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SCAFFOLDING WRITING SKILL IN THE K-12 CURRICULUM

Rufo A. Labarrete

Faculty, College of Education, Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines
labarrete@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study aimed to assess the sixth grade teachers instructional scaffolding practices in writing as a macro language skill with the end view of developing a contextualized Detailed Lesson Plan (DLP). Using the descriptive qualitative research design, data were generated using open-ended survey questionnaire, and a focus group discussion. Results showed that the K-12 curricular contents for elementary writing were rather challenging to teach that is further aggravated by limited learning resources. Remediation Reinforcement Enrichment (RRE), Explicit Teaching (ET), Little Teacher Strategy, Group Work Technique and Detailed Lesson Plans (DLPs) are mainly utilized as primary scaffolds with the aid of visuals, graphic organizers, and technology-based learning tools. Though commendable, their scaffolding practices however still fell short in actualizing instructional scaffolding holistically. Thus, the need to further the elementary teachers' knowledge on this dimension through professional advancement and similar activities.

Keywords

K-12 Curriculum, Instructional Practices, Scaffolding, Writing Skill

1. Introduction

The Philippines K-12 Curriculum puts a premium on the teaching and learning of the English language. Legally recognized as the country's second language, it is offered as one of the learning areas in the basic education across grade levels. Being such, it is taught and learned

through what scholars called as macro language skills, that is, reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Recognizing the vital role in language learning each skill plays, Massi (2001) considered writing as a mechanism for ideas generation and a coalition of the linguistic system by utilizing it for interactive communication. Warschauer (2010), on the other hand, stressed that teaching writing is needed for ESL learners to ensure academic and occupational successes, enable academic language proficiency, and master multifarious learning areas. Learning to write in its many facets, however, remains a concern or a waterloo to the Filipino learners Araya (2016). Empirical based-literature can readily explain these claims though. For example, Sayuti (2013), posited that ESL learners usually have a negative attitude towards writing and even considers such as an appalling activity. They too, according to Armendariz (2009), are apprehensive when exposed to western models of writing. Understandably, these concerns may be explained by anchoring them to factors identified by Hjortshoj (2001) as writing block or mental block that beginning writers normally experience and the complexity of writing as an activity. Flower and Hayes (1981) supported these claims and did acknowledge of the agony writers need to endure as writing demands complex cognitive processes that require planning, organizing, generating, evaluating, and revising both the text and its objectives.

Given the above contestations, enhancing learners' writing skills is undoubtedly challenging. As such, teacher's decisions about scaffolding this language skill will definitely play an important role towards the pupil's writing success. Presently, basic education teachers in the Philippines refer to the Daily Lesson Log (DLL) or Detailed Lesson Plan (DLP) prepared and endorsed by the Department of Education (DepEd) as lesson blueprints for teaching various learning areas across levels. DLL or DLP as explained in DepEd Order No. 42 s. 2016, allows teachers for reflection on what learners need to learn, how learners learn, and how best to facilitate the learning process.

Grade six teachers in Barugo I District, Barugo, Leyte had lauded the institutionalization of D.O. 42 as it had primarily stripped them the task of planning their lessons for different learning areas on a daily basis. As it is, they then just have to download DLLs or DLPs in DepEd's websites they call as DepEd Tambayan and recite them in their respective classes. This group of teachers though was as well quick to point some of its downturns. They claimed that lesson objectives such as for writing skill are too challenging to recite and its procedural contents are not learners-based needs or contextualized. As a result, they said, non-recital of the actual

DLLs or DLPs contents in its entirety has since become a norm or practice amongst them. As such, this study then assessed the instructional practices in facilitating writing as a macro language skill of the 6th grade elementary teachers in Barugo I District, Barugo, Leyte, Philippines. It hoped to provide teachers in the field especially the neophytes concrete empirical insights they could utilize in teaching this language skill such as a prototype DLL anchored on a specific teaching strategy for writing with a contextualized content.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess the sixth grade teacher's instructional scaffolding practices in writing as a macro language skill with the end view of developing a contextualized Detailed Lesson Plan (DLP). Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the instructional challenges of the teachers in the implementation of the K-12 elementary writing curriculum?
2. How are these challenges addressed in relation to teaching elementary writing?
3. Based on the data gathered, and analyses made, how may a contextualized DLL be designed to address this scaffolding concern?

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1 Diagnostic Tools Helpful for Checking ESL learners Concerns in Writing

Impressive teaching of writing begins by diagnosing or knowing existing knowledge of the target learners. Several instruments can be used for this purpose. Araya (2016), for example, used Error Analysis to determine the errors committed by the learners in grammar, lexis, mechanics, and syntax. He reported that ESL learners committed errors the most in grammar which accounted for their misuse of verb, pronoun, and preposition. This was followed by mechanics or misspelled words and comma misuse. Then the lexical and syntactic errors respectively. He then utilized this error correction method along with the process approach to writing as scaffolds in enhancing the writing competence of the target respondents and eventually gauged their level competence using a different tool. Labarrete (2019), on the other hand, used Jacobs et al. ESL Composition Profile which measures five writing domains: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics in analyzing the compositions of the ALS-A&E clientele written in Waray and English languages. Results showed that although the clientele was able to write a composition fairly using their own language, they, however, have

difficulty conveying their ideas using the English language specifically on content, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics domains. An enhanced session guide was prepared to augment their knowledge of the domains that requires attention.

The instruments cited above proved that by conducting needs analysis, the facilitator of this macro language skill will be guided in the instruction phase such as in designing and selecting instructional aides, setting goals and focus, and choosing appropriate scaffold to ensure that the desired goals are met. A considerable number of empirically tested scaffolds were actually proven to have augmented the writing competence of the ESL learners learning to write.

3.2 Effective Writing Skill Scaffolds

A considerable number of studies relative to effective writing skill scaffolds likewise exist. Villasor (2018) and Acuin, Petallana, & Esperas (2018) reported that students became more creative writers after having been exposed to visual thinking strategies such as the use of pictures, paintings, and videos and to Team Pair Solo, a cooperative-collaborative learning strategy for developing language proficiency such as writing, as reported by respectively. In a similar vein, Oted (2014) reported that view-think-write, a learners' interests-based strategy in teaching writing, can also improve the writing performance of the students especially on the relevance and adequacy of content, organization, and cohesion, referential, grammatical and mechanical adequacies writing dimensions. She attributed the effectiveness of this strategy to its inherent features which integrate the use of technology, allows the writer to practice and requires feedbacking and error discussions. Technology also plays a role in augmenting students writing proficiency. Finally, a case study conducted by Nassim (2018) proved that digitally produced stories is an effective tool in enhancing the learners' engagement in the learning process, which, in turn, aids in improving their macro language skills especially in reading and writing as well as in the development of creative skills. It was then suggested that digital stories be implemented for blended learning purposes as it foster learner's ability to organize, cooperate and collaborate so necessary towards goal attainment.

3.3 Technology Integration

The study of Ugsad (2017), proved that students were more motivated when asked to write using a weblog, a technological-motivational aide, than by simply doing the same through the traditional pencil and paper mode which, in turn, contributed to their improved writing skill. Similarly, Deligero-mMonte(2016) reported that the use of Facebook, a popular social medium, improved the accuracy of the learners use of punctuation, organization, and grammar rules and

usage which are some of the elements usually referred to when judging writing skill worthiness. The researcher, thus suggested that Facebook is used as an alternative learning tool as it enables to provide a convenient and attractive means to engage oneself in discussions and activities. AAño nuevo2004), however, relegated the learners improved writing performance still to process-oriented approach to writing and not to the use of technology such as the Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI) which she claimed of just being a tool. Meanwhile, Laadem (2017) investigated the status of the teaching of English language using e-learning technology in various Moroccan higher education institutions by examining both internal and external factors involved in the process of its integration. Result revealed that e-learning integration in facilitating of language skills in this country is still in its infancy stage.

The literature cited above only proved that a bulk of studies have been conducted as regards to the use of multifarious teaching strategies for writing as its scaffolds. Evidently, these studies had as well reported its positive impact to the learner's performance especially amongst high school and college students. In similar vein, literature claiming same result involving elementary pupils as the target group are uncommon. Much more as regards to practices of the elementary teachers in facilitating this skill under the Philippine's K-12 Curriculum. It is thus imperative to pursue an academic undertaking on these regards.

4. Methodology

4.1 Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in a cluster of elementary schools under Barugo 1 District located in Barugo, Leyte, Philippines.

4.2 Selection of Respondents

Although there are twelve 6th grade teachers teaching writing skill in Barugo I District stationed in nine different schools, only seven participated because the five other teachers were unavailable for various reasons. These teacher-respondents were purposely chosen, informed of the study purpose and were assured of utmost data confidentiality. Consent of their district supervisor was likewise sought and that the data generation was conducted in a recess break in one of their district meetings to avoid disruptions of classes. Table 1 presents the summary of the profile of the respondents.

Table 1: Summary of the respondent's educational profile

	f	%
Age		
21 – 25 years old	0	00.00
26 – 30 years old	0	00.00
31 years old and above	7	100.00
Total	7	100.00
Sex		
Male	0	00.00
Female	7	100.00
Total	7	100.00
Tenureship		
Permanent	7	100.00
Probationary	0	00.00
Total	7	100.00
Educational Attainment (Undergraduate)		
Elementary Education	6	85.71
Secondary Education major in TLE	1	14.29
Total	7	100.00
Educational Attainment (Masters)		
None	3	42.86
Units	1	14.29
CAR	3	42.86
Full-pledge	0	00.00
Total	7	100.00
Years in Teaching		
1 – 5 years	2	28.57
6 – 10 years	1	14.29
11 years above	4	57.14
Total	7	100.00
Academic Rank		
Teacher 1	3	42.86
Teacher 2	0	00.00
Teacher 3	3	42.86
Master Teacher	1	14.29
Total	7	100.00

4.3 Data Collection

The study used a researcher-made open-ended survey questionnaire. It consisted two questions focused on eliciting information pertinent to the instructional challenges of the elementary teachers in teaching K-12 writing curriculum, and their coping mechanisms to address said challenges. To gain further details and draw a better understanding of their perspectives, a focus group session was also conducted.

4.4 Data Analysis

Data obtained from both the survey questionnaire and the focus group were analyzed following Braun & Clarke's six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis which includes:

data familiarization, codes generation, themes searching, themes review, theme definition, and reporting. In this study, patterns that recurred twice were considered as a theme which was then subjected for specific analysis.

5. Results and Discussions

Results of this academic pursuit is presented as follows: (1) Instructional challenges in the implementation of the K-12 elementary writing curriculum; and (2) Addressing Instructional Challenges.

5.1 Instructional Challenges in the Implementation of the K-12 Elementary Writing Curriculum

The terminal goal of teaching writing in the 6th grade is for the pupils to be able to write a scholarly composition. Being such, it must be error free of the different writing mechanics such as subject-predicate agreement, word spelling, word choice, use of various end marks, among others. It should as well be organized and content and vocabulary-rich, clear, and concise to mention a few attributes. With the transcript of the conducted focus group as main anchor, two themes surfaced as regards to the instructional challenges of the elementary teachers in teaching writing skill. These include: *ambitious learning objectives spelled out in the K-12 Writing Curriculum and as reflected in the prepared DLPs and limited learning materials.*

According to the teacher-informants, the learning objectives outlined in the K-12 Curriculum that are reflected in the DLLs are very challenging to the kind of learners that they have. Seeing 6th graders pupils especially those in the lower sections struggling to write a composition on a simple topic is a common classroom scenario. This would usually result for the class clamoring for an extended writing time, late output submission, or allowing them to do the task home. Their outputs, when submitted, so to say, require quality augmentation if only writing standards is to be strictly followed. Though empirically unverified, the informants suspected that this plight could be attributed primarily to their reading competence, language difficulty, and skill's cognitive demands. Meanwhile, the difficulty of realizing these learning objectives is aggravated by limited learning materials such as textbooks, interactive skill books and workbooks as well as access to computers and internet connectivity which are all suggested in the prepared DLLs to use as they have since been proven to support student learning and increase the likelihood of their academic successes.

5.2 Addressing Instructional Challenges

Resourceful as they are, elementary writing teachers in Barugo I District in Barugo, Leyte still find coping mechanisms to the myriad of challenges relative to the teaching of the K-12 elementary writing curriculum. These include: (1) web searching in DepEd Tambayan, a popular educational site for teachers, in hope of being able to find learning tools and techniques to best facilitate this skill; (2) availment of school library pile of resources; (3) creating customized learning resources tailored fit to their pupil's needs; and (4) adopting various writing scaffolds.

5.2.1 Adopted Writing Scaffolds

In actualizing the learning objectives for elementary writing, the lessons are recited using their proven effective scaffolds or teaching strategies including: (1) Remediation Reinforcement Enrichment (RRE); (2) Explicit Teaching (ET); (3) Little Teacher Strategy; (4) Group Work Technique; and (5) Detailed Lesson Plan's suggested teaching-learning process rigors for this macro language skill. In their context, in using RRE, the learners are categorized as slow, average, and advance which, in turn, are given remedial instruction, reinforcement, and enrichment activities respectively. ET, on the other hand, is direct teaching. The key informants defined ET as directly teaching all the elements needed in composition writing or paragraph development. These include sentence construction through sentence pattern, word spelling familiarization and mastery, uses of end marks and cohesive devices, outlining, vocabulary enrichment, and ideas generation techniques among others. Tomlinson & McTighe (2010) characterizes explicit instruction as skill based with the students as active agents of the learning process. Since it is holistic, it can be used to teach all those that are included in literacy. As a scaffold it integrates smaller learning units into meaningful whole and is tailored specifically to the learner's attentional and learning needs.

Meanwhile, the 'little teacher strategy' refers to allowing 'cognitively able' pupils to take the role as the class teacher or to serve as the buddy-teacher to his/her classmates in need of instructional support to successfully write. Said 'little teacher's role includes correcting the fundamental writing mechanics such as spelling and giving suggestion for improvement of his/her classmate's draft the elementary way which is of course subject for verification and guidance of the actual teacher. Jacobi (1991) defines peer mentoring as a form of mentorship in which the peer mentor, a knowledgeable, an experienced individual or someone who had lived through a specific experience mentors an inexperienced, less knowledgeable person. An example

would be a student or pupil who serves as a mentor to another student in a particular subject or skill. Similarly, (Min, 2006; & Lundstrom and Baker, 2009) pointed out that feedback gained from seasoned peers create positive impact upon EFL students' writing and that both writers and reviewers benefit the process. Finally, Yang's (2011) study also showed that L2 writing skill could also be enhanced through peer revision because learners usually favor the idea of having their peers, and the teacher correct grammar issues of their work and give them explicit corrections.

The small group technique writing scaffold, on the other hand, is by nature a collaborative learning strategy. As used in their setting, it is actually convergence of a small group of heterogeneous pupils who together are tasked and expected to work, learn, and achieve a common goal, that is, to write an academic composition. In using this strategy, the teacher appoints a group leader who is supposed to monitor and report the task's progress and group concerns relative to the writing to their class teacher. Results of various empirical studies proved the effectiveness of this strategy. Castromayor & San Jose's (2019) action research, for example, which explored the experiences of the students in using the tandem strategy and its facilitation to improve their writing skill reported that the strategy provided them meaningful experience as they: enjoyed to share, learned to accept their mistakes, developed confidence, improved their grammar competence, became good listener, speaker and critical thinker. Likewise, Dalagan, Morales, & Musni (2011) had also statistically proved that cooperative learning activities such as write shops are strongly correlated to student's outputs as data showed of a satisfactory level in problem definition, content and structure, organization, format, and mechanics.

Finally, DLLs instructional procedure for this skill include preliminary activities which come in the form of a drill, review, and motivation. This is followed by developmental activities to include presentation and modeling teaching. Then, a guided practice, generalization, assessment, and assignment. Elementary writing teachers need to follow this teaching outfit.

In using the scaffolds mentioned above, teacher-respondents do use as well use support tool such as visuals, graphic organizers, and technology-based learning tools. These are all utilized in different episodes of the teaching-learning process such as in brainstorming and in guided practice.

5.2.2 Visuals as Support Tools

Visuals such as pictures is commonly employed as support tool in teaching elementary writing especially in ideas generation phase. Oftentimes, elementary writers are asked to write

words that can be associated to the given pictures. These words then are referred to for sentences construction, which, in turn, are used for paragraph development. Though specifically stated as useful for slow learners, Pineda, Dupa, & Torio, et al. (2008) reported that the use of visual presentations is preferred by the elementary teachers in motivating this type of learners across learning areas. In their study, slow learners as those who require attention sustainability, inactive participants in various classroom activities, and those that are in need of parental attention.

Actually this kind of scaffold falls under descriptive writing technique. An article posted online titled “Writing Descriptive Essay”, descriptive writing is simply verbally describing a specific thing, object, person, or moment in time. It is regarded as a classic approach of painting a picture with words. An ideal description, it said, must be able to create a vivid picture of whatever is under description. Writers are expected to describe what happens or what something or someone is like. They should as well be able to express their emotions. Doing This requires that the author be able to create an image, feeling, or emotion in text. Descriptions are found several text types: narratives, reports, persuasive texts, and biographies among others. Central to good description is capturing the mood in detail using all senses possible. Tompkins (2019) suggested five techniques for descriptive writing: adding specific information, careful selection of words, use of sensory images, adding figurative language, and creating a dialogue.

5.2.3 Graphic Organizers as Support Tools

Apart from the use of visuals, Barugo I District teacher-respondents use graphic organizers as well in facilitating this language skill. Aedy (2013), defines graphic organizers such as concept map, web, and mind map as visual aids that helps illustrate correlation between concepts, ideas, or facts. Its use enables the learners to think outside the box and be more participative in the writing and learning process. It helps them see small details amidst the big picture and structure their thinking. Teachers, on the other hand, are provided a vivid idea of the learner’s level of understanding which makes it easy for them to offer suggestions and point out areas of improvement.

5.2.4 Technology-Based Learning Tools

Technology-based learning tools refers to the use of video clips and computer-based puzzles and games as aides which generally aims to enrich the knowledge of the pupils, brainstorm, hold their attention, and provide them sample or model text to pattern from. Studies have since proved that technology is indeed been very useful in learning to write. Montecalvo (2014), for example, reported that CD-ROM module, an electronic learning facility, was

effective in enhancing the content, organization, and grammar writing mechanics of the learners making e-learning, she claimed, an essential and valuable tool useful in supplementing the English language classroom. Similarly, Maricimoi's (2017) classroom action study confirmed the usefulness of audio visual media in enhancing the writing skills of the 11th graders students.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This study assessed the instructional challenges of the sixth grade teachers in the classroom recital of the learning objectives contained in the K-12 elementary writing curriculum. It also elicited empirical data on how they best address these challenges. Its findings served as the bases for developing a contextualized lesson blueprint that other teachers teaching this skill may refer to and pattern from in their respective classrooms.

The assessment made proved that the curricular contents of K-12 elementary writing curriculum were generally rather challenging to facilitate to the kind of 6th grade pupils studying in different schools clustered in Barugo I District. Skill facilitators, however, were quick to suspect that these could have been caused by learning barriers such reading competence, language difficulty, and to the skill itself being too cognitively demanding though they said, such a suspicion necessitates empirical validation. This is further aggravated by limited learning resources. In similar vein, the study likewise proved that Barugo I District elementary teachers were also resourceful in spite of the many instructional challenges they need hurdle just so that they can best actualize the curricular expectations. This was evident of the many initiatives they have undertaken to counter the many challenges in the delivery of instruction for this macro language skill. The use RRE, ET, Little Teacher Strategy, Group Work Technique, and DLP's framework for this skill as instructional scaffolds as well as the support tool such as visuals, graphic organizers, and technology-based learning tools aides they tested as helpful for their learners to academically succeed in writing served as the highlights of these initiatives.

Having resorted to the use of myriads of scaffolds for teaching this language skill is tantamount to categorically claim of the need for instructional supports to best facilitate writing which has repeatedly been empirically reported as the most challenging of the four macro language skills to learn. According to Araya (2016), an effective scaffold is able to: identify skills to be learned, expect errors to occur in the process, apply dynamic and skill generative scaffolds, and extend learning beyond the cognitive domain by including the emotive and

affective domains. Evidently, their choice of various instructional scaffolds mentioned earlier though laudable, still fell short of the holistic attributes of scaffolding instruction. Thus, the need to further the elementary teachers' knowledge about scaffolding the writing skill holistically. Continuing professional development through the conduct of seminar-workshops could be helpful especially so that the K-12 Curriculum highly demands a showcase of teacher's expertise. In so doing additional knowledge will be generated and added that will further enrich their instructional practices in reciting lesson objectives of this skill. Contextualizing the lesson content of a specific scaffold will likewise help.

6.2 Recommendation

Since, this study concentrated on a single district only, a clearer and holistic picture about how this skill is facilitated can be captured by involving other elementary teachers teaching in other school districts of the municipality. Assessing the learner's writing readiness and similar scholastic related factors suspected by the teachers to contribute to the challenges in composition writing may also be subjected for an empirical inquest.

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