis often deprives students of opportunities to develop effective language strategies for generating, drafting, and refining their ideas (Hyland, 2003). Ironically, to the frustration

of many of the advocates of the process approach, the overt emphasis on discovering ideas, drafting, revising, and collaborative writing simply does not lead to a sure reduction, if not elimination, of student errors (Ferris, 2002).

While some composition teachers are not certain how to provide grammar instruction, others are uncertain when to provide such instruction. Fearing that an early emphasis on linguistic accuracy may direct students' attention away from developing ideas to editing text, many writing teachers tend to postpone grammar instruction or do not address language issues until the editing stage (Ferris, 2002; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Some even contend that there is simply no place for grammar instruction and error correction (see Truscott, 1996, for his position on error correction). As a result, language instruction, often in the form of error feedback, becomes a reactive and impromptu solution to students' linguistic difficulties rather than a predictive and systematic support that addresses writing students' language needs (Hyland, 2003).

Research on grammar instruction in the composition classroom has suggested that for grammar instruction to be an integral part of composition classes, it should be both proactive and reactive (i.e., Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hyland, 2003). To be proactive, grammar instruction should be systematic, directive, and transmissive (see Frodesen, 1991; Frodesen & Holten, 2003, for pedagogical arguments; and see Ascher, 1993; Fox, 1992; Lane & Lange, 1999; Raimes, 1992, for editing and grammar texts specifically written for ESL writers). To be reactive, it should prompt student writers to be reflective and self-regulated over their language skills development (see Ferris, 1995; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, for discussions on self-editing strategies). In this article, therefore, I will focus on exploring a kind of grammar instruction that facilitates student writers' learning of grammar through providing a carefully constructed supportive framework—language scaffolding. In the following, I will first provide a brief discussion of the concept of scaffolding and its pedagogical implications for the second language composition classroom. I will then proceed to describe a five-step pedagogical framework to illustrate how scaffolded grammar instruction can help foster ESL student writers' increasing linguistic and discourse competence in second language writing. In the end, I will argue that when systematic and flexible support is provided for student writers throughout the writing process, they will develop an increasing ability to exploit grammar as a resource to construct meaning rather than practice isolated grammar rules to maintain simplistic accuracy.

The Concept of Scaffolding and Its Implications in the Second Language Composition Classroom

Scaffolding, in its usual sense, is a temporary structure erected to support a building under construction. As the building is progressively completed, scaffolding is gradually removed. What is significant about scaffolding, however, is its essentiality to the successful construction of the building though a merely temporary structure. As applied to language learning, classroom scaffolding involves the more knowledgeable teacher's providing a carefully constructed supportive framework that facilitates students' learning, extending their current skills and knowledge to a higher level of competence (Boyle &

Peregoy, 1990; Bruner, 1978; Cazden, 1980; Donato, 1994). Simply put, scaffolded instruction means the teacher enables connections to be made between what the students already know and what is new to them, leading the learners from their present understandings to new understandings (Myhill, 2003).

In second language acquisition research, scaffolded learning has attracted an increasing amount of scholarly attention. Benson (2001), for instance, emphasizes the use of modeling as a scaffolding structure to support students' learning to become autonomous. Similarly, in exploring the role of scaffolding in second language reading-strategy instruction, Cotteral (1990) found extensive, contextualized modeling of effective reading strategies to be an effective scaffolded procedure for beginning academic readers.

Second-language writing researchers have also started investigating the use of scaffoldings in the academic writing classroom. Many of the studies investigated the usefulness of providing scaffolded instructions on genre structures and rhetorical patterns of academic writings (Coe, 1994; Flowerdew, 2000). They argue that rhetorical modeling is critical in developing student writers' ability to respond to the purpose and audience of their writing and make competent decisions on the structure, language, and tone of their text. Other studies have researched the usefulness of explicit language modeling in the composition classroom. For instance, Cotteral and Cohen (2003), in implementing scaffolded instruction on transitional links, did not simply provide a simple list of transitional phrases but instead provided examples that showed how the targeted transitional links were embedded in highly elaborated contexts. They later discovered that the students were keen to incorporate the modeled language structures in their original composition, producing a text that was a close imitation of the modeled text. Although the researchers noticed that such close parallel imitation might encourage plagiarism, they were impressed with the students' natural use of the newly learned language structures in their students' final drafts and the appropriateness of the modified language structures to the content of the students' own original writing.

Of course, the use of models could be misleading. It may focus students upon the form of the text too early at the expense of the development of composing skills, such as planning, drafting, and revising (Zamel, 1983). Also, emphasizing one particular model might leave student writers with an impression that the imitated model was the only right model. To prevent this from happening, students do need to be exposed to a wide range of texts and models, so that they can develop a gradually progressive awareness of rhetorical expectations and task demands, and so they can approach the given writing task with a reliable genre and rhetorical schema (Hyland, 2003) and with sufficient confidence and strong self-efficacy. Furthermore, the writing teacher needs to be aware that scaffoldings are always supportive temporarily; the purpose of using scaffolds is to help students eventually become self-regulated and independent.

In short, scaffolded instruction aims to provide appropriate linguistic and rhetorical input to both support and challenge learners. By engaging learners in cognitively and interactionally demanding learning tasks, it pushes students toward an increasing, systematic understanding of the structure of texts, patterns of language use, and the appropriateness of language choices to the pur-

pose, meaning, and reader of the created text. One hopes that as students become increasingly familiar with the linguistic and text features of particular academic genres, they become increasingly independent and competent in creating target texts without any outside assistance.

A Five-Step Pedagogical Model of Language Scaffolding

In proposing a literacy scaffolding model, Boyle and Peregoy (1990) emphasize that scaffolding instruction should adhere to the following five principles:

1. Aiming at functional, meaningful communication found in whole texts;
2. Making repeated use of language and discourse patterns so they are predictable;
3. Providing models for comprehending and producing particular written language patterns;
4. Supporting students in comprehending and producing written language at a level slightly higher than their competence; and
5. Removing the scaffolds when students are ready to be independent.

Second language literacy educators have also proposed various pedagogical models that reflect these principles. For instance, Feez (1998), in discussing the use of scaffolding in the composition classroom, proposes a five-stage teaching-learning cycle, namely, building the context, modeling and deconstructing the text, joint construction of the text, independent construction of the text, and linking related texts. Gibbons (2002), in drawing on Derewianka's (1990) and others' work on genre-based approaches to teaching writing, proposes a similar curriculum cycle: building the field, modeling the text type, joint construction, and independent writing. Hyland (2003), in reviewing various scaffolding techniques, also proposes a similar framework that includes five stages of instruction, that is, contextualizing, modeling, negotiating, constructing, and connecting.

These various models, though somewhat different in categorizing stages of writing, well complement each other in the contextualized modeling of the writing process. Integrating the various models briefly discussed above, this article proposes a five-step pedagogical framework for scaffolded grammar instruction in the composition classroom, namely, contextual awareness building, model analysis and language manipulation, controlled and guided practice, collaborative construction of text, and independent writing. This proposed grammar pedagogy does not merely emphasize grammar skills practices at the sentence level; rather, it emphasizes grammar practices beyond the sentential level and pertinent to the purpose and function of the target academic written discourse. It employs a range of activities at each of the instructional stages to serve a particular teaching purpose. Table 1 presents a brief list of sample instructional activities for illustration.

Table 1
Types of Language Scaffolding Tasks

Stages of scaffolded instruction in grammar

Stage 1: Contextual awareness building
- Providing examples to expose students to the use of target grammar structure in the target written discourse and rhetorical pattern

Stage 2: Model analysis and language manipulation
- Collecting examples of a particular genre and/or rhetorical pattern
- Reading different essay types
- Reading model essays
- Reading model paragraphs
- Analyzing model essays
- Analyzing model paragraphs
- Mapping out the outline of a given text
- Analyzing language features of a given text
- Choosing the best vocabulary form to complete a text
- Choosing the best grammar form to complete a text

Stage 3: Controlled and guided composition
- Rearranging scrambled sentences into a coherent paragraph
- Rearranging scrambled paragraphs into a coherent essay
- Matching topic sentence with support details
- Inserting topic sentence in support paragraphs
- Deleting incoherent sentences
- Transforming an outline into a paragraph or essay
- Completing gapped paragraphs with target grammar form and vocabulary
- Completing gapped paragraphs according to a text frame
- Creating a parallel text using a given model
- Creating text using a given set of key vocabulary
- Creating text using a sequence of provided pictures

Stage 4: Collaborative construction of text
- Teacher and students constructing the text together
- Student revising text based on teacher's corrective feedback
- Student revising text based on peers' corrective feedback

Stage 5: Independent writing
- Student peer editing grammar errors
- Student self-editing grammar errors
- Student production of original text naturally integrating targeted structures

Note. Adapted from Hyland, 2003.

For many composition teachers, one key question has been when it is appropriate to conduct grammar instruction in the composition classroom. It should be noted that this pedagogical model can be implemented in any stage of a process-based composition class, whether it is before the teaching of a

process strategy or at the end of collaborative writing. The key issue is, however, which language structures to teach. After all, a composition class is not a grammar class, and grammar instruction in the composition classroom should begin with an awareness of students' needs (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). This means that the writing teacher should first assess the missing gap in student writers' knowledge of grammar and then use the information collected to shape the contents of grammar instruction. In college basic writing classes I used to teach, I often used previous students' papers and initial in-class writings to identify common grammar errors and then used the results of the error analysis as the basis for my grammar instruction.

The Language Scaffolding Cycle: Description of Tasks

In the following, I will provide a detailed description of each of the stages of scaffolded grammar instruction and provide some useful activities for illustration. Given that there is a wide range of language structures in correspondence to a variety of rhetorical patterns in academic writing, the examples provided here are limited to the teaching of form, meaning, and use of the simple present versus the simple past in expository essays. These types of activities, however, do not serve just the simple present and simple past tenses. Rather, they are meant to be examples. Therefore, composition instructors are encouraged to adapt and expand the ideas and activities to serve the needs of their students.

Stage 1: Contextual Awareness Building

In this stage of instruction, the aim is to expose students to a variety of related texts that exhibit the use of the target grammar structure in correspondence to the particular written communicative purpose, genre, and rhetorical pattern. In the traditional inductive grammar classroom, grammar structures are often presented and explained at the sentence level and isolated from a meaningful context. For instance, many grammar texts often provide the definition of the meaning of a given structure along with a sentence for illustration, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Sample Chart for Inductive Grammar Teaching

The simple present

Use	*Examples*
1. To express a habitual or repeated action in the present	Jack goes to school every day.
2. To express a condition that is true at any time	Since I get up too early in the morning, I often feel a little sleepy in the early afternoon.
3. To express general truths that are timeless	Water freezes at zero degrees Celsius.
4. To summarize or report what appears in a text	In his essay, Smith emphasizes the need to attend to the learning process.

The pragmatic aspect of the structure, such as how the structure may be used in correspondence to the function of a particular discourse, however, is often neglected.

Given that the goal of grammar instruction in the composition classroom is to enable student writers to exercise active control over linguistic choices, a grammar chart, though it may serve as a good preview or review, is definitely far from sufficient. Grammar structures should be presented, explained, and practiced in context. In other words, in addition to the explicit instruction of the forming of the structure, the teacher must explain to students what the given language structure means and why it is used in the particular situation and how it corresponds to the purpose and function of the target written communicative discourse. Take the paragraph shown in Figure 1, for example. This paragraph describes the different life habits and lifestyles of Igor and Hector. The teacher, following an inductive explanation of the rules that govern the use of the simple present and the simple past, as shown in Table 2, can present the paragraph to students, highlighting all of the verbs in the simple present (underlined) and explaining how it fits with the logical development of the argument. The teacher can point out that the main verb of the topic sentence is expressed in the simple present because the topic sentence is a statement of truths that are current, and the simple present is also used with the subsequent support details because they are often facts that are current as well. The teacher, of course, can add additional examples in the simple past tense (as shown in the sentences highlighted in italics) to illustrate how the tense shift, from the simple present to the simple past, offers additional examples to illustrate the differences between Igor and Hector.

In discussing the use of the verb tenses, the teacher may also want to purposely arrange the paragraph in an outline format to highlight the hierarchical structure of the paragraph, so that students can be prompted to attend to the use of the verb tenses in relation to the logical development of the ideas. For instance, in the paragraph in Figure 1, not only can the teacher ask students to pay attention to the discourse markers such as *first*, *second*, *lastly*, *on the other hand*, *in addition*, and *also*, but he or she can also ask students to search for a tense shift marker, such as *last week* and *during the last several months*. In so doing, the discussion of the target linguistic features in relation to the particular context is closely tied to the purpose of development, prompting students to develop an awareness that a language structure is often conditioned by the context and is always used to serve a certain communicative function.

Figure 1
The Simple Present and Simple Past in a Support Paragraph

Topic sentence:
Igor's and Hector's lifestyles and spending habits <u>are</u> different for three main reasons.

Support details:
(1) First, Igor usually *<u>buys</u>* groceries and *<u>cooks</u>* meals at home. *Last week, however, <u>was</u> an exception. Igor <u>ate</u> at a restaurant because a friend of his <u>came</u> to visit him.*

(1) Second, he rarely *spends* money on recreational activities. *During the last several months, Igor went to the movie theater only once.*

(1) Lastly, most of Igor's income *goes to* housing and tuition.

    (2) For example, he *spends* $800 per month on rent and $120 on utilities.

    (2) He *is* a nonresident and *pays* $960 a month for tuition.

(1) On the other hand, Hector usually *goes* out to eat.

    (2) He *may* spend a total of $110 at restaurants each month.

(1) In addition, he *spends* a lot of his money on entertainment.

(1) Also, Hector *lives* with his parents, so he *doesn't pay* for housing.

(1) He *pays* less for tuition, too—only $265 a month.

Note. *Adapted from Cavusgil, Reid, and Byrd, 1998, pp. 73-74. Verb tenses highlighted by author.*

Stage 2: Model Analysis and Language Manipulation

In this stage of learning, students are not only provided with an inductive instruction of grammar rules in an abstract manner, but they are also prompted to identify the target grammar structure and analyze their use, in other words, the present tense in thesis statements, summary, and evaluation, the past tense in reporting past events, and so on. In this way, students' attention is consciously directed to how language forms are used in a relevant context, in particular, in connection with the function of the target rhetorical pattern and its specific purpose. For example, students can be asked to identify the language features of a particular text or a set of particular texts in whole or in part. Table 3, as an example, shows how the simple present and the simple past can be used in topic-support paragraphs. Depending on the purpose, the two verb tenses can be flexibly used in the topic sentence or in supportive details.

Table 3
Patterns of Verb Tense Use in Topic Sentences and Support Details

Pattern	Topic sentence	Support details
1	The simple present	The simple present
2	The simple present	The simple past
3	The simple past	The simple past
4	The simple present	The simple present and the simple past

To further illustrate, students should be presented with further examples to enhance their linguistic awareness. For example, Figure 2 shows the topic sentence expressed in the simple present since it is a general truth while the support details are expressed in the simple past because they present facts in the past. Also, in engaging students in linguistic analysis, the teacher may also want to direct their attention to any tense shift marker, such as *last spring* in the support details.

Figure 2
The Simple Present Used in the Topic Sentence
With the Simple Past Used in Support Details

Topic sentences:

The Internet has drastically altered the way many people perform numerous tasks, and recently it has become an important tool used by those working for political and humanitarian reform. The ongoing struggle for democracy in Indonesia <u>underscores</u> the power of the Internet.

Support details:

(1) *Last spring*, protesters *<u>bypassed</u>* the state-controlled media by posting a website containing a database that *<u>kept track</u>* of the corruption of then president Suharto.

(1) People across the country continually *<u>added</u>* information about the accumulated wealth of the president and his children, knowledge of which *<u>fueled</u>* an inflammatory situation.

(1) Students also *<u>relied on</u>* the Internet to coordinate their demonstrations, which eventually led to Suharto's resignation.

Note. *Source: Smalley, Ruetten, and Kozyrev, 2000, p. 92.*

Figure 3 shows that the topic sentence and the support details are both about the past and are therefore both expressed in the simple past.

Figure 3
The Simple Past in Both the Topic Sentence and the Support Details

Topic sentence:

The centuries immediately preceding and following the birth of Christ *<u>witnessed</u>* much expansion and exchange among the civilized peoples of the world.

Support details:

(1) Alexander's conquests *<u>helped</u>* to spread Greek culture throughout the Near East.

(1) In the East, India *<u>prospered</u>* under the Mauryas, the Bactrian kings, and Kishans.

   (2) Merchants *<u>traveled</u>* back and forth between India and the West, exchanging goods and ideas.

(1) China, too, took part in the expansion and cultural interchange that *<u>characterized</u>* this period.

   (2) During two Chinese dynasties, the Ch'in and the Han, trade *<u>flourished</u>* through the encouragement of the ruling class, which *<u>fostered</u>* contacts with people from other lands and an increase in China's role in world commerce.

Note. *Source: Sparks and Johnson, 1970, p. 109. Verb tenses highlighted by author.*

In Figure 4, the general statement in the topic sentence is expressed in the simple present, but the support details are expressed both in the simple present and simple past.

Figure 4
Simple Present in Topic Sentence With Mixed Simple Present and Past in Support Details

Topic sentence:
    Not everyone <u>is</u> positive about gene-splicing technology.

Support details:
(1) Some people feel that it <u>*may*</u> have terrible consequences.
   (2) In fact, a type of corn engineered to kill a certain insect pest also <u>*threatened*</u> to annihilate desirable monarch butterflies.
   (2) In another accident, a genetically engineered type of corn that was approved only for animal consumption because it was toxic to humans accidentally <u>*cross-pollinated*</u> with corn grown for humans.
     (3) As a result, many countries <u>*banned*</u> imports of genetically modified corn for several years.
(1) Furthermore, the ability to clone human beings <u>*is*</u> a possibility that frightens many people.
   (2) In 2004, two South Korean scientists <u>*reported*</u> that they had successfully cloned a human embryo. The embryo <u>*did not*</u> develop into a baby.
   (2) However, it <u>*is*</u> possible that one could do so in the future, a possibility that not everyone is comfortable with.

Note. Source: Oshima and Hogue, 2006, p. 30.

In addition to feature identification, students can also be asked to analyze the purpose of the use of the given language structure, as shown above. Students can also be asked to compare the different linguistic patterns in a similar rhetorical context to enhance their awareness of the function of the linguistic choice. Take the examples given above. Students can be prompted to compare and contrast the uses of the present and past tenses in the support paragraphs. The teacher can also ask students to pay attention to the markers for tense shift. For instance, the switch to the "threatened" sentence seems slightly disjointed, which in fact makes a great teachable moment. The teacher can perhaps have students discuss which tense shift markers they can use to produce a much smoother switch, prompting students to develop a repertoire of choices depending on their rhetorical planning needs.

Stage 3: Model Analysis and Language Manipulation

In this stage, the purpose is for students to become further familiar with the use of the target grammar structure of the given type of text through textual manipulation. Practice activities in this stage are largely receptive with minimum productive requirements. For instance, modeling and manipulation tasks can involve students in reordering, combining, and deleting text segments. Take the exercise in Figure 5, for instance. Students can be asked to reorder the support sentences in a logical order. In particular, they can be reminded that some sentences are expressed in the simple present while others are in the simple past. As a result, students are prompted to pay conscious attention to the use of the simple present and the simple past as they indicate an appropriate chronological order. Students may have to look at the transitional phrases as well, such as *in addition*, *now*, *as a result*, to determine the order of the sentences. In this way, students' practice of the verb tenses is highly contextualized in close connection with the activation of their rhetorical knowledge as well as the practice of their rhetorical skills.

Figure 5
Sample Reordering Task

Instruction: Examine the following paragraph. Rearrange the sentences in the support section in a logical order. Pay particular attention to the simple present and the simple past as they allude to the chronological order of the support details. The transitional phrases such as *in addition*, *now*, and *as a result* can be helpful as well.

Topic sentence:
   Perhaps the most positive effect of dieting and weight loss advertising is an increase in education.

Support details:
   (a) In addition, exercise was considered appropriate only for men.
   (b) For many years, Americans ate heavy food cooked only in butter or lard.
   (c) These trends changed as television and radio began promoting a healthier lifestyle that includes private gyms, low-calorie foods, and aerobics tapes, among other things.
   (d) Since the media's attention to this phenomenon, Americans are certainly healthier than they were in the recent past.
   (e) They are now aware that heart disease and other illnesses can be controlled with proper diet and exercise.
   (f) As a result of this advertisement, Americans began to understand that diet, exercise, and other preventive measures made them healthier.

Note. *Source: Exercise developed based on the text in Folse, Mahnke, Solomon, and Williams, 2003, p. 124.*

Stage 4: Controlled and Guided Practice

In this stage, the aim is for students to learn to manipulate the target structure in context. The practice activities are largely productive in nature but within clearly, if not narrowly, defined parameters. The controlled practice tasks in this stage of learning may require students to complete a gapped paragraph with the target grammar form or vocabulary, complete a gapped paragraph according to a text frame, correcting designated errors, or creating a parallel text using the given model. Figure 6, for instance, shows an exercise that requires students to fill in the gaps with the correct verb forms. Students may also be prompted to search for a tense switch marker, in other words, the time phrase *in 1853*, for a heightened awareness of tense shift.

Figure 6
Sample Gap-Fill Task

Instruction: Fill in the gaps with the correct verb tense. Also, discuss why the particular verb tense is used instead of another verb tense.

Topic sentence:
    With the introduction of the railways in 1853, the opening of the Suez Canal, and the building of cotton factories, the trade and commerce of Bombay _____ (advance/advanced/have advanced) quickly.

Support details:
    (a) Soon thousands of yards of material _____ (be/were/are) produced.
    (b) Goods from all over the world now _____ (become/became/have become) available in plentiful supply.
    (c) Also, goods from the interior _____ (can/could) now more economically be shipped to the rest of the world.
Note. Source: Exercise developed based on the text in Sparks and Johnson, 1970, p. 95.

In Figure 7, students are required to correct the verb tense errors relating to the use of the simple past. Although both exercises may seem mechanical, they draw students' attention to the accurate use of the verb tenses appropriate to the purpose of the discourse.

Figure 7
Sample Error Correction Task

Instruction: Correct the wrong verb tense use in the following paragraph.

That summer I decided to buy a radio receiver with the money I had earned mowing lawns. I set it up in my bedroom, and then I spent an afternoon getting an antenna on the roof. My mother stands down

there on the lawn hollering advice at me because she's afraid I'm going to fall off the roof. In spite of her I finally get it up, and then I went inside and connected the antenna to the receiver. Presto! I am listening to radios all over the world. Eventually I decide I want a ham radio operator's license too, so I could transmit back to some of the stations I was hearing. I got the license all right, but being young and shy, I never did much talking. Mostly I just listen and work on my equipment. After a few months, I tired of my new toy and never did any more with it. The challenge of striving for the set was more fun than actually having it.

Note. *Source: Glazier, 1998, pp. 129-130.*

Parallel writing is yet another scaffolding technique that provides student writers with a supportive environment that they may need. With the introduction of an authentic model as well as with the various functional stages of development clearly labeled, students are provided with a contextual, rhetorical, and linguistic structure to help them develop a more productive control of their grammatical skill. Figure 8 presents such an example.

Figure 8
Sample Parallel Writing Task

The topic sentence with main idea expressed in simple past.	When they were first married, my sister and brother-in-law made many sacrifices to save enough money to buy their first home.
First support topic sentence in simple past. Further details in simple past.	(1) *First of all*, they moved in with my parents instead of renting their own apartment. (2) Fortunately, my parents had a house with a room and bath over the garage. My parents charged my sister and her husband only $300 a month for room and board.
Second support topic sentence in simple past. Further details in simple past.	(1) *In addition*, my sister and brother-in-law limited all their expenses. (2) For example, they watched TV instead of going to the movies. They gave up their tickets to sporting events such as basketball and football, and my sister cut her own hair and gave herself home permanents.
Third support topic sentence in simple past. Further details in simple past.	(1) *Finally*, they both worked extra jobs. (2) In addition to his regular job, my brother-in-law worked at night at Fry's Electronics store. My sister worked three nights a week as a clerk at a Barnes & Noble bookstore.

Concluding comment in response to the opic sentence.	Because of all their sacrifices, my sister and brother-in-law were finally able to move into their own home three months ago.

Writing assignment: Draft a paragraph explaining something you did in order to achieve a certain goal. Be sure to state the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph, provide three support points, and all the relevant details. Be sure to use the simple past tense since you are to describe past experiences.

Note. Adapted from McClelland and Marcotte, 2003, p. 208.

It should be noted that aside from engaging students in manipulating the structures, it is important to prompt students to explain why a certain form is selected over another, so that they can maintain a conscious attention to the targeted structure and internalize the rule.

Stage 5: Joint Construction of Text

In this stage, the teacher and students work together to create text, so that students can not only see how a text is written through the modeling of the teacher but can also practice what they have learned previously through awareness raising, model analysis, and controlled/guided practice. The focus here is on illustrating the process of writing a text, considering the content, the organization, and the language. For instance, the teacher can provide a topic sentence expressed in the simple present tense and then do the brainstorming together with students over any possible ideas that can effectively support the topic sentence. Next, the teacher can ask a few students to write a paragraph on the blackboard, asking them to pay conscious attention to a smooth switch between the present tense and past tense as they construct supportive details. After that, the teacher can invite the whole class to revise the texts and discuss the uses of the present and past tense in the writings. This technique works best when a learning community has been established and trust developed among its members. In this situation, the teacher acts first as a facilitator rather than as a judge, whereas students assume an active participant role, critiquing and supporting each other in consolidating their command of the target grammar structure. The open negotiation, discussion, and immediate teacher feedback, in the form of lively online demonstration, can enhance students' understanding of how a target grammar structure can be appropriately and accurately woven into a written discourse aimed at serving a certain purpose.

Stage 6: Independent Writing

In this stage, students are prompted to edit their own writing or edit each other's writing according to an editing guide. It should be noted that the editing guide should be narrowly focused only on the types of targeted grammar structures that have been covered in class, so that students are not surprised. Figure 9 shows an example of an editing worksheet that uses questions to prompt students to examine their use of verb tenses.

Figure 9
Sample Self-Editing Guidelines

Instruction: Now that you have finished revising your essay and are satisfied with the ideas that you have developed, it is time to edit it for errors. Read the essay out loud and pay particular attention to the time shifts.

Examine each paragraph and answer the following questions:

1. What is the time focus of the paragraph?

2. What time phrases have you used in reference to the time focus of the paragraph?

3. Does the verb tense you used agree with the time focus of the paragraph?

4. Does the verb tense agree with the time phrase you have used in the sentence?

Note. Source: Adapted from Ascher (1993, p. 125).

Another self-editing technique that promotes writers' editing autonomy is to prompt students to develop an editing reminder based on the error logs they have created benefiting from the teacher's prior corrective feedback. In this way, students can direct their conscious attention to the common errors in their writings without being distracted by a more generic editing guide developed by the teacher. Productwise, students may not be able to correct all of their errors. Processwise, however, students can develop a keen awareness of their problematic structures and thus can make conscious, active, preventive, and even self-corrective attempts to exercise appropriate and accurate linguistic choices in creating a text.

It should be noted, however, that grammar editing is not necessarily an end-stage process; rather, it can occur at any targeted times—even during the composing process, in which case, students will be prompted to consciously regulate their attention to the present and past tense shift while constructing the text. Self-editing in this case is no longer an end-stage reaction to a finished written product but rather a proactive, self-directed move to assess, monitor, and revise linguistic choices appropriate to the purpose and function of the written discourse.

Adapting Scaffolding Techniques to Other Grammar Structures

The scaffolding techniques illustrated above are by no means limited to the present and past tense shift. Rather, these techniques can be easily adapted or expanded to other grammar structures. Table 1 has provided a list of such possible tasks and techniques. The key issue, however, is that whatever activities are introduced, grammar instructional scaffoldings should adhere to the

following basic principles: contextual awareness building, contextualized modeling, and contextualized practices. Or to be more specific, scaffolded grammar instruction should aim to alert student writers to the given problematic grammar structure in the beginning, provide adequate contextualized analysis and modeling, and engage learners not only in language imitation and manipulation tasks but also in peer collaboration, self-monitoring, and independent production. After all, the purpose of scaffolded instruction is to gradually withdraw the scaffolds and eventually lead students to become self-directed editors and producers of effective written discourse for purposeful communication.

Conclusion

Learning to write involves an ability to exercise appropriate language choices at and beyond the sentence level. Therefore, grammar instruction in the second language composition classroom should aim to increase students' ability to exercise their linguistic choices fluently, accurately, and appropriately. Language scaffolding is one such technique that proactively addresses students' language needs and prompts learners to approach and exploit grammar as a resource to help them construct meanings rather than maintain simplistic accuracy. As student writers gain increasing familiarity with the text features through meaningful practices, they can move away from models and use their increasing knowledge of purpose, structure, and language to create texts in specified contexts and with controlled input.

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