Collective peer scaffolding, self-revision, and writing progress of novice EFL learners

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ABSTRACT
This classroom-based study examined the effect of collective peer scaffolding activity on self-revised as well as new narrative and descriptive paragraphs developed by 32 EFL university students in a paragraph writing course in Iran. Each genre was discussed and practiced every other week and was followed by a collective peer scaffolding session. For each genre, learners were required to develop a 150-word paragraph in two drafts (pre- and post-collective scaffolding activity) and email them to their lecturer within five days before the next sessions were held. During collective scaffolding sessions representative learners were asked to write their paragraphs on board while other students scaffolded solutions to the problems they noticed in the paragraphs written on board. The analyses of the students' pre- and post-collective peer scaffolding drafts and new developed paragraphs revealed that although the activity improved learners' self-revised drafts, its effect on new developed paragraphs was inconclusive.

KEYWORDS: Collective peer scaffolding, self-revision, L2 learners' writing progress, feedback, EFL paragraph writing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, student-centered pedagogy has been extensively integrated in educational settings including L2 writing classes across the world (Memari Hanjani, 2016). More precisely, ESL/EFL writing programs have increasingly supplemented the traditional teacher-

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directed pedagogy by alternate forms of instruction such as pair and small-group peer scaffolding/collaboration technique in recent decades(Hyland & Hyland, 2006). This activity is supported by several theoretical arguments including process-oriented approach to writing and constructionist theory of learning. Process composition pedagogy, which emphasizes on meaningful writing for a real purpose and audience and is characterized by developing multiple drafts and receiving feedback during the composing process, provides an excellent opportunity for incorporation of peer scaffolding/collaboration technique in writing courses (Ferris, 2003; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hu, 2005; Kamimura, 2006; Memari Hanjani & Li, 2014b). It is also strongly supported by Vygotsky's learning theory (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Memari Hanjani & Li, 2014a; Min, 2005, 2006; Yong, 2010). Drawn from this theoretical framework, several scholars maintain that writing and learning are social processes (DiPardo& Freedman, 1988; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hyland, 2003; Yong, 2010) and through interaction, negotiation, and collaboration, peers can mutually scaffold each other to improve their writing skills (de Guerrero & Villamil, 1994, 2000; Hsieh, 2017; Li & Zhu, 2013; Ohta, 1995, 2000; Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2002, 2005; Yong, 2010).

Inspired by sociocultural theory of learning and guided particularly by one of its key tenets, 'collective scaffolding' (Donato, 1994), the present classroom-based research endeavored to evaluate the progress of self-revised as well as new narrative and descriptive paragraphs written by novice students after being engaged in collective peer scaffolding activities during an EFL paragraph writing course. It should be noted that in this study collective peer scaffolding encompasses peer collaboration activities in which all students are engaged in providing assistance to their classmates to improve the quality of their texts in subsequent drafts in a paragraph writing class. More specifically, the whole class jointly revises representative paragraphs written by their peers, pool their resources, and facilitate co-construction of new language knowledge in an attempt to maximize their paragraph writing skill. Besides, the term self-revision refers to writers' revisions of their own written texts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The sociocultural theory of development rejects the view that cognitive growth exists or is developed inside individual brains independent of context and intention and as a consequence of individual processing of information (Alfred, 2002; Palinscar, 1998). According to this paradigm, learning is a much more complex activity than individual engagement. In other words, cognition and knowledge are inherently social and are dialogically constructed and shared within a social world (Alfred, 2002; Lantolf, 2000, 2006; Swain, Brooks & Tocalli-Beller, 2002). In fact, the basic assumption of the sociocultural theory of mind and learning, originally associated with the work of Vygotsky, is that human learning is intertwined with

the context within which it occurs, and knowledge is not only something that exists or is developed inside individual people's minds, but also constructed through a process of interaction, collaboration, and communication among members of the society (Nassaji & Swain, 2000).

From a sociocultural perspective, higher forms of human mental abilities and complex skills are learnt in specific cultural, historical, and institutional contexts through the medium of language and other semiotic tools (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985), by which the novice and the expert work together in order to create a mutual activity frame (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). This activity frame known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is where learning and development come together and is 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). According to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), ZPD is 'the framework, par excellence, which brings all of the pieces of the learning setting together - the teacher, the learner, their social and cultural history, their goals and motives, as well as the resources available to them, including those that are dialogically constructed together' (p. 468). However, for that interaction to be effective, the assistance provided by the more knowledgeable member (expert) needs to be adjusted to the less knowledgeable partner's ZPD (Van Der Stuyf, 2002). In the literature, this graduated and temporary assistance provided by the expert to a novice has been metaphorically referred to as "scaffolding" (Weissberg, 2006).

Vygotsky's original framework was later extended to educational settings (Donato, 1988) and to both unequal (expert-novice) and equal (learner-learner) situations (Storch, 2002). One of its implications, for example, is for second language learning scenarios in which L2 learners need to be scaffolded and supported in their ZPD in order to develop second language competence (Lantolf, 2000, 2006). Accordingly, Ohta (1995) adapted the concept of the ZPD to L2 as 'the difference between the L2 learner's developmental level as determined by independent language use, and the higher level of potential development as determined by how language is used in collaboration with a more capable interlocutor' (p. 96). Hence, scaffolding in the L2 refers to those supportive behaviors employed by the more advanced partner in collaboration with the less competent learner that aim to foster L2 learner's progress to a higher level of language proficiency. However, a number of researchers (Hsieh; 2017; Li & Zhu, 2013; Memari Hanjani & Li, 2014a; Ohta, 1995,2000; Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2002, 2005; Swain, Brooks & Tocalli-Beller, 2002; Yong, 2010; Watanabe, 2008; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009) have stressed that scaffolding is not just a unidirectional support from an expert to a novice, but can occur between novices with both learners acting as expert and supporting each other mutually and concurrently through dialogic interaction.

Sociocultural theory also offers a theoretical framework for peer scaffolding and collaboration including collaborative writing, peer review, collaborative revision (Memari Hanjani, 2013; Memari Hanjani & Li, 2014a). In other words, it stresses that peer interaction integrates the cognitive and social aspects of language by allowing peers to construct meaning within the context of dialogic interaction (Zhang, 1995). Indeed, by rejecting the traditional view that assumes writing as an individual attempt through which the writer tries to convey his/her message to the intended audience, this theoretical perspective considers writing as a deeply rooted social act (Santos, 1992: 3). Hence, it has prompted composition theorists and researchers to begin to empirically explore how engaging students in collaborative tasks in the classroom can contribute to the development of writing abilities. As DiPardo and Freedman (1988) put it, sociocultural theory provides 'a close relationship between talk and writing and the importance of a research framework that leads to understanding how social interactions, in this case in the form of peer talk, can contribute to writing development' (p. 122). It is also well documented that scaffolding can occur in an L2 composition context among peers when working in pairs and groups (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Hsieh; 2017; Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2002, 2005; Yong, 2010).

Despite the persuasive arguments in favor of pair and small-group peer collaboration/scaffolding incorporation in L2 composition classrooms, research findings regarding the efficacy of implementing this technique in ESL and EFL contexts are inconclusive. For instance, several investigations have highlighted the learning benefits of such collaboration (Byrd, 2003; Memari Hanjani, 2013; Min, 2005, 2006; Rollinson, 2005; Ting & Qian, 2010; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006). More precisely, it is acknowledged that pair and small-group peer scaffolding/collaboration can:

- foster student autonomy (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006),
- enhance critical thinking and reading (Rollinson, 2005; Ting & Qian, 2010),
- develop audience awareness (Memari Hanjani, 2013; Tsui & Ng, 2000),
- generate more positive attitudes towards writing (Min, 2005),
- improve confidence and language skills (Byrd, 2003; Min, 2006),
- form a supportive and friendly atmosphere in class (Memari Hanjani, 2013; Schmid, 1999),
- and advance learners' writing skill (Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006) by incorporation of the peer feedback in revised drafts (Ting & Qian, 2010).

On the other hand, some studies have reported a number of problems associated with the use of pair and small-group peer collaboration/scaffolding in L2 writing courses which have turned it into a counterproductive activity (Diab, 2010; Fei, 2006; Hu & Lam, 2010; Memari Hanjani & Li, 2014a; Tsui & Ng, 2000). The challenges identified in the literature include:

- peer reviewers' tendency to focus more on grammar and mechanics mistakes rather than content and organization problems (Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Memari Hanjani & Li, 2014a; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1998),

- learners' lack of knowledge of the target language which may limit their ability to detect errors and provide concrete and constructive feedback (Diab, 2010; Memari Hanjani & Li, 2014a; Tsui & Ng, 2000),

- students' doubt about their peers' linguistic ability to provide valid feedback and their reluctance to incorporate peer comments into their revisions (Fei, 2006; Hu & Lam, 2010; Rollinson, 2005; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006).

Hence, the conflicting findings of the previous studies regarding pair and small-group peer scaffolding/collaboration in EFL contexts especially problems such as novice L2 learners' inability to identify their classmates' errors, their doubtful feeling about the accuracy of their classmates' comments, and their reluctance to use their peers' suggestions when placed in pair or small-groups which have been reported as impeding factors in successful integration of pair and small-group peer scaffolding/collaboration in L2 writing courses provide incentive for further research to clarify the role and potential learning benefits of collective peer scaffolding in EFL writing contexts. Furthermore, although previous studies have explored pair/small-group scaffolding, little attention has been paid to a large group of learners (whole class) performing such task.

As it was stated earlier, collective peer scaffolding refers to those activities in which all students of the class work together and pool their writing knowledge and resources to provide scaffold (assistance) to the representative paragraphs written by their classmates in an attempt to improve their quality in subsequent drafts. It is hoped that engaging the whole class in peer scaffolding/collaboration activities alleviate some of the concerns expressed by L2 researchers and practitioners working with pairs or small groups. Therefore, drawing on 'collective scaffolding' principle (Donato, 1994), the present study aimed to address these issues by examining the progress of self-revised as well as new narrative and descriptive paragraphs written by novice students after being engaged in collective peer scaffolding activities during an EFL paragraph writing course in an Iranian tertiary context. To serve that end, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Can collective peer scaffolding improve the overall quality of self-revised narrative paragraphs developed by Iranian novice EFL learners?

2. Can collective peer scaffolding improve the overall quality of self-revised descriptive paragraphs developed by Iranian novice EFL learners?

3. Can collective peer scaffolding improve the overall quality of new narrative paragraphs composed by Iranian novice EFL learners?

4. Can collective peer scaffolding improve the overall quality of new descriptive paragraphs composed by Iranian novice EFL learners?

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Context and participants

The study was embedded in an English Paragraph writing course at a medium sized private university in Iran. This course was scheduled once a week (90 minutes) for 15 weeks. Altogether, 36 students enrolled in the course, yet the data of four learners were discarded because either their first or second drafts were missing. The students shared Persian as their native language and were English language translation majors. The age of the learners ranged from 20 to 24 years, with the average age being 22. Before attending university, they had studied English in high school for four years and their English proficiency level ranged from lower intermediate to intermediate with the majority of them being novice English writers. In their profile questionnaires most students admitted that they had no previous formal, systematic exposure to process, learner-centered composition instruction. The overall course objective as outlined by the curriculum was to develop EFL students' paragraph writing skills. The lecturer/researcher was a non-native English speaker who had been teaching English in Iran and the UK for over 17 years by that time.

3.2. Data collection

The research was conducted in an L2 paragraph writing class with no changes to the course syllabus apart from incorporation of collective peer scaffolding technique in the class activities. To ensure that students enjoyed the same level of writing proficiency, all of them were required to compose a sample piece at the onset of the semester. The sample papers were evaluated using multiple trait scoring rubric. According to Hamp-Lyons, the advantage of multiple-trait scoring rubric is that the traits are specific to the task. In other words, the method judges the texts against not only the features of a particular genre, but also an assigned prompt and the goal is to create criteria for writing that are unique to each prompt and the writing produced in response to it (1991, cited in Min, 2006: 135). As the assessment revealed, almost all participants had restricted knowledge of English writing skill.

The course was generally composed of two main parts. The first part of the course which lasted for eight weeks focused on writing generics and students were introduced to the process of writing such as pre-writing, drafting, and revision, as well as English paragraph structure and components. The second part, on the other hand, concentrated on preparing students for composing narrative and descriptive (a person / a place) paragraphs respectively (See Figure 1).
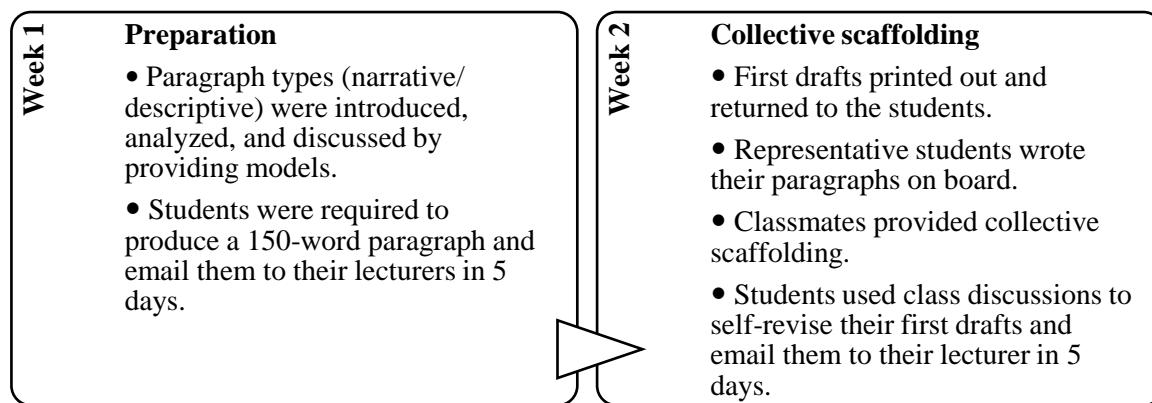
| Week 1 | **Preparation**

• Paragraph types (narrative/ descriptive) were introduced, analyzed, and discussed by providing models.

• Students were required to produce a 150-word paragraph and email them to their lecturers in 5 days. | Week 2 | **Collective scaffolding**

• First drafts printed out and returned to the students.

• Representative students wrote their paragraphs on board.

• Classmates provided collective scaffolding.

• Students used class discussions to self-revise their first drafts and email them to their lecturer in 5 days. |

Figure 1. Data collection procedure.

As Figure 1shows, first, each type of paragraph was introduced, its characteristics were discussed, and the steps involved in developing it were explained by providing some models. Then, the students were assigned a 150-word paragraph (pre-collective scaffolding draft) and were asked to email them to the lecturer in five days before the next class met. Next, collective peer scaffolding sessions happened a week after each genre had been taught. During these sessions the lecturer returned the students' printed first drafts and asked six representative learners to write their paragraphs on board. Other students acted as collective, scaffolding solutions to the problems they noticed in the paragraphs written on board. The lecturer monitored the process and intervened whenever needed. For instance, when several students commented on a piece simultaneously, he asked them to take turn when giving feedback. Besides, when inaccurate, subjective, or irrelevant comments were provided by the class members, he tried to explain why the feedback was inappropriate. It should be stressed that before the students started the activity, the lecturer asked a couple of them to write their paragraphs on board and modelled scaffolding process for the whole class. More precisely, he practically demonstrated what to focus (e.g. topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation), and how to provide feedback (e.g. in collaborative and friendly tone and manner).

Further, all of the students were required to carefully listen to the scaffolds (comments) provided in class, use them to self-revise their first drafts (if applicable), develop their second drafts (post-collective scaffolding), and email them to their lecturer in five days before the next session was held and a new genre was taught. This part continued for six weeks and the participants produced three paragraphs (See Table 1). It should be noted that all students had a chance to write their paragraphs on board at least once and receive feedback from their classmates. Finally, in order to determine the writing progress of the students, each participant composed one narrative and one descriptive paragraph a month after the semester had finished as part of their end of the term final exam.

3.3. Data analysis

The study employed students' written paragraphs and their scores as its data sets. Altogether, 160 paragraphs were composed by the students during the study (See Table 1). That is, 96 paragraphs during the course and 64 paragraphs a month after the course had finished. However, as the descriptive paragraphs which students developed during the term were similar, only data from one type (describing a place) was included in the research. Hence, 128 paragraphs were analyzed for the purpose of this study.

No	Type	Paragraph Prompt	Draft 1	Draft 2
32	Narration	An Experience That Taught You a Lesson	✓	✓
32	Description (a person)	Someone You Admire	✓	✓
32	Description (a place)	A Shopping Center	✓	✓
32	Narration	Your Most Embarrassing Experience	✓	X
32	Description (a place)	Your Favorite Restaurant	✓	X

Table 1. Number of paragraphs/drafts written by the learners.

To compare the quality of drafts written by the students before collective peer scaffolding activity with their self-revised drafts composed after the activity as well as the drafts developed pre-scaffolding activity with new paragraphs developed a month after the instruction, multiple trait scoring rubric (See Appendix for a sample rubric), Compare option of Microsoft Word 2010, and paired-samples T-tests were used. To ensure the reliability of scores, the researcher asked one of this experienced colleagues to mark 25 percent of the paragraphs randomly. The scores assigned to these paragraphs were subjected to Chronbach's alpha inter-rater reliability test. The inter-rater reliability index acquired was 0.87. As the agreement in terms of participants' overall writing scores was satisfactory and the scores of almost all sample papers fell under the same scoring bands, the rest of the paragraphs were assessed by the researcher.

4. FINDINGS

The primary objective of this study was determining novice EFL students' narrative and descriptive paragraph writing progress after participating in collective peer scaffolding technique both over drafts and over an English paragraph writing course. To serve this purpose, first multiple trait scoring rubric and Compare option of Microsoft Word 2010 were used to mark the students' paragraphs. Then, the normality of distribution of variables were tested and as Table 2 displays, the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors were lower than +/- 1.96 and normality of the data was met. Hence,

parametric tests (paired-samples t-tests) were used to check the significance of collective peer scaffolding technique.

	N	Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
N-D1	32	-.427	.414	-1.03	-.008	.809	-0.01
N-D2	32	-.435	.414	-1.05	-.690	.809	-0.85
N-F	32	-.291	.414	-0.70	-.964	.809	-1.19
D-D1	32	-.490	.414	-1.18	-.912	.809	-1.13
D-D2	32	-.555	.414	-1.34	-.611	.809	-0.76
D-F	32	-.590	.414	-1.43	-.544	.809	-0.67

Note: N = narrative, D = descriptive, D1/2 = first/second draft, F = final

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics: Testing Normality Assumption.

RQ1: The quality of narrative paragraphs pre and post (self-revised) collective peer scaffolding

A paired-samples t-test was run to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the scores of first (pre-collective scaffolding) and second (self-revised, post-collective scaffolding) narrative drafts composed by the participants. As the results in Table 3 show, the participants composed significantly higher quality second drafts (M = 13.81, SD = 2.40) as opposed to the first drafts (M = 12.34, SD = 2.78) (t (31) = 4.22, p = .000. r = .604 representing a large effect size). Hence, the results suggest that collective peer scaffolding improved the quality of self-revised narrative paragraphs of EFL learners.

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	p	R
N-D2	13.81	32	2.402	.425	4.22	31	.000	.625
N-D1	12.34	32	2.789	.493				

Note: N-D2 = narrative draft 2, N-D1 = narrative draft 1

Table 3. Paired Samples Statistics: Narrative Paragraph; First and Second Drafts Scores.

RQ2: The quality of descriptive paragraphs pre and post (self-revised) collective peer scaffolding

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores of first and self-revised descriptive drafts composed by the participants. As the results in Table 4 reveal, there was a significant difference in the scores of second drafts (M = 15.38, SD = 2.25) than the first drafts (M = 15, SD = 2.35) (t (31) = 3.83, p = .001. r = .567 representing a large effect size). Hence, the overall quality of self-revised descriptive paragraphs of the learners significantly improved.

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	p	R
D-D2	15.38	32	2.254	.398	3.83	31	.001	.567
D-D1	15.00	32	2.356	.416				

Note: D-D2 = descriptive draft 2, D-D1 = descriptive draft 1

Table 4. Paired Samples Statistics: Descriptive Paragraph; First and Second Drafts Scores.

RQ3: Participants' narrative paragraph writing progress

A paired-samples t-test was run to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the scores of narrative paragraphs composed by the participants before collective peer scaffolding activity during the term and those developed a month after the course. As the results in Table 5 demonstrate, the narrative paragraphs developed one month after the end of the term were higher in quality (M = 14.19, SD = 2.59) as opposed to those written during the term (M = 12.34, SD = 2.78) (t (31) = 4.70, p = .000. r = .651 representing a large effect size). Hence, the results suggest that collective peer scaffolding improved the quality of EFL learners' narrative paragraphs over time.

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Df	p	R
N-F	14.19	32	2.596	.459	4.70	31	.000	.651
N-D1	12.34	32	2.789	.493				

Note: N-F = narrative final, N-D1 = narrative draft 1

Table 5. Paired Samples Statistics: Narrative Paragraphs; First and Second paragraphs Scores.

RQ4: Participants' descriptive paragraph writing progress

A paired-samples t-test was run to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the scores of descriptive paragraphs composed by the participants before collective peer scaffolding activity during the term and those developed a month after the course. As Table 6 demonstrates, there was not any significant difference between the participants' mean scores of the descriptive paragraphs produced one month after the end of the term (M = 14.38, SD = 2.80) and the scores of those composed during the semester (M = 15, SD = 2.35) (t (31) = 1.64, p = .110. r = .287 representing a weak effect size). Hence, the results suggest that collective peer scaffolding did not improve the quality of EFL learners' descriptive paragraphs over time.

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	p	R
D-F	14.38	32	2.803	.495	1.64	31	.110	.287
D-D1	15.00	32	2.356	.416				

Note: D-F = descriptive final, D-D1 = descriptive draft 1

Table 6. Paired Samples Statistics: Descriptive Paragraphs; First and Second paragraphs Scores.

In sum, the self-revised narrative and descriptive drafts written by students were significantly more accurate than the first drafts. It was also evident that collective peer scaffolding considerably improved the quality of the new narrative paragraphs written by the students one month after the classes had finished. However, these changes were not significant in the new descriptive paragraphs developed by the learners at the end of the term.

5. DISCUSSION

So far, several studies have investigated various aspects of peer scaffolding/collaboration. One research strand has focused on the nature of peer scaffolding and patterns of peer-peer interaction (Memari Hanjani, 2013; Zhu, 2001; Zhu & Mitchell, 2012). Another line of research has investigated the efficiency and outcome of collaborative activities (Diab, 2010, 2011; Kamimura, 2006; Lundstorm & Baker, 2009; Memari Hanjani, 2013; Ting & Qin, 2010; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006). The third group of research has inquired L2 learners' reactions to peer scaffolding tasks (Byrd, 2003; Hu & Lam, 2010; Memari Hanjani, 2013, 2015; Min, 2006; Morra & Romano, 2009; Wang, 2014). However, despite a wealth of research on pair and small group scaffolding/collaboration, sometimes with inconsistent results, studies examining the effect of collective peer scaffolding activities involving the whole class on self-revision and paragraph writing skill of L2 learners are rather sparse. Underpinned by social constructivism, the present classroom-based study attempted to broaden the investigation by assessing the quality ofself-revised as well as new narrative and descriptive paragraphs developed by novice students after being engaged in collective peer scaffolding activities during an EFL paragraph writing course in an Iranian university.

The results of this study revealed that collective peer scaffolding had a positive impact on the quality of the participants' narrative and descriptive revised drafts. Hence, as the students had to make the revisions themselves after collective peer scaffolding activities, it is safe to claim that creating a cooperative atmosphere during which learners used their classmates' comments and built on their strengths to compensate their weaknesses improved self-revision ability of novice EFL learners. From sociocultural theory perspective, which

stresses the social nature of writing, this finding highlights the role of collective peer scaffolding activity during which the students extended and received scaffold, pooled their incomplete individual resources, and co-constructed linguistic knowledge. More precisely, their active participation and engagement in the evaluation tasks contributed to the overall good quality self-revised subsequent drafts. That is, dialogue, interaction, collaboration, and the scaffold provided by the peers, helped individual learners move from other regulation to self-regulation state and improved their revision skills by producing more accurate and richer texts.

However, the mid-term effect of collective peer scaffolding on the paragraph writing quality of the participants was mixed. While the activity could help novice EFL learners develop greater quality new narrative paragraphs, it was not the case for descriptive paragraphs. A possible interpretation to such inconsistency is that the students in this study did not have enough writing practice before and during the course. A further reason appears to relate to lack of revision training. Hence, even though the learners were able to write better quality revised drafts and new narrative paragraphs, they were not able to develop improved descriptive paragraphs at the end of the course. Normally, students are more familiar with the requirements and structure of narrative papers, but they probably need further training and writing practice to get more competent in writing descriptive genre which is a more complex and demanding task compared to the narrative one. As sociocultural theory is concerned, the findings suggest that the students could perform tasks and solve problems (self-revision) with the support and assistance of their peers at their potential development level, whereas they failed to extend their potential to actual development level as they were not able to perform new tasks (new writing tasks) independently after a month interval.

More precisely, the significant and substantial improvement observed in the writing quality of revised narrative and descriptive drafts as well as new narrative paragraphs of the students as opposed to the lack of progress observed in the new composed descriptive paragraphs confirms the idea that the movement from other-regulation toward self-regulation should be gradual and happen over time and the scaffold provided by the expert should accommodate with the potential developmental level of learners (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994: 480).

Even though inconclusive in terms of mid-term effect of collective peer scaffolding on writing quality of L2 learners, the findings of our research corroborate the results reported in earlier studies regarding the beneficial effect of pair and small-group peer scaffolding/collaboration particularly peer feedback on EFL students' revised drafts (Diab, 2011; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hu & Lam, 2010; Kamimura, 2006; Min, 2006; Rahimi, 2013; Ting & Qian, 2010; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006). All of these investigations have linked significant progress in the quality of subsequent drafts developed by L2 learners to peer feedback activities both in ESL and EFL contexts. Some of them have also noted that

student-centered activities like peer review have boosted student autonomy and self-revision (Memari Hanjani, 2013; Ting & Qin, 2010; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006). Thus, it can be inferred that collective peer scaffolding can also improve L2 learners' paragraph writing skills provided that it is supplemented by proper planning, purposeful instruction, and extensive practice. More precisely, carefully planned scaffolding activities and preparing students adequately before embarking on collaborative tasks, can maximize learners' active involvement and consequently produce promising results at least in the short-term.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to address a gap in the literature by examining the quality of self-revised as well as new narrative and descriptive paragraphs developed by novice students after being engaged in collective peer scaffolding activities during an EFL paragraph writing course in an Iranian university. The findings shed light on the potential value of engaging EFL students in collective peer scaffolding activities as they can improve their paragraph writing skill and develop student autonomy at least in the short-term. Hence, the results may be helpful to guide L2 writing practitioners' decisions when planning to incorporate student-centered activities such as collective peer scaffolding into their writing class as a complement to the traditional teacher feedback pedagogy.L2 learners can also be encouraged to involve in such tasks to take advantage of their peers' strengths through discussion and collaboration and accommodate their writing needs. However, there is a need to organize well-structured training sessions for students on how to extend and receive scaffolds collectively in a class.

Some limitations of the study need to be acknowledged. First, it lacked control group; as a result, the progress observed in the writing quality of the learners cannot be attributed exclusively to collective peer scaffolding performed in class. Further research may be conducted to test the efficiency of this technique in experimental design studies. A further limitation was that due to the course time constraints, the students collectively scaffolded their peers just for a few times. Longitudinal studies aimed at evaluating students' paragraph writing progress after being extensively exposed to collective peer scaffolding activities over a longer period of time may provide a more complete picture. Finally, the participants in this study were from the same cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. The scope of the present study could be extended by conducting similar studies in other instructional contexts in order for the researchers and practitioners to develop a better understanding of the efficiency of collective peer scaffolding activity as well as L2 learners' perceptions toward it. With a deepened understanding of these issues, writing instructors will be in a better position to integrate peer scaffolding/collaboration tasks into their ESL/EFL writing classes and can help enhance students' writing skills.

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APPENDIX

Narrative Paragraph Scoring Scale

Content and Organization	Score
Clear and effective topic sentence (Topic + opinion) Adequate supporting information Well organized paragraph (chronological order) Transitions/connectives are used effectively and correctly Clear and effective concluding sentence (topic restatement/ prediction/ recommendation, summary of the main points)	9-10
Implicit topic sentence (lacks opinion) Satisfactory supporting information Satisfactory organized paragraph Slight over- or under-use of transitions/connectives but correctly used Implicit concluding sentence	6-8
Unclear topic sentence Limited/undeveloped supporting information, some irrelevant details Some patterns of organization Over- or under-use of transitions/connectives with some incorrect use Unclear concluding sentence	3-5
Topic sentence missing Inadequate supporting information, irrelevant details No evidence of organization No or incorrect use of transitions/connectives Concluding sentence missing	1-2
Language, Vocabulary, and Mechanics	**Score**
Effective use of a wide variety of correct sentences No significant grammatical mistakes Effective use of a wide variety of lexical items Correct spelling and punctuation	9-10
Good use of a variety of correct sentences Some grammatical mistakes Variety of lexical items with some problems but not causing comprehension difficulties Few spelling and punctuation errors	6-8
A limited variety of mostly correct sentences Recurring grammatical mistakes A limited variety of lexical items occasionally causing comprehension problems Some spelling and punctuation errors	3-5
A limited variety of sentences requiring considerable effort to understand Frequent grammatical mistakes and comprehension problems A very limited variety of lexical items Frequent spelling and punctuation errors	1-2
Total Score	**20**