



Scaffolding Strategies for Students: Improving Writing Skills in a Five-Paragraph-Essay
Elaboration

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Abstract

This study aims at presenting the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies to enhance EFL learners' writing skills. Research sample consists of 23 male and female undergraduate intermediate students, studying English language in a higher institution. To meet the purpose of the study, a quasi-experimental design was adopted. A pre-test/post-test layout was applied to measure EFL learners' writing progress. In addition, recorded interviews, field notes, and students' reflections were used for evaluating the perspective of students towards this innovation. The results demonstrated that the scores of the post-tests in the experimental group were significantly higher than the scores of the control group showing an effect size of 0.93. Consequently, the study revealed that applying scaffolding strategies with an emphasis on a five-paragraph-essay structure helped students improve their quality of writing. The students' perspectives towards scaffolding strategies also affirm that brainstorming in pairs enabled them to improve their writing skills. The study has implications since it can bring beneficial understandings for both EFL teachers and learners about the importance of following a structure to write five-paragraph essays to improve the students' writing performance.

Keywords: scaffolding strategies, five-paragraph-essay structure, writing skills, higher education

Este estudio tiene como objetivo presentar la efectividad de las estrategias de andamiaje para mejorar las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes de EFL. La muestra de investigación está formada por 23 estudiantes hombres y mujeres, que estudian inglés en una institución superior. Para cumplir con el propósito del estudio, se adoptó un diseño cuasi-experimental. Se aplicó un diseño pre-test / post-test para medir el progreso de escritura de los estudiantes de EFL. Las entrevistas grabadas, las notas de campo y las reflexiones de los estudiantes también se utilizaron para evaluar la perspectiva de los mismos hacia esta innovación. Los resultados demostraron que las puntuaciones de las pruebas posteriores en el grupo experimental fueron significativamente más altas que las puntuaciones del grupo de control, mostrando un tamaño del efecto de 0,93. En consecuencia, el estudio reveló que la aplicación de estrategias de andamiaje con énfasis en una estructura de ensayo de cinco párrafos ayudó a los estudiantes a mejorar su calidad de escritura. Las perspectivas de los estudiantes hacia las estrategias de andamiaje fueron positivas. El estudio puede aportar entendimientos beneficiosos tanto para los profesores de EFL como para los alumnos sobre la importancia de seguir una estructura para escribir ensayos de cinco párrafos para mejorar el rendimiento de escritura de los estudiantes.

Palabras claves: lluvia de ideas colaborativa, estrategias de andamiaje, formato de ensayo de cinco párrafos, habilidades de escritura, educación superior

Scaffolding Strategies for Students: Improving Writing Skills in a Five-Paragraph-Essay Elaboration

Teaching English as a Second Language is an active process, which requires an in-depth knowledge of the language and the proper application of the four English skills. Within the core components of the English language, writing is one of the four macro, active and productive language skills of communication. It demands the most attention from the teacher and the student. Nevertheless, second language learners seem hesitant towards practicing this domain in and out of the classroom because they find writing in a foreign language more difficult than writing in their mother tongue (Listyani, 2018). In relation to undergraduate learners, they struggle when writing any text because of their low language proficiency and poorly developed writing skills even in their first language (Yusuf, Jusoh, & Yusuf, 2019; Gonca, 2016). Gonca (2016) asserts that students produce unclear and incoherent writings that include lack of sentence fluency, organization, and conventions. An absence of strategies for writing skills development presents a gap in organization and coherence for students.

Considering the relevance of developing good writing skills, a study by Bailey, Zanchetta, Velasco, Pon, and Hassan (2015) affirm that the writing process begins in an oriented way that goes from the simplest (brainstorm) to the most complex form of writing (essay). Due to learners' weaknesses in this area, the implementation of scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers, along with web tools is pivotal in the writing performance.

Studies in Iraq, Jordan, Iran, Thailand, Colombia, and Canada demonstrate how the previously mentioned scaffolding strategies provide L2 learners with a sense of confidence and relevance of their work during the writing process. From all these cited countries, there are corresponding studies as follow. Faraj (2015) states that scaffolding is a strategy that assists learners to increase their writing skills. It allows the progression of the student from

guided tasks to independent work. Brainstorming is also a scaffolding strategy that is considered an immediate solution to the difficulties that students present in the writing learning process (Amoush, 2015). It is significant to mention that scaffolding stimulates collaboration and support among L2 learners (Khatib & Meihami, 2015).

Collaboration among students, as Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014) declare, is an ideal choice to create productive and active learning environments, so students help one another to generate writing tasks. Working in pairs or groups collaboratively in class, as Robayo and Hernández (2013) mention, prepare students for future work where team skills are needed. Furthermore, to strengthen collaborative writing, McDonough and Neumann (2015) point out that the combination of language, content, organization, and interaction of students is positively associated with text. Consequently, it can be understood that the quality of learners' writings at tertiary levels requires that these components be addressed together.

Focusing on the Ecuadorian educational system, the government between 2006 and 2017 spent a great deal of money sending local teachers abroad with scholarships, such as the “Go Teacher” program. This project aimed at improving the learning of the English language, which was also a mechanism to raise the country’s profile (British Council, 2015). Nevertheless, there is still uncertainty as to how undergraduate students reach the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B2 level at the time of graduation, a requirement established by the government (Ministerio de Educación, 2012). A significant issue present in the Ecuadorian educational system for English learning is how to approach the writing process as a teacher and as a learner. While teachers find it challenging to teach the writing process due to its complexity, students find it uninteresting and frustrating, based on initial interviews.

To emphasize the necessity of improving undergraduate learners’ quality of writing by focusing on scaffolding strategies, a study in Ecuador reveals that scaffolding involves

receiving support from the teacher when it is not possible to achieve an individual learning objective (López, 2018). In other words, learners want the instructor's support until they reach their independent learning level.

Another topic to consider is that the CEFR for Languages gives clear guidelines concerning the writing standards that must be met by students of a B1 level when enrolling level 5 course at this private university. These standards include understanding the main ideas of complex texts and the production of clear, detailed texts, essays or reports related to their interests (Ministerio de Educación, 2012). In observance to this fact, the current English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Program in this Ecuadorian higher institution is comprised of six 48-hour courses taught by the accredited EFL faculty. Most of the students come from monolingual schools or rural areas with limited exposure to English.

The problem intermediate students confront is deficient written production, as evidenced by the low scores obtained in the diagnostic test that revealed poor writing skills. Lack of organization, poor development of ideas, and non-existent logical sequencing among other components of writing were found in their texts. These difficulties limit the students' quality of writing, and accordingly, learners are failing at producing well-structured essays.

Research on this academic issue is gaining attention among the advanced students at international levels. However, there is no available research on applying scaffolding strategies to improve intermediate undergraduate students' pieces of writing at a B1 level in the Ecuadorian context.

The present study makes the scaffolding strategies as a critical part of a teacher's plan to achieve positive outcomes in learners' writing performance. When students attempt to learn a skill in English, they need the teacher's assistance until they acquire knowledge and master independent tasks. Working holistically on the scaffolding strategies with an emphasis on the five-paragraph-essay structure, the undergraduate learners' writing output

levels and overall skills could achieve satisfactory outcomes at the end of their academic cycle at university.

Literature Review

Built on the premise that L2 learners' quality of writing has been an academic issue at Ecuadorian undergraduate levels, this study emphasizes the relevance of applying scaffolding strategies. Modeling a mentor text, in which a five-paragraph-essay structure is applied, is feasible in intermediate learners to achieve positive writing outcomes and succeed in their academic life.

This proposed study was based on "collaborative communication" since the students are actively engaged in the production of effective work in groups. Richards (2005) claims that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a set of principles that involves the language teaching goals, how students learn a language, a variety of activities that help students learn, and the role of teachers and students in the classroom. Activities and tasks contribute to second language learners' academic progress, problem-solving skills and students' motivation during the learning process (Chen, 2017). Therefore, focusing on this approach creates a spontaneous classroom that allows learners to feel confident to develop any piece of writing, especially essays, and to provide peer feedback. Consequently, given all these assertions, it is indispensable to apply scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers along with web tools so that undergraduate students produce an organized piece of writing in English during their learning process.

Scaffolding

Hammond and Gibbons (2005) point out that scaffolding are provisional structures that builders situate around the outside of new buildings to access and work with ease. Once the building is able to support itself, the builder removes the scaffolding. In the English language

learning contexts, scaffolding is applied as a temporary help given to students to develop tasks so that they will be capable to complete similar assignments on their own.

The term “scaffolding” comes from Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1971) theories that claim that successful learning is obtained through the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the space between what a learner can develop on his own and what he can do with assistance. Bruner (1971) affirms that scaffolding for learning as a process developed gradually by learners until they feel confident working independently. Bruner also highlights that teachers provide scaffolding strategies that involve the use of structures, activities, and temporary support for the students to construct knowledge. Thus, the implementation of scaffolding strategies requires the connection of the previous components to make learners produce knowledge on their own.

A study conducted by Majid, Stapa, and Keong (2015) defines scaffolding as an essential element of cognitive learning used to help learners perform a task that they do not know or that is beyond their current ability. In the scaffolding process, students are encouraged to perform the tasks that are within their capacity of understanding. If students cannot perform complicated tasks due to their complexity, then the instructor can scaffold them. Therefore, teachers provide the students with enough guidance gradually until they can learn the process and carry out the activities on their own (Faraj, 2015; Vonna, Mukminatien & Laksmi, 2015).

Related to the present study, Faraj (2015) researches the impact of scaffolding on EFL students' writing ability through the writing process. The research was applied to 32 college students studying in the English Department, School of Languages and its results revealed that the students' achievement made a significant improvement of 60-72% within and between pre-test and post-test. The Faraj (2015) study emphasizes that 70% of students effectively brainstormed in post-tests whereas only 46% brainstormed in the pre-test. Results

indicated that scaffolding writing is efficacious to support students' writing with English language difficulties. Faraj (2015) also claims that scaffolding strategies have allowed students to find their weaknesses, so they can focus on them to improve their writing. Within this approach, the author ensures that working progressively with students in the writing stages, has yielded benefits.

Strategy

Sykes and Cohen (2016) reveal that “strategies” are detailed thoughts and actions that can be combined and employed in cognitive, emotional, and social scenarios.

Scaffolding Strategies

There are diverse scaffolding strategies that are applied in the classroom during the writing learning process. They are modeling, bridging, contextualization among others (Abejuela, 2014). This project draws attention to the modeling category, in which a mentor text is presented to students so they can improve their writing and produce good essays.

Mentor Texts

Mentor text, as Liaghat and Biria (2018) declare, is a modeling approach that facilitates new learning ways to improve any competence. Escobar Alméjiga and Evans (2014) also claim that a mentor text is an appropriate method of guiding poor writing, or a text, which is observed and analyzed so that learners try to emulate one or more linguistic functions. These assertions are valid especially with undergraduate learners whose writing well-written essays has been poor throughout their university life. Thus, modeling a mentor text in which a five-paragraph-essay structure is applied can be an efficacious way to enhance students' writing skills.

Research on the Application of a Five-Paragraph-Essay Structure.

Examining in greater depth the issues raised by the absence of undergraduate learners' writing skills, it is appropriate to define first what an essay means and how it helps students to

write in an organized and coherent way. The researchers Januševa and Pejčinovska (2016) assert that writing an essay means that a topic should be completed in a written form, and the students illustrate their ideas and perspectives on the topic following some requirements such as organization, content, and language.

A study conducted by Johnson, Thompson, Smagorinsky, and Fry (2003) highlights that writing structured five-paragraph essays is still prevalent during the English learning process. Despite “enculturation”, “teachers shortcomings” and other factors that could influence teachers and hinder the writing instruction, teaching five-paragraph essays still lays foundations for a better quality of writing. The mentioned authors demonstrate that five-paragraph essays, which is a principal pedagogical tool, still endures in writing instruction. Through the five-paragraph-essay structure, the students were encouraged to apply the scaffolding strategies and elaborate an organized and coherent piece of writing. They used brainstorming (peer collaboration), to write an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

To validate the implementation of a five-paragraph-essay structure, Januševa and Pejčinovska (2016) analyzed essays of 50 college students at the Faculty of Education in Bitola. These essays were examined based on the elements of the five-paragraph essay. The results were satisfying and were justified due to the essay structure that gave basic skills for writing, which guarantees positive results. Hence, the previously mentioned authors recommend that students follow a structure such as the five-paragraph essay that provides simple instructions to develop the necessary skills in academic writing.

Peer Collaboration

It is advisable to first brainstorm ideas in collaboration with peers, which indicates that students work collaboratively with one partner or more to go through the writing process (Robayo & Hernández, 2013). Collaboration is social and crucial in the learning process; it increases the sharing of ideas and strengthens the internalization of the stages of the writing

process. Working collaboratively stimulates students' cognitive areas and helps them generate ideas and produce related and logical texts. Widodo (2013) states that when working in groups, learners can give any ideas they have on their minds and share them with their peers. Learning in collaborative contexts allows learners to construct knowledge in social interaction that involves students and teachers, where members receive and share experiences or knowledge (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014). Likewise, Talib and Cheung (2017) present similar results asserting that doing pair work shows better quality of writing and positive feelings about collaborative writing assignments.

As Robayo and Hernández (2013) advocate, collaboration promotes free, non-judgmental opinion and allows conclusions to be drawn about issues that are part of the lives of students. Caviedes, Meza, and Rodríguez (2016) claim that collaborative writing invigorates students to join efforts with the aim of producing and creating together a single piece of writing. It also helps students to think critically, giving their points of view about the topics discussed. In a research on pair and group work, Shehadeh (2011) states working collaboratively enhances students' self-confidence, writing ability, and other skills. Writing collaboratively allows students to comment on their texts, giving extra details and producing a better text. Learners develop a sense of responsibility for sharing their skill and newly acquired information with their peers (Deveci, 2018). These assertions are valid especially when students attempt to write essays and need their peers' collaboration to produce a better piece of writing.

Brainstorming

Faraj (2015) asserts that the brainstorming strategy allows students to consider the topic and write down any promising ideas since many students will forget their previous ideas while thinking about the new ones. A research done by Listyani (2018) acknowledges that the brainstorming strategy allows learners to work collaboratively to generate possible topics

and develop ideas to write essays. Other significant statements about brainstorming is what Zheng and Wiping (2012) as well as Hashempour, Rostampour, and Behjat (2015) mention that the process is a useful way that generates ideas and thoughts stemming from the judgment-free dynamic interaction with others. These thoughts can motivate students to discover what to say and how to say it on paper. In addition, brainstorming encourages communication skills, helps promote thinking and decision-making capacities, and fosters different viewpoints and opinions (AlMutairi, 2015). Finally, applying the brainstorming strategy as the first scaffolding strategy can enhance the students' writing skills while developing essays.

Graphic Organizers

Being graphic organizers part of the scaffolding strategies in this study, Ciascai (2009) emphasizes that graphic organizers are representations, symbols, images or visual models that are used to process information. Graphic organizers allow the student to better understand a large amount of information that must be learned in a limited time.

There are different types of graphic organizers such as concept map, story map, semantic map, bubble map, T-chart among others (Kansızoğlu, 2017). This research study mainly used the bubble map and the T-chart to help students classify and describe information related to the essay topics.

Answer Garden and Padlet Web Tools

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education cannot go unnoticed. ICT enables communication among learners and teachers and creates an interactive environment. According to Sangeetha (2016), *Padlet* and *Answer Garden* are online tools that facilitate interaction and collaboration among learners in the educational field. Teachers and students can collaborate, brainstorm, reflect, and answer topic questions. Therefore, the application of these web tools can motivate second language learners' learning process.

There are arguments that writing essays may not always be feasible. It is useful to look at the studies that have yielded results that are opposite to the ones featured in this project. Quintero (2018) agrees with Januševa and Pejčinovska (2016) when they say that writing essays embodies an essential task to develop independently, an organized and coherent text at university levels. Even though for some authors writing essays involves good organization and logical order of ideas, Punyaratabandhu, Rush, Kleindl, and Wadden (2017) argue in their research that developing a five-paragraph essay using traditional methods is suitable only for beginning writers. They emphasize that university teachers have found many weaknesses in the students' writings and that it is necessary to create consciousness in learners about written production. They also highlight methods for writing better than "the five-paragraph orthodoxy" by pointing out that writing instruction should be designed so that the writer has different ways to express more complex thoughts and analyze any topic critically.

In examining writing deficiencies, it is of relevance to guide this research towards the incorporation of scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers to improve intermediate B1 learners' quality of writing at a private university. Specifically, this study puts forward the following research questions.

1. How does scaffolding the five-paragraph essay help intermediate EFL learners improve their writing performance?
2. How does collaboration at the brainstorming phase of writing help students generate ideas?
3. How do students' perspectives on writing in English change with supports such as collaboration and the five-paragraph-essay structure?

Innovation

The innovation started the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019 at a private university with the voluntary participation of 23 intermediate students enrolling in the English 5 level. The objective of this study was to have students write a coherent essay using scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers along with web tools. The researcher emphasized the five-paragraph essay structure that helped students write in an organized and logical way. Following the Ecuadorian standards, the instructor-researcher guided this study using Backward Design approach. Backward design offers clearer objectives in both short and long terms goals, in a blended fashion as it currently applies, despite its concept having been around for quite some time. Furthermore, it features more effective forms of assessing and teaching with a higher sense of purpose than the traditional strategies that lay the path of learning, especially when the main goal of education is the achievement of transfer of learning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The researcher conducted the project over six weeks, with one 4-hour session weekly, during which the scaffolding strategies were introduced to the experimental group. The teacher-researcher elaborated a detailed plan (Appendix A).

At the beginning of the innovation, the teacher-researcher applied a pre-test to the control and experimental groups (Appendix B). After the pre-test, scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers along with web tools were applied in sessions two, three, and four. The teacher-researcher used a mentor model text (Appendix C) to teach a five-paragraph essay. The researcher scaffolded the essay by first brainstorming to generate ideas. Then, the researcher explained how to organize thoughts and arguments. Afterwards, the teacher-researcher demonstrated how to write an introductory paragraph. Finally, the researcher showed the students how to give feedback. Using the writing process as the larger framework, students were encouraged

to apply the scaffolding strategies: brainstorming (peer collaboration), to write an introduction, a body, and a conclusion and self-assess. Following the strategies, the experimental group wrote two essays.

The control group developed its essays without any support. In other words, this group did not use the five-paragraph-essay structure, graphic organizers, or any other scaffolding strategy. Finally, both groups were required to do a post-test (Appendix D), which consisted of a five-paragraph essay as the final product on the topic of “Academic stress. What contributes to it? What would reduce it? What are the ways to help undergraduate students cope with stress?”

Methodology

Design

This is quasi-experimental action research with qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Action research is a systematic strategy presented in scenarios that requires the participation of teachers as researchers so that they can use their investigation to improve their teaching style and the students’ learning (Bradbury-Huang, 2010). The instructor-researcher developed the project lasting six weeks and concentrated on scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers along with web tools.

Action research is a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives.

Participants

The study was carried out in two parallel classes with a total of 46 EFL learners from the English Language Center at a private university in Guayaquil. The experimental group included (5 males and 18 females) and a control group (6 males and 17 females). The age of

the two groups' participants ranged between 19 and 23, and they were pursuing different careers.

Assignment of the classes as control or experimental was completely random. The instructional curriculum was the same for both classes. The same instructor-researcher followed the syllabus and material provided by the course and used the same textbook for both classes; however, the lesson plans differed since the experimental group applied the innovation.

Variables of the Study

Independent.

1. Scaffolding strategies to teach five-paragraph essays:
 - 1.1 Brainstorming
 - 1.2 Peer collaboration
 - 1.3 Mentor text
 - 1.3.1 Essay structure
 - 1.4 Graphic organizers

Dependent.

1. Organizing better writing
2. Students' perspectives on writing in English collaboratively

Instruments

The researcher applied pre and post-tests, interviews, and collected field notes to examine relevant information that would answer the three research questions: 1) How does scaffolding the five-paragraph essay help intermediate EFL learners improve their writing performance with regard to different writing components: development of ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions?; 2) How does collaboration at the brainstorming phase of writing help students generate ideas?; and, 3) How do student

perspectives on writing in English change with supports such as collaboration and the five-paragraph-essay format?

To answer the first research question the researcher applied a pre and post-test (Appendices B). The instruments were applied before and after the intervention to obtain information concerning the students' previous and post experiences with scaffolding strategies used to write a five-paragraph-essay. According to Teacher Planet (2016), the researcher used a rubric, which was adapted and contains five components:

1. *Development of ideas*: content; focus
2. *Organization*: order of paragraphs; clear details
3. *Word choice*: appropriate language; vocabulary; word order
4. *Sentence fluency*: transition words; sentence structure; rhythm; flow
5. *Conventions*: capitalization; spelling; punctuation; subject-verb agreement

To respond to the second research question referring to students' collaboration at the brainstorming phase of writing, the researcher analyzed field notes (Appendix E) and the students' journals by highlighting relevant information. Students' reflections on their collaboration during the brainstorming stage were collected through these instruments. Field notes included observations on misunderstandings, areas of confusion, and student engagement.

The third research question refers to how students' perspectives on writing in English change with supports such as collaboration and the five-paragraph-essay structure. Based on the students' performance and scores obtained in the post-tests, the researcher interviewed eight students (Appendix F) with the highest and lowest scores after the intervention. The interview session was conducted face-to-face with each participant. The nature of the interview was to analyze the extent to which scaffolding strategies helped students to improve their writing skills. According to research (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig,

2007), the interview explores the experiences of participants and amplifies the understanding of the investigated events since it is more realistic and a less structured tool of data collection.

According to Lub (2015), validity is the range in which the variables of a research concept can be measured. Thus, to guarantee the validity of data, and using the same rubric, two other instructor colleagues scored five essays done by the experimental and control group during the post-test. Their results matched with the ones the instructor had scored. All collected relevant and supporting data was compiled and saved. All of these techniques were prevalent to ensure credibility of the research project.

Data Collection and Analysis

The students' writing on the pre-tests/post-tests constituted the quantitative data that were collected in Sessions 1 and 5. The interview, the researcher's field notes, and the students' reflections/journals provided qualitative data on the students' perspectives of collaborative writing during the brainstorming phase and using the five-paragraph essay structure. Data were analyzed in the function of the research questions that are explained below.

RQ#1: How does scaffolding the five-paragraph essay help intermediate EFL learners improve their writing performance?

The data of pre-test and post-test were analyzed using Independent Sample T-Test to show if there had been any significant differences between the writing performance of the two groups (control and experimental). The researcher utilized a rubric to analyze five components of writing that are development of ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions.

RQ#2: How does collaboration at the brainstorming phase of writing help students generate ideas?

Researcher's field notes and students' reflections on their collaboration during the brainstorming stage were collected daily. The instructor included observations on misunderstandings, areas of confusion, and student engagement. During the six-week sessions, students reflected on the way they were improving their writing performance by using the scaffolding strategies.

RQ#3: How do students' perspectives on writing in English change with supports such as collaboration and the five-paragraph-essay format?

The interview session was conducted face-to-face with each participant. The nature of the interview was to understand in detail about the participants' experiences and perspectives on writing in English and writing a five-paragraph essay based on a format. The interview session took approximately 10-15 minutes for each participant and was audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher. Transcriptions were grouped according to the participants' insights about collaboration during the brainstorming stage of writing.

Results

Quantitative Data from Pre-Test/Post-Test Using Rubric

This section reports on how the five-paragraph essay structure helped intermediate EFL learners improve their writing performance. Students did a pre-test/post-test to determine whether the intervention had an impact on students' quality of writing. The data corroborates that modeling a mentor text and following instructions helped the students write a clear and poignant essay on their own.

Table 1

Results of Comparison between Pre-test and Post-test: Control versus Experimental

Groups	N	PRETEST		POSTTEST	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Control	23	4.25	0.638	4.49	0.599
Experimental	23	5.75	0.806	8.58	0.959

Table 2.
Pre and Post-Tests: Experimental group

Construct	PRETEST			POSTTEST			Cohen's d	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> value <0.05
	N	M	SD	M	SD	MD			
Content	23	5.96	0.976	9.00	1.000	-3.043	-3.0766	-0.8384	0.000
Organization	23	5.87	0.920	8.52	1.123	-2.652	-2.5815	-0.7905	0.000
Word Choice	23	5.91	1.041	8.48	1.123	-2.565	-2.3735	-0.7647	0.000
Sentence Fluency	23	5.74	0.864	8.39	1.118	-2.652	-2.6523	-0.7984	0.000
Conventions	23	5.30	0.635	8.00	0.798	-2.696	-3.7441	-0.8820	0.000

Note. N= Sample. M= Mean. SD= Standard Deviation. MD= Mean Difference. *r*= Effect size

Table 1 demonstrates the comparison between the pre-test and post-test of control and experimental groups in which the latter who participated in the innovation made improvement when applying scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, a five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers. From the initial measurement (M = 5.75, SD = 0.80) and the final measurement (M = 8.58, SD = 0.95) a considerable growth was evidenced.

Table 2 displays the values of the different constructs of the experimental group before and after the intervention. The statistics show that the group improved after the first half-partial was concluded. The “content” construct of the experimental group rose from 5.96 to 9.00, considered as the highest value among the other constructs. This construct also demonstrated that peer collaboration plays an important role in performing writing skills. Padlet and Answer Garden were part of this enhancement.

The *p*-value of the five constructs of the experimental group was 0.000, which signifies that the means are different at the significance level. Since the *p*-value for the experimental group is .000 ($p < .05$), it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between the quality of writing of the experimental group.

The “organization” construct during the treatment had a marked increase ($M = 8.52$, $SD = 1.12$), which means that students greatly improved the way they organized their ideas and paragraphs. For that, they applied graphic organizers, another scaffolding strategy, that were provided during the activity.

Another important result was the positive outcome obtained in the “conventions” ($M = 8.00$, $SD = 0.79$) construct during the intervention. In every session of the lesson plan, students had to correct sentences that had grammar mistakes. The “conventions” construct had a marked increase, which means that students greatly improved their grammar skills.

Table 3.

Post-Tests: Control versus Experimental

Construct	N	POSTTEST CONTROL			POSTTEST EXPERIMENTAL			Cohen's d	r	p value <0.05
		M	SD	MD	M	SD	MD			
Content	23	4.87	0.694	-4.13	9.00	1.000	-4.7983	-0.9230	0.000	
Organization	23	4.70	0.635	-3.82	8.52	1.123	-4.1875	-0.9023	0.000	
Word Choice	23	4.65	0.647	-3.83	8.48	1.123	-4.1791	-0.9020	0.000	
Sentence Fluency	23	4.43	0.590	-3.96	8.39	1.118	-4.4301	-0.9114	0.000	
Conventions	23	4.17	0.388	-3.83	8.00	0.798	-6.1042	-0.9502	0.000	

Note. N= Sample. M= Mean. SD= Standard Deviation. MD= Mean Difference. r= Effect size

Table 3 indicates the values of the different constructs of the post-tests of the control and the experimental groups after the intervention. The “content” construct of the experimental group ($M = 9.00$, $SD = 1.00$) indicates the highest value among all the constructs. The post-test data of the experimental group reveals that the participants showed greatest improvement in the components of the language, especially on the “content” with the highest mean value of 9.00. Thus, the study revealed that following scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, a five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers help students improve their quality of writing when developing essays.

Qualitative Data from Collaboration at the Brainstorming Phase of Writing,

Data collected through the field notes, participants' reflections and interviews with them also helped identify student views on writing in English, and how collaboration at the brainstorming phase helped them generate ideas. The high results obtained in the first construct "content" had relation with peer collaboration in which participants had to brainstorm ideas in a collaborative way. Participants attempted to work in pairs and obtained positive results when sharing their opinions with their peers to improve their writing. It was relevant for the students that their opinions were taken into consideration during the brainstorming activity. Additionally, the researcher's field notes emphasize that students felt comfortable when giving feedback on their essays. The students provided feedback, and that enabled them to highlight the effort their peers made while giving feedback on their work. The feedback also motivated them to see that this work was not useless.

Discussion

Findings from the Post-Test

Based on the findings obtained, this research illustrates that it is adequate to brainstorm ideas during the pre-writing stage of the writing process to improve learners' writing performance. The application of a five-paragraph essay structure is vital since the level five English course requires that students develop essays as part of their learning practice. The experimental group made more progress than the control group because the participants implemented the scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, a five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers along with web tools during the innovation. Thus, it is a significant way to enhance the quality of the learners' writing in the Ecuadorian tertiary EFL classrooms. To give more emphasis on the five-paragraph-essay structure, one of the students indicated that "*the structure works fast; it was organized and allowed me to classify relevant information before writing essays. Doing the essay step by*

step made me feel confident” (S1). Faraj (2015) reported similar findings that were consistent with this study.

Findings through the Interviews

The results of interviews disclose that working collaboratively among students aided them to create writing that is more appealing to them. Additionally, sharing ideas or thoughts during the brainstorming phase made the students feel more confident during the writing process. This assertion has relation to findings of other studies: doing pair work shows better quality of writing and positive feelings about collaborative writing assignments (Shehadeh, 2011; Talib & Cheung, 2017). This claim also has connection to Faraj (2015) study, in which the 70% of students effectively brainstormed in post-tests whereas only 46% brainstormed in the pre-test.

One interviewee commented, *“Working in pairs helped my partner and me to develop clear and well-structured ideas. It is the best way to learn and share knowledge”* (S2). What Widodo (2013) pointed out about working collaboratively has been confirmed in this study. Another respondent remarked, *“Collaborating with my peers made me feel secure and free, especially when I had to give opinions without feeling intimidated. The most challenging part was to classify the information”* (S3). This assertion is connected to what Robayo and Hernández (2013) advocated in the literature review, which says brainstorming ideas in collaboration with peers indicates that students work collaboratively with one or more partners to go through the writing process.

It is relevant to mention another interviewee’s comment: *“Writing an essay on my own at this point was competitive. I was able to create a poignant and clear essay based on the mentor text and the instructions I received. I also felt confident when I gave feedback to diverse partners’ essays. For the first time, I realized that my point of view was taken into account”* (S4). Similar studies correspond with the results of the studies conducted by

Liaghat and Biria (2018) and Escobar Alméciga and Evans (2014). The researchers have pointed out that a mentor text facilitates the students to order their ideas and improve their writing skills.

Findings through Students' Reflection and Field Notes

Based on the students' reflections on how writing in English affected them, the 23 participants had trouble at the beginning of the intervention when composing the first five-paragraph-essay. They struggled to write down ideas or thoughts that came to their minds; they felt rushed working in pairs. Despite using a structure and having peer collaboration during brainstorming in the prewriting stage, it appeared to be arduous for students to accomplish it. This obstacle seems to be related to the shortcomings in the organization and developing of ideas of students' writings. Fortunately, by implementing scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, a five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers, students could write in an organized and coherent way. Modeling a mentor text, students could follow the five-paragraph-essay structure. As Januševa and Pejčinovska (2016) assert, a well-structured essay should be developed in a format and has to be written considering three factors, which are content, language, and organization.

The following is another student's opinion that stated that the five-paragraph essay format was practical. *"This format works better. Doing the essay systematically made me feel confident. Besides, doing peer feedback, which is the first time doing it, lets me highlight the good work. It also motivated me to see that this work was not in vain"* (S5). Vonna, Mukminatien and Laksmi (2015) reported similar findings in which scaffolding the essay enabled the teacher-researcher to create a positive classroom environment by assisting the students until they mastered the task.

The experimental group was reluctant to face the uncertain, and they felt uncomfortable. The students thought that writing paragraphs did not need attention and

organization. The following interviewee's opinion made the researcher think on how students were mistaken about developing paragraphs. *"I thought a paragraph contained only two sentences or five lines. I never paid attention on the number of sentences that a paragraph must have"* (S6). Once the instructor explained in detail what the group was going to do, the students decided to collaborate and support each other in order to fulfill the objective, which was to improve their writing skills.

Findings through Components of Language

Relevant results were found in this research. The "organization" construct during the treatment had a marked increase, which means that students greatly improved the way they organized their ideas and paragraphs. For that, they applied the bubble chart and the t-chart that were provided during the activity. Another important result was the positive outcome obtained in the "conventions" construct during the intervention. In every session of the lesson plan, students had to correct sentences that had grammar mistakes. The "conventions" construct had a marked increase, which means that students greatly improved their grammar skills.

Supporting each other with ideas during the first stage of writing improved the students' quality of writing. Padlet and Answer Garden were part of this enhancement. Sangeetha (2016) mentions that these web tools facilitated interaction and collaboration among peers.

Conclusions

In an Ecuadorian EFL context, where learners struggle to break barriers of language, writing in an organized and coherent way has become a hard task to develop in undergraduate students. The present research demonstrates that the experimental group achieved significantly better results in the post-test. The results from the statistical analyses disclosed significant improvement within and between pre-test and post-test.

One possible explanation for these obstacles found when attempting to develop writing skills in second language (L2) learners at tertiary levels is that researchers and practitioners have not given the much-needed attention to scaffolding strategies. For that reason, L2 learners' writing skills might present complications when writing simple texts or essays.

The first research question of the present study focused on how scaffolding five-paragraph essay help learners improve their writing performance. Based on the results, the experimental group was significantly different from the control group. Using scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, the five-paragraph-essay structure, peer collaboration, and graphic organizers was key to facilitating students writing a good English text in an organized and coherent way. The students who applied the scaffolding strategies produced a higher score in writing than the students who were taught without using any scaffolding strategies. Modeling a mentor text to write a five-paragraph essay with the experimental group was essential considering that its primary objective was to improve the learners' writing skills.

Scaffolding a five-paragraph essay using a structure is an advantageous way to encourage students to write who are not yet skilled in English language proficiency. It seems that the learners in the experimental group had a better disposition towards the implementation of the structure in comparison to the control group. The control group only developed the assignments given by the researcher.

Concerning the second research question, working in a collaborative way strengthens students who previously felt intimidated and reluctant to write because they felt uncomfortable sharing ideas and opinions with others, as noted in their interviews and the researcher's field notes. Collaborative writing enables students to share ideas with their peers and improve their own. The use of Answer Garden and Padlet web tools also enhanced collaborative brainstorming, which was the first step students developed when writing essays.

These tools motivated students to interact and brainstorm ideas freely and without much hesitation.

It is undeniable that motivation also played an essential role during the intervention process. Working collaboratively enabled students to obtain better writing outcomes. Pair work activities were engaging and aided them to follow the prewriting phase without any inconvenience.

Referring to the third research question, learners' perspectives on writing in English lead the researcher to build adequate approaches to enable learners develop a good piece of writing. Regarding essays, students demonstrated very positive perceptions because they could get peer feedback, especially when developing the topics. Students were keen to make the necessary adjustments to their peers' observations.

The results of the study clearly indicate that the use of the scaffolding strategies improved intermediate undergraduate students' texts at a B1 level. There are studies done at advanced levels at international contexts; however, there is no available research that reports about scaffolding strategies at B1 level. Therefore, it is of relevance that new teaching strategies should be implemented. Consequently, further research in applying scaffolding strategies with an emphasis on the five-paragraph-essay structure to enhance intermediate undergraduate learners' writing skills is still recommended.

Limitations and Recommendations

Among the limitations of this study, the following stands out as significant. First, the university students come from varied educational backgrounds whose prior English knowledge might present difficulties when doing their assignments. Second, undergraduate EFL learners at this private university receive three hours of English class every week. Third, a small sample size might be another shortcoming that would limit the identification of significant relationships within the data set. Fourth, the time might also be another constraint

to improve the learners' writing performance since learners may not feel confident practicing the scaffolding strategies within a short period of three-hour sessions. Although time was insufficient, the development of the intervention phase was accordingly carried out in the allotted time. In other words, all the learning objectives and their assignments were successfully fulfilled. Increasing the teaching time would be ideal to obtain positive learning outcomes.

Although it is true that evident motivation ignites the students' learning activities, there is nevertheless a deep-grounded tendency to fall off this motivational plateau. A positive attitude and willingness are needed in order to lead learners to succeed in second language learning.

A well-equipped laboratory with qualified teachers would be a reasonable initiative to improve students' writing skills. Instructors could implement a portfolio, in which students and teachers can monitor progress, reflect on what they have learned, and organize tasks that are appropriate to the content students need to reinforce.

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Appendix A

Design from Your Goals¹

Instructional design of units for transfer of learning to real life contexts

Institution:	Private higher institution
Year of study:	Semester B-2018
Student description:	B1 19-23-year-old students enrolled in English 5 level
Professor:	Karina Izquierdo Zamora
Unit title:	New Generations Face Academic Pressure
Weeks:	Six weeks
Hours:	24 hours

I. Transfer Goal (Stage 1)

Standards the unit will work with: B1 Can write short, simple essays on topics of interests

Goal:

I want my students to learn how to communicate simple ideas, use new vocabulary and transition words, use appropriate word order, paragraphs, and subject-verb agreement, and write a thesis statement, so that, in the end and on their own, they will produce short, simple essays on current topics.

Breakdown of transfer goal

A. If we see and hear them do this, they CAN transfer this learning.	B. If we see and hear them do this, then they CANNOT (yet) transfer:	C. What I will commit to doing differently in my classroom to ensure my results look like Column A.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Use vocabulary they know/word choice *Use transition words *Communicate simple ideas in a cohesive way. *Write a main idea and a supporting details *An introduction with a thesis statement. *Use subject-verb agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Weak vocabulary/word choice. *Sentence structure is poor. *No transition words. *No organization of ideas *No main idea and no supporting details. *Poor introduction and weak thesis statement. *Poor conclusion *Subject-verb agreement are weak. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Create two-word banks *Develop a bank of transition words. *Provide immediate feedback *Collaboration for brainstorming *Provide scaffolding strategies such as brainstorming, a five-paragraph essay structure, peer collaboration, graph. **Use Answer Garden and Padlet web tools for peer collaboration. *Scaffold for thesis statement and collaboration for brainstorming

¹ This unit design process was adapted from the Guillot Design Process worksheet (2017) *Design from Your Goals* based on Wiggins-McTigue Backward Design.

II. Summative Performance Assessment Task (Stage 2)

Goal	Students will learn to determine causes of academic stress across generations.
Role	Students are reporters of the Journalism Club at the university.
Audience	Authorities and university community.
Situation	The university authorities have noticed some issues students are having in communicating with others. Principals and teachers have observed strange attitudes and behaviors in students of different careers. Therefore, they decided to create a campaign of motivation. The first thing is asking students to research about academic stress, its causes, symptoms, and consequences.
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interview two people from different generations (a 60-year-old teacher and a 20-year-old student) to determine their views, the characteristics each generation had, how they cope with stress, what causes academic stress, and the person's perspective toward managing anxiety. ● Students will present an essay in the classroom, and the top three essays selected by doing peer-feedback and meeting all the five-paragraph-essay requirements will be demonstrated in the Language English Center. ● The essays will be published in the university's magazine. ● The most appealing essay will be used as the cover story for the magazine.
Standards	<p>The essay should meet the following criteria: content, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions</p> <p><i>Other Evidence:</i> Academic prompts, observations, journals, homework. Self-assessment: reflective journals, home assignment.</p>

III. Knowledge and skills the students need to succeed in the assessment. (Stage 1)

What students will need to know	The skills students will need to be able to do
<p>Students will need to know:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formulas to help them to write. 2. The concept of brainstorming in the pre-writing process. 3. The concept of using graphic organizers. 4. Vocabulary that they can use. 5. Transitions words that they can use in essays. 6. The concept of using a five-paragraph essay structure. 	<p>The skills students will need to be able:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To brainstorm ideas in the pre/writing process. 2. To use a five-paragraph essay structure. 3. To classify information through graphic organizers. 4. To work collaboratively to enhance effective communication through researching updated topics and facilitating peer-to-peer learning. 5. To apply vocabulary to write coherent essays. 6. To create probing questions for an interview. 7. To promote the understanding of issues regarding social behavior, scholarly conduct, and community responsibility.

IV. Essential Questions (Stage 1)

Essential questions support the transfer goal, signal inquiry, guide instruction, and can be asked over and over throughout the unit without reaching a final answer
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do good writers do to start writing? 2. How can writing be a pleasurable experience? 3. How can I write in English so that it is understandable to my audience?

V. Learning Activities

Transfer Goal: I want my students to learn how to communicate simple ideas, use new vocabulary and transition words, use appropriate word order, paragraphs, and subject-verb

agreement, and write a thesis statement, so that, in the end and on their own, they will produce short, simple essays on current topics.

Abbreviated Performance Task: You are the reporter of the Journalism Club at the university and the principal requested that you write a catchy short essay for the university's magazine. You decided to work collaboratively with other peers and chose as a topic *Academic stress. What contributes to it? How would you reduce it? How does stress affect new generations?*

Brief Description of the Subject:

The Unit called "New Generations Face Academic Pressure" is designed because education is continuously evolving along with new linguistic approaches. The application of teaching strategies, methods, and materials is applied based on the diverse learners' cultural backgrounds, and interests.

The unit will demonstrate how to write a five-paragraph essay using a scaffolding format that will help students work collaboratively and improve their writing skills. The students will interact with the university community and will use receptive and productive language to understand and produce information about current topics.

Objectives of the Unit:

The students will be able to:

Cognitive

- Recognize and put into practice the scaffolding strategy when writing essays.
- Produce simple, short essays based on current topics.

Attitudinal

- Work in pairs, groups, and individually while respecting other people's opinions and reaching a common consensus.
- Work effectively in pairs to facilitate peer-to-peer-learning.

- Recognize and reshape one's own errors of doing essays.
- Ask for help from the instructor and/or peers if necessary.
- Feel confident when creating collaborative work.

Transfer Goal

I want my students to learn how to communicate simple ideas, use new vocabulary and transition words, use appropriate word order, paragraphs, and subject-verb agreement, and write a thesis statement, so that, in the end and on their own, they will produce short, simple essays on current topics.

Appendix A

Lesson Plan

Stage III - Learning Plan					
Learning Activities	Intention	A	M	NT	T
		Acquisition	Meaning Making	Near Transfer	Transfer
<p>Session 1 (4 hours) Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students will brainstorm and work in pairs to promote peer-to-peer learning. The students will work collaboratively to generate ideas <p>Activities: <i>Diagnostic phase. Pre-test Essay using rubric: a) developing ideas/content, b) organization, c) word choice, d) sentence fluency, e) conventions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher reads the topic. “Drugs: an escape from social problems in young people” Teacher asks students to write an essay on the topic without giving any scaffolding strategies. Teacher allows 30 minutes to write the essay. Teacher collects essays and corrects them at home to be discussed the following day. <p><i>Class discussion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students look at the pictures and cartoons. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *What can you see? *What are the benefits of learning English? *Why should people study a second language? <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZLqaE7qUF1d6FbbrFROr4hjXs5AyCet6t5-84zPkNz4/edit</p> <p><i>Review useful vocabulary for the next task</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What common words, adjectives, and phrases can we use when learning English? Use “Answergarden” web tool to brainstorm words. Examples: what does it mean? What form is it? How do you spell it? Etc. Define words, phrases, vocabulary, or special tips we use when we are learning English? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Keep a list 	<p>Diagnostic phase</p> <p>Hook</p> <p>Hook</p>				
		X	X		
		X	X		

<p>*Play games *Use new words in conversations *Write a blog *Visit dictionary websites *Learn word parts *Learn the culture</p> <p><i>Give context and a model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch a Ted Talk in class. It is linked to learning English or other languages. Listen and take notes. <p>www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQRjouwKDIU John Worther (10.01 minutes)</p> <p>Pair work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students get in pairs and talk about the following questions on the Ted Talk. These questions are related to the Mentor Text to teach 5-paragraph-essay. Topic: Learning English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *What things can be done to enrich a student’s English learning? *What should an English teacher do to promote second language learning? *What are the qualities an English teacher should have? *Is it a good idea to learn a language from a non-native speaker of that language? *Is knowing grammar more important than knowing vocabulary? *What personal qualities do you need to be an effective language learner? *What careers are possible if you speak a foreign language? Students make a list of the ideas or answers individually. Then they talk to their partner. Discuss possible answers and ideas arisen from the talk. <p><i>Individual work - Homework Assignment</i> <i>Journal entry: Record your understanding on the first session. Reflect on how working in pairs affected your writing.</i></p> <p>At the end of session 1 students reflect on their learning. Student feedback – Expected Outcome Question:</p>	<p>Hook</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How did working with a partner impact your writing?</i> 					
<p>Session 2 (4 hours) Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students will scaffold a five-paragraph essay. • The students will elaborate the introductory paragraph. • The students will peer review their essays. <p>Activities: (the first two hours 09:00 - 11:00)</p> <p><i>Class oral discussion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher hands in revised essays. • Teacher explains the difficulties found when revising the essays, such as the absence of development of ideas, lack of organization, spelling, punctuation, and word order. • Teacher gives brief explanation of the types of essays (narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive) prior to the introduction of expository essay. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher recalls what a paragraph is. • Teacher models the five-paragraph-essay mentor text. • Teacher explains how to scaffold the essay. She uses a format. • Scaffolds: The five-paragraph-essay. *Brainstorm to generate ideas (peer collaboration) *Outline of ideas (organize thoughts and arguments) (Teacher explains the importance of an outline when writing essays) *Write introductory paragraph (self-assessment) (proofreading) *Peer feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher gives the first topic to work in class. Essay 1: Benefits of Learning English. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students start the five-paragraph essay, doing the introductory paragraph. *Students brainstorm to generate ideas regarding the topic. *Students write an outline to categorize ideas *Students think of a hook sentence. 		<p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students brainstorm and generate ideas on the topic to be discussed the following day. <p>At the end of session 2 - Student feedback – Reflection - Expected outcome</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How did a five-paragraph essay format help you organize your writing?</i> <i>How well were you able to peer review your partner's essay?</i> <p>Session 3 (4 hours)</p> <p>Learning objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students will identify the grammar mistakes in the sentence. The students will generate ideas in pairs to promote collaborative writing. The students will share their ideas on Answer Garden tool (technological tool that allows the whole class to interact) The students will identify main idea from a short text (The Effects of Stress). <p>Activities:</p> <p><i>Class oral discussion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly oral language (Grammar practice) Students correct the sentence (order of adjectives) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Incorrect: The Dutch daring old thin lawyer went to a trial. *Correct: The daring thin old Dutch lawyer went to a trial. Students review what they did the session before (introductory and body paragraphs) Students write the concluding paragraph following the scaffold template Peer review of a five-paragraph-essay scaffold. Presentation of essay 1 in class. Students share their ideas with their peers on the first essay. Then, students look at the pictures and cartoons. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *What can you see? *What things make young people stressed? <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HL279tZirCwoVkFNxLnknBxSp2RY0iKKAUYRmwBV/CU/edit</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p>		
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<p><i>Pair work</i></p> <p><i>Review useful vocabulary for the next task</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What words, adjectives, and phrases can we use to describe problems related to stress? • Teacher uses “Answer Garden” tool to brainstorm words. This web tool will help students interact and share ideas. Examples: overreact, digest, addiction, hopelessness, symptom, reduce, increase, influence, moody, anxiety, suicide, mania, depression, disorder, etc. <p><i>Give context and a model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch a Ted Talk in the classroom. It is linked to academic stress. • Students watch it and take notes individually https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jRND5IU3 <p><u>Qg</u> (Kristen Race – Generation Stress: From surviving to thriving - 15.36 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After reviewing individually the following questions, students get in pairs to share and discuss their answers about the video. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *What contributes to stress? *What would reduce stress? *What are some ways to reduce stress? *How do students feel when they are stressed? *Should stress awareness be taught at the university? *Is it sometimes better to take risks than to follow a more reasonable course of actions? * Does taking risks or following a course of action stress students? <p><i>Group Discussion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss possible answers and ideas arisen from the talks. • Students take notes from the discussion for essay 2 <i>Academic Stress</i>. <p><i>Pair work</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap of video about generation stress. • Reading of a short text <i>The effects of stress</i>. https://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/490/reading/stress3-reading.htm • Students obtain information from the text for a required interview to be done in session 4. 			<p>X</p> <p>X</p>		
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<p>more “stress” improvising or planning your activities?</p> <p>At the end of Session 3 - Student feedback – Reflection - Expected outcome</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What is your level of confidence when sharing ideas on a web tool such as Answer Garden?</i> • <i>How did you come up with the main idea for your text?</i> <p>Session 4 (4 hours)</p> <p>Learning objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students will recognize the mistakes in the daily grammar sentence • The students will classify information by using graphic organizers. • The students will design an interview by elaborating probing questions. • The students will interview two people (a student and a 60-year-old teacher) at the university. <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly oral language (Grammar practice) students correct the sentence (order of adjectives) <p>*correct: I love that old, big, really, antique, red car that always parked at the end of the street. *Incorrect: I love that really big old red antique car that always parked at the end of the street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher explains that a graphic organizer is another example of scaffolding that helps them organize information. Later, they will use a graphic organizer to classify information based on the mock interview. • Teacher explains how to prepare probing questions and what their purpose is. Teacher emphasizes that probing questions is a strategy for finding out more details about specific topics. Examples: Could you tell me more about...? and what happened after that? Can you give me an example, etc.? • Mock Interview. Students prepare probing questions prior to the interview in the classroom. Possible questions: *What are some ways of coping with stress? What do 				<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	
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<p>you think is causing stress during your studies? Etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer feedback to improve their questions. <p><i>Pair Work</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mock interview- Version 1. Ask the different questions regarding academic stress, causes and consequences. Students use graphic organizers to analyze and classify the most relevant characteristics taken from the mock interview. See the links for the graphic organizer rubric. <p><i>Individual work</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview- Final Version. Students will interview two people from different generations (a college student and a 60-year-old teacher) at the university and ask questions on the topic: Academic stress. Students record the interviews. Students use their notes and recording (transcription) and use graphic organizers to classify the information. <p><i>Individual work - Homework Assignment</i> <i>Journal entry:</i> Students reflect on how they held the interview and the steps they followed to write version 1 of the essay. Were the questions for interview correctly made? How do graphic organizers help to organize and classify information?</p> <p>At the end of Session 4 - Student feedback – Reflection - Expected outcome Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>What helps you generate questions for the interview?</i> <i>Which graphic organizers helped you?</i> <p>Session 5 (4 hours) Learning Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students will recognize the correct indirect question. The students will be able to use the five-paragraph essay (scaffold) on their own (post-test) The students will learn how to do peer feedback. <p><i>Individual work,</i></p>			<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recap the task done before. ● Weekly oral language (grammar practice). Students practice indirect questions: *Incorrect: I have no idea where is the bus station is? *correct: I have no idea where the bus station is? ● Essay – Version 1 Students follow the scaffolding strategies. They elaborate a simple and short essay for the English Language Center and university magazine. They explain how academic stress influences students’ life. What contributes to it? What would reduce it? What are the ways to help undergraduate students cope with stress? See the essay rubric. <p>Scaffolds: The five-paragraph-essay.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Brainstorm to generate ideas (peer collaboration) *Outline of ideas (organize thoughts and arguments) (Teacher reminds students the importance of an outline when writing essays) *Write introductory paragraph and self-assess (proofreading) *Peer feedback *Write body paragraphs (teacher verifies using the rubric) *Write the concluding paragraph *Review the whole essay (Conventions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher monitors the task ● Teacher revises the essay using the rubric. ● Essay – Final revised version.- Students use their notes and/or recording and corrections made by peers. <p>Class Reflection: Students reflect on the final version of the essay and the difficulties they encountered while scaffolding it. They will also reflect on the importance of using scaffolding techniques when writing essays. How does collaborative writing help them improve their writing?</p> <p>At the end of Session 5 - Student feedback – Reflection - Expected outcome</p>			<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>		<p>X</p> <p>X</p>
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<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will you recommend a five-paragraph essay? • How could you use a five-paragraph essay structure outside the classroom? • How did you get your partner's feedback? • What helped you give your partner's feedback? <p>Session 6 (4 hours) Learning Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students will learn that collaborative work improves their writing skills. • The students will work in pairs, groups, and individually while respecting other people's opinions. <p><i>Interview eight students on their attitudes toward writing in English and collaboration. Teacher will record the interviews. This interview will be held after class, outside the classroom.</i></p> <p>Activities: <i>Individual work</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly oral language (grammar practice). Students will correct sentences using indirect questions. Incorrect: Can you tell what should we do now? Correct: Can you say what we should do now? • Essay presentation in the classroom: Students write one part (introductory, body, or concluding paragraphs) and put them in a hat to read it in class. In this way, the whole class participates and has the chance to read at least part of their essay. • Peer Feedback: Teacher puts the essays on the wall for students to comment using the criteria of the rubric I like it because I wonder how.... • Teacher scores the essays. • Teacher chooses best three based on rubric and peer feedback. <p>Group discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher puts the essays with high scores on the wall. Then students put dots on the essays they consider the best. • Teacher announces three winners. 			<p>X</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students discuss why the winners’ essay were so special that made them win. • Committee gives diploma to the winners. • Reflection. Students reflect on contribution from new generations on how to cope with stress. Is it sometimes better to improvise than to follow an organized schedule? Recommend steps or ways to relax while working or studying. • Questions: How important is working collaboratively in and out the classroom? How relevant is collaboration in the learning process? What is your perception toward working in pairs when writing essays? Does scaffolding the five-paragraph-essay enhance collaborative writing? What makes authentic material to be developed in the classroom? <p><i>At The English Language Center</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After announcing the three winners, the Director of The Language Center emphasizes the relevance of the language skills developed through the well-structured essay. • The Director gives strategies to promote a pleasant atmosphere at university so as to avoid stressful situations in the students. • Publish the top three essays in the magazine and the best will be shown as the cover story for the magazine. <p><i>Class discussion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap-up to bring everyone together for a final word about academic stress. Synthesize and share with the class. • Students present their ideas, opinions about academic stress. They will share their ideas using the collaborative web tool “padlet”. <p><i>Individual work</i></p> <p>Homework assignment: <i>Report.</i> Students write a report on their insights regarding the scaffolding strategy used during the elaboration of a five-paragraph-essay. How does scaffolding a five-paragraph-essay affect their writing?</p>					<p>X</p>
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<p>How does collaborative work improve their quality of writing? In what way does collaborative work improve their quality of writing?</p> <p>At the end of Session 6 - Students feedback – Reflection - Expected outcome</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reflecting back, how did collaborating with your partner organize your thoughts?</i> • <i>How competent do you feel about writing an essay on your own at this point and why?</i> <p>Materials: Ted Talks, journals, essays, interview, graphic organizers, computers.</p> <p>A = Acquisition M = Meaning Making NT = Near Transfer T = Transfer</p>					
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Appendix B

Five-Paragraph Essay Rubric

Pre-test

Student name: _____

Date: _____

Standard	Descriptor
B1	Can write short, simple essays on topics of interests.

Essay 1: Write a five-paragraph essay about *Drugs: an escape from social problems in young people. Explain why drugs influence social issues with teenagers.* Try to make your readers understand your viewpoint.

Criteria	Poor (4)	Fair (6)	Good (8)	Excellent (10)	Total
Development of ideas Content Focus	The writing is not focused on the topic. Reader has difficulty identifying the purpose of the essay	The writing is related to the topic but does not have a clear focus. Details are not clear.	The writing is generally focused on the topic. Details are present but not developed.	The writing is full of details. Great generation of ideas that keeps the reader's attention.	
Organization Order of paragraphs	Organization is not clear. No beginning or ending	There is little organization. Details are not in order. Beginning and ending are adequate but not outstanding.	Organization is appropriate. Good introduction and conclusion. The paper seems complete.	Clear organization. Details are in order. Introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion are excellent.	
Word choice Appropriate language, vocabulary Word Order	Limited range of words. Inappropriate use of words.	Words and vocabulary may be correct but could be improved.	Language is appropriate. Good use of vocabulary.	Adequate language. Coherent sentences. The writing is interesting to read.	
Sentence Fluency Transition words, sentence structure, rhythm, flow	Difficult to follow or read aloud. No transition words. No rhythm or flow.	Some strange constructions. Common simple pattern used	Easy flow and rhythm. Good variety in length and structure	The sentences are well constructed. Complete sentences connected to one another. The writing has rhythm and flow.	
Conventions Capitalization, Spelling, punctuation, subject-verb agreement	Parts of speech show lack of agreement. Numerous errors distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.	Inconsistent agreement between parts of speech. Limited control of conventions.	There are a few errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization.	Uses consistent agreement between parts of speech. No errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization	

Adapted from: <http://www.teacherplanet.com/pdf/6TraitsParagraph.pdf?ref=rubrics4teachers>

Appendix C

Mentor Model Text to Teach Five-Paragraph Essay

<p>Introductory paragraph/hook/thesis</p>	<p>Hook sentence to grab the reader: What would you do if you were an English teacher for young people?</p> <p>First supporting statement: Knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes are what an English teacher needs to help students succeed as they learn English.</p> <p>Second supporting statement: Since learning English opens doors for individuals to become successful professionals, it is necessary that teachers find practical tools to make it happen.</p> <p>Narrowed to the thesis: ...because ... Teaching English is a rewarding experience because there is no more satisfying feeling than helping students become autonomous learners.</p>
<p>First supporting paragraph (4 sentences-details to support thesis)</p>	<p>In the first place, taking into consideration what students need, helps the teacher organize to make students feel confident. Listening to students, giving feedback, making a pleasant environment will always help teachers find the correct resources to teach accordingly. Teachers can develop skills so that students successfully engage in independent learning. When students can learn on their own, they can have a sense of satisfaction and become more motivated and autonomous learners.</p>
<p>Second supporting paragraph (4 sentences to support thesis)</p>	<p>In the second place, teachers know that learning English includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. Mastering each skill will help learners with the other skills. Each skill has a special place in the design of the teacher's lessons. For that reason, teachers must dedicate their time to prepare their classes carefully.</p>
<p>Third supporting paragraph (4 sentences to support the thesis)</p>	<p>Finally, students feel motivated when teachers monitor their progress. When students and teachers are both engaged in the learning, everyone can be successful. Beyond engagement, students and teachers need a sense of commitment to the learning process. Without commitment, no one is successful.</p>
<p>Concluding paragraph, reworded thesis, summary, clincher</p>	<p>In conclusion, being an English teacher is not an easy task since it requires a dose of strategies and creativity to help students reach their goals.</p> <p>Summary sentence one: Although teachers need to know content to teach English, they must know their students first.</p> <p>Summary sentence two: Everyone needs personal attention during the learning process.</p> <p>Clincher to connect to the big idea—outward and forward: After all, devotion and commitment are pillars for teachers to help their students achieve.</p>

Appendix D

Five-Paragraph Essay Rubric

Post-test

Student name: _____

Date: _____

Standard	Descriptor
B1	Can write short, simple essays on topics of interests.

Essay 2: Write a five-paragraph essay about *Academic Stress*. *What contributes to it? How would you reduce it?* Try to make your readers understand your viewpoint.

Criteria	Poor (4)	Fair (6)	Good (8)	Excellent (10)	Total
Development of ideas Content Focus	The writing is not focused on the topic. Reader has difficulty identifying the purpose of the essay	The writing is related to the topic but does not have a clear focus. Details are not clear.	The writing is generally focused on the topic. Details are present but not developed.	The writing is focused on the topic. Great generation of ideas that keeps the reader's attention.	
Organization Order of paragraphs	Organization is not clear. No beginning or ending	There is little organization. Details are not in order. Beginning and ending are adequate but not outstanding.	Organization is appropriate. Good introduction and conclusion. The paper seems complete.	Clear organization. Details are in order. Introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs, are excellent.	
Word choice Appropriate language, vocabulary Word Order	Limited range of words. Inappropriate use of words.	Words and vocabulary may be correct but could be improved.	Language is appropriate. Good use of vocabulary.	Adequate language. Coherent sentences. The writing is interesting to read.	
Sentence Fluency Transition words, sentence structure, rhythm, flow	Difficult to follow or read aloud. No transition words. No rhythm or flow.	Some strange constructions. Common simple pattern used	Easy flow and rhythm. Good variety in length and structure	The sentences are well constructed. Complete sentences connected to one another. The writing has rhythm and flow.	
Conventions Capitalization, Spelling, punctuation, subject-verb agreement	Parts of speech show lack of agreement. Numerous errors distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.	Inconsistent agreement between parts of speech. Limited control of conventions.	There are a few errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization.	Uses consistent agreement between parts of speech. No errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization	

Adapted from: <http://www.teacherplanet.com/pdf/6TraitsParagraph.pdf?ref=rubrics4teachers>

Appendix E

Field Notes

Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Time:** _____

Observer: _____ **Setting** _____

Description of the class:

Notes/Suggestions/Actions _____

Summary of class reflection notes _____

Appendix F

Scaffolding Strategies for Students: Improving Writing Skills in a Five-paragraph-essay
Elaboration

Interview

Goal: To obtain information regarding the students' previous experience in brainstorming, scaffolding strategies used for a five-paragraph-essay elaboration, and collaborative writing experiences.

Instructions: Read each question carefully and answer according to your personal experience. Be as honest as possible. Your answers will be anonymous.

Confidentiality clause: All of your answers will be kept in strict confidentiality. All information gathered will be used for academic purposes. No names will be kept in the documentation, and your responses will be kept anonymous.

Name of the Interviewer:

Name of the Interviewee:

Date of the Interview:

Place of interview:

No.	Questions
1	What challenges do you face when writing in English?
2	What do you use to activate thinking?
3	What techniques do you use when writing an essay?
4	Describe one of your favorite experiences working with an effective team. What was your role in the teamwork? How did you contribute to this group task?
5	How do you feel about writing right now? What helps you write?