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A Case Study on the Function of Tutor's Verbal Scaffolding for L2 Writing Development

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The main purpose of this study is to explore how a tutor uses verbal-only scaffolding to develop L2 tutee's writing skills within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Although there are a number of studies on scaffolding and L2 speaking, we do have few studies on how scaffolding is related to L2 writing. This research probed how L2 writing can be developed through verbal-only tutor scaffolding that previous research did not consider. I video-taped a 30-minute writing session to capture the interaction between an English native tutor and an L2 tutee at an intermediate proficiency level and analyzed the data through the micro descriptive analysis. It was found that tutor's verbal scaffolding played three significant roles: 1) encouraging the tutee more actively to participate in the interaction through motivational scaffolding, 2) double-checking the tutee's error corrections or response through cognitive scaffolding, and 3) explaining rules and principles through instructional scaffolding. Motivational scaffolding was used most frequently, cognitive second, and instruction least. Therefore, this study suggests that to depict the interactional picture of L2 writing process, we need to consider the relationship between verbal-only scaffolding and L2 writing.

[the Zone of Proximal Development/second language writing/scaffolding/verbal-only scaffolding modality]

I. INTRODUCTION

The basic framework of this study is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) coined by Vygotsky (1978, 1986) which provides a theoretical lens to see how tutors scaffold second language (L2) learner's writing. The ZPD was defined as "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, p. 86). According to Vygotsky, within her/his ZPD, a learner can perform a certain task beyond the actual developmental level with teacher's guidance and instruction. In this process, teacher's scaffolding serves to support the learner to reach the successful performance (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 1994; Bruner, 1978; Cazden, 1983; Donato, 1994; Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1995; Lidz, 1991; Ohta, 1995; Stone, 1993; Stone & Wertsch, 1984, Wertsch & Stone, 1985; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

To examine the function of teacher scaffolding, a majority of L2 researchers (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; Walqui, A., 2006) have been interested mostly in L2 communicative competence. Meanwhile, even in the field of L2 writing, peer scaffolding was found to be effective in collaborative writing (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Storch, 2002, 2005, 2007) However, we do have only a few studies (e.g., Cotteral & Cohen, 2003; Laksmi, 2006) on how tutor scaffolding is related to L2 writing. Therefore, this study examine the function of tutor's verbal-only scaffolding for L2 writing. This study will contribute to increasing our understanding on how tutor's verbal-only scaffolding is related to the development of L2 writing within the ZPD. This research will provide wider lenses for L2 researchers and educators to see deeply the interactional architecture of writing process.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development

Teacher instruction is an essential element to promote student learning and cognitive development. With regard to the ZPD, Vygotsky (1986) emphasized the role of instruction in classroom settings:

> *Instruction is only useful when it moves ahead of development. When it does, it implies or wakens a whole series of functions that are in a stage of maturation lying in the ZPD. This is the major role of instruction in development… instruction would be completely unnecessary if it merely utilized what had already matured in the developmental process, if it were not itself a source of development (p .212).*

Instruction is maximized through scaffolding that contributes to making learners self-regulated and independent (Hartman, 2002). The term scaffolding was introduced to the field of education by Wood et al. (1976) who proposed that teacher's assistance is regarded as scaffolding which "enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or

achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (p. 90). They defined the tutor scaffolding process as six functions as follows:

- Recruitment: Making learners interested and helping them concentrate on the task requirements
- Reduction in degrees of freedom: Simplifying steps and movements for learners' problem solutions
- Direction maintenance: Directing learners to keep pursuing their goals
- Marking critical features: Marking essential features of the task to offer information about the gap between "what the child has produced and what he would recognize as a correct production"
- Frustration control: Making problem solving task less stressful and risky for learners
- Demonstration: Demonstrating learners models of problem solutions to make learners eventually imitate the steps successfully

Wood et al. (1976) also captured five ways of scaffolding: Providing feedback, giving some hints, offering instruction, explaining and modeling.

As a result, scaffolding brings "development of task competence by the learner at a pace that would outstrip his unassisted efforts" (p. 90). Further, tied with Vygotskian SCT (socio-cultural theory) framework (Hammond & Gibbons, 2001), scaffolding serves to operationalize the Vygotsky's concept of instruction within the ZPD (Berk, 2001; Maybin, Mercer, & Stierer, 1992; Mercer & Fisher, 1998; Wells, 1999, 2000, 2002a, 2002b). Scaffolding demonstrates how "a knowledgeable participant creates, by means of speech, supportive conditions in which the novice can participate and extend the current skill and knowledge to higher levels of competence" (Donato, 1994, p. 48). Likewise, the ZDP and scaffolding are core concepts of SCT and language is regarded as an essential mediational tool of scaffolding to make knowledge be co-constructed through dialogic interaction (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Moll, 1990; Wertsch, 1985, 1991). Reviewing previous research, Cromely and Azevedo (2005) identified four types of tutor scaffolding: 1) instruction such as direct instruction, providing and explaining the answer, and referring to previous lesson, 2) cognitive scaffolding such as previewing, hinting, and pumping, and 3) motivational scaffolding including negative and positive feedback, elaborated negative and positive feedback.

2. Scaffolding for L2 Writing

Since Wood et al. (1976) introduced the term scaffolding, that term has been applied and practiced in many different ways in the field of education. The area of second language (L2) education was not exceptional. More specifically, some L2 researchers have focused more on how scaffolded assistance brings L2 development within the ZPD. According to

Ohta (1995) the ZPD is identified as “the difference between 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). The ZPD shows the power of teacher’s scaffolding that helps L2 learners acquire a higher level of language development through collaboration and interaction between teachers and learners. There are several conditions that make teacher’s scaffolding work better for L2 learning (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994): 1) being graduated by considering what level of help learners currently need, 2) being contingent by providing help when it is necessary, and 3) being dialogic.

A majority of research on L2 scaffolding has focused on general language teaching and development. For instance, Harrell and Jordan (2004) found that scaffolding plays a critical role in academic and content L2 teaching as types of visual and modeling instruction. Walqui (2006) also proposed that scaffolding is effective in enhancing learners’ academic language skills and L2 acquisition in that teachers scaffold their students through verbal explanation, prior knowledge activation, or metacognitive development.

In fact, scaffolding is not separable from L2 writing. On one hand, some studies examined the effect of peer scaffolding in L2 writing classes. For example, De Guerrero and Villamil (1994) found that through peer collaboration, L2 learners promoted mutual understanding and task management ability, elicited more error repair and clarification, and helped each other to become an independent and self-regulated writer. In a similar vein, Antón and DiCamila (1998) reported that peer revision scaffolding within the ZPD provided the opportunities for readers to see the written text through the writer’s views and elicit more active error correction from writers, and for writers to revise their own errors and become self-regulated reviser. On the other hand, as peers were, a teacher was also found as a great scaffolder for writing of L2 learners. For instance, Cotteral & Cohen (2003) examined the role of teacher scaffolding in the process of academic essay writing and found that teacher scaffolding in the ZPD led L2 learners’ attention more to language and structure, brought the decrease of their burden to a new writing task, and eventually improved their writing accuracy. Laksmi (2006) also argued that teacher scaffolding played a significant role in promoting L2 learners’ confidence when they expressed their ideas on a written text.

As described above, it is clear that teacher scaffolding is effective in promoting writing skills of L2 learners. If so, what kinds of scaffolding strategies do teachers employ? In first language (L1) writing tutorials, Thompson (2009) classified tutor scaffolding as 3 sub-categories based on Cromley and Azevedo’s (2005) coding scheme: instruction (i.e., offering concept, principles, and rules through explanation), cognitive scaffolding (i.e., inviting students’ response through prompting questions or hints) and motivational scaffolding (i.e., giving feedback to students’ response). He found that the writing tutor

used cognitive scaffolding most frequently, instruction second, and motivational scaffolding least. In the field of L2 writing, there is not enough research on L2 tutor's scaffolding. One study was conducted recently by Kim and Cho (2015) and they reported that due to L2 tutee's low proficiency level, the tutor had to explain L2 vocabulary or grammar directly to scaffold the learner to repair her own errors. However, we do not know sufficiently how tutor scaffolds L2 learners in writing class and what strategies he/she employs.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to examine how tutor verbal-only scaffolding modality serves to scaffold tutee's L2 writing through the micro descriptive analysis. If we consider such modality, we can see how that works for L2 writing scaffolding. To see the picture of L2 learner's writing process, this study explores the function of verbal-only scaffolding. For that reason, the current research presented following three research questions:

1. How often does the tutor produce verbal-only scaffolding modality?
2. Which type of verbal-only scaffolding does the tutor employ most frequently, instruction, cognitive, or motivational and why?
3. How does each type of the tutor verbal-only scaffolding function for interactions between the tutor and the tutee?

IV. METHOD

1. Participants

The tutor came from the United Kingdom, majoring in a political science and had taught English conversation and writing at Korean universities for 6 years. The 22-year-old tutee was a sophomore in the college of Education, taking an English Reading and Writing I, a required two-credit liberal arts course. The English class had 3 different tracks (advanced, intermediate, and beginning) based on students' TOEIC scores. Since her TOEIC score was 470, she was assigned to an intermediate track class.

2. Data Collection

The university runs an English writing center called an E-clinic. The E-clinic opens

thirty-six 30-minute writing sessions per week every semester. Students who enrolled in the English Reading and Writing class are recommended to visit the E-clinic at least once with an on-line appointment to get feedback from Korean or English native tutors on their writing assignment. The tutors do not have any chance to read the writing text in advance. For the data collection, a video camera was set up in front of the round table located at the back of the E-clinic room to capture the verbal-only and nonverbal interactions between tutor and tutee who sat facing each other. A 30-minute writing session was video-taped and the researcher was not there on the spot.

3. Data Coding and Analysis

I modified dada coding frames from previous studies fitting into my research purpose and develop my own schemes in order to depict how the tutor provides scaffolding for L2 tutee to complete her task and goal. Verbal-only modality is a type of scaffolding given only through verbal channels. Since this study aims to examine how tutor verbal-only scaffolding serves to help the L2 tutee accomplish her writing goal, the focus was on verbal modality.

This study combined the coding schemes of previous research (Juel, 1996; Lepper, Drake, & O'Donnell-Johnson, 1997; Cromley & Azevedo, 2005) and developed 3 types of scaffolding as follows (see Table 1):

TABLE 1

Types of Verbal-only Scaffolding

Type	Definition
Motivational scaffolding	● Positive feedback such as "you are right," "good" ● Negative feedback such as "no" ● Humor ● OK, back channel
Cognitive scaffolding	● *Forced choice question* such as "A or B? ● *Double-checking* learner's response through confirmation check (e.g., "Is what you said right?") or clarification request (e.g., "what do you mean?" or "what did you say?") ● *Pumping* the learner to elaborate such as "what else?" ● *Inviting learner's response or error correction* through stretches (e.g., "so:::")
Instruction	● Direct *instruction* of a rule or principle ● *Explanation of* why the answer is correct/incorrect ● Giving *an example* of how a word/rule can be used in a sentence ● Asking *a question* for the learner to answer ● Offering *a correct answer* to the learner.

I watched the video-taped data three times and then transcribed the verbal-only and nonverbal features watching the video again and again until finishing it. The verbal transcription was based on Conversation Analysis (CA) conventions (see Appendix A) by Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998). CA conventions were utilized for the micro analysis appropriately "to visualize on paper the time line of the interactional stream," and to catch "pauses, overlapping, slower, faster, latched, or stretched speech" (Have, 1999, pp. 33-34). In addition, CA is a well-designed methodology to describe error repair of participants and talk in interaction (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977).

With regard to data coding, inter-rater reliability was set up. The other researcher and I selected one fourth of the whole transcript for coding and made a 94% agreement level (Cohen's kappa= .78). When we faced a discrepancy, we watched the video-taped data until reaching a mutual agreement.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Verbal-only Scaffolding

First, this study examined verbal-only scaffolding modality employed by the writing tutor. The tutor produced 115 instances of verbal-only scaffolding that was used for the interaction in the process of L2 writing. Through the verbal-only scaffolding, we can see the whole architectural structure of the interaction between tutee and tutee. To see how such scaffolding modality works, we need to take a close look at each type of verbal-only scaffolding. First, It will be shown how frequently each type of scaffolding was used in this writing session. More specifically, as seen in Table 2, the tutor employed motivational scaffolding most frequently (40%: 46 out of total 115 instances), cognitive scaffolding second (33%: 38 instances), and instruction least (27%: 31 instances). This result is in contrast to that in Mackiewicz and Thompson's (2014) study in which instruction appeared as the most dominant tutor scaffolding pattern in writing center tutoring.

In the following section, we will see how verbal-only scaffolding works for interactions between the tutor and the tutee.

TABLE 2
Frequency of Each Type of Verbal-only Scaffolding

Types	Frequency	%
Motivational Scaffolding	46	40%
Cognitive Scaffolding	38	33%
Instruction	31	27%
Total	115	100%

It is notable that verbal-only scaffolding was used primarily for motivational purposes. In other words, the tutor seems to utilize verbal-only scaffolding primarily in order to promote tutee's motivation and self-regulation by encouraging her to engage in the given task actively and complete it successfully as Evens and Michael (2006) argued.

2. Verbal-only Motivational Scaffolding

As mentioned above, the most frequent type of tutor verbal-only modality was found to be motivational scaffolding. It is interesting that the tutor used the verbal-only modality mostly for motivational scaffolding. As motivational scaffolding, 46 instances of verbal-only modality were found. As shown in Table 3, out of 46 instances, 23 (50%) were positive feedback such as "good" or "you're right, 16 (35%) Okays, 4 (9%) humors, and 3 (6%) negative feedback such as "that's not correct." Based on the data, we can assume that verbal-only modality seems to be used to motivate learner's active participation.

TABLE 3
Frequency of Each Type of Function Used for Verbal-only Motivational Scaffolding

Functions	Frequency	%
Positive feedback	23	50%
Ok	16	35%
Humor	4	9%
Negative feedback	3	6%
Total	46	100%

In Excerpt 1, we can see how the tutor utilizes verbal positive feedback to promote the tutee to continue working and motivate her more active participation.

Excerpt 1 (The tutee explains to the tutor that male students come to the Department of Early Childhood Education to see female students.)

1. S: Because early child education, people thinks there many girls in there so (3.0)
2. T: Right.
3. S: Yeah. If boys come, they think they only want to see girls
4. T: Ah…. you are right. I understand.
5. S: ((laughing) they like girls.

In line 1, the tutee verbalized that there are many girls in Department of Early Childhood Education and tried to add the stretched word "so" and3.0s pause that signaled she might have any lexical retrieval problem. At the next turn, the tutor provided a verbal positive feedback "right" to motivate the tutee to keep speaking (see line 2). The tutee continued to

speak out in line 3 by explaining that boys wanted to see girls at the department. As also seen in line 4, the tutor produced a positive feedback "you are right. I understand" for the motivational purpose. The tutee laughed out and then said "they like girls." Likewise, tutor's verbal-only modality seems to serve as motivational scaffolding by providing positive feedback primarily to promote tutee's motivation and encourage her to participate in the interaction more actively as Evens and Michael (2006) pointed out.

3. Verbal-only Cognitive Scaffolding

In this study, it was found the tutor produced 33% of speech only cognitive scaffolding (38 out of total 115 cases). As Table 4 shows, the most common cognitive scaffolding was 'double-checking' of tutee's responses (24 instances, 63%), second 'invitation' and 'pumps' (5 instances, 13% respectively), and third 'repetition' (4 instances, 11%) the least. It is interesting how the tutor used cognitive scaffolding to double-check tutee's answers through a confirmation check or clarification request.

TABLE 4
Frequency of Each Type of Function Used for Verbal-only Cognitive Scaffolding

Functions	Frequency	%
Double-checking	24	63%
Invitation	5	13%
Pumps	5	13%
Repetition	4	11%
Forced choice	0	0%
Total	38	100%

Excerpt 2 shows how verbal cognitive scaffolding serves primarily to double-check the tutee's answer or self-error correction.

Excerpt 2 (The tutee wrote the sentence "there are several man in my department" on the script and the tutor tries to scaffold the tutee to repair her own error.)

1. T: Normally man oh man
2. S: people?
3. T: men
4. S: ah:: e
5. T: plural right?
6. S: yeah

In line 1, the tutor spoke out the word "man" two times. The repetition seems to be used to deliver "something is wrong here" to the tutee. At the next turn, the tutee responded with a rising tone "people?" that depicts she may not be sure about the word (Glosser, Wiener,

& Kaplan, 1988). Right away, the tutor provided the correct answer as seen in line 3. In line 4, the tutee produced an acknowledgment “ah::” i.e., a change of mental state (Heritage, 1984) and an utterance “e”. That utterance “ah:: e” seems to signal the tutee acknowledged her error and the singular form “man” should be changed to the plural form “men.” At the next turn in line 5, the tutor provided a confirmation check “plural right?” to double-check the tutee’s previous answer. Finally, the tutee produced a positive response “yeah” in line 6.

As described in Excerpt 2, the verbal cognitive scaffolding mostly seems to function for double-checking of the tutee’s answer and error correction within the ZPD. This appears to mean that verbal cognitive scaffolding is primarily for confirmation of tutee’s response.

4. Verbal-only Instructional Scaffolding

TABLE 5
Frequency of Each Type of Function Used for Verbal-only Instructional Scaffolding

Functions	Frequency	%
Explanation	16	52%
Giving answer	7	23%
Posing question	6	19%
Giving example	1	3%
Direct instruction	1	3%
Total	31	100%

As mentioned above, It was found that the least frequent verbal-only modality was for instructional scaffolding: 27% (31 out of total 115 instances). Table 4 shows the frequency of each type of function used for verbal instructional scaffolding. As seen in Table 5, more than half (52%: 16 out of total 31 cases) of verbal instructions were used to explain why the tutee’s answer is correct or incorrect. The tutor produced more or less 20% of instructional scaffolding to request the tutor to answer a problem or to offer a right answer to the tutee. In contrast, only 1 instruction was used to give an example of how a word/rule works in a certain context or to teach a rule or principle directly.

In Excerpt 3, we can see that the tutor explains to the tutee why the tutee’s answer is not correct through verbal-only scaffolding. In this excerpt, the tutee wrote her major name in lower cases and the tutor provides instructional scaffolding by explaining why that should be capitalized.

Excerpt 3 (The tutee wrote her major in lower case on her script such as “early childhood education” and the tutor tries to correct the error by explaining why that should be capitalized.)

1. T: Ah, my::: and my
2. S: uhm:::: (3.3)
3. T: and my major is Early Childhood Education because it's a name
   ((writing down the "Early Childhood Education" on a paper))
4. S: Oh. you have (2.0)
5. T: Yeah. They should be capital letters.
6. S: okay

In this excerpt, the tutor and the tutee were talking about the tutee's major "Early Childhood Education." In line 1, the tutor invited the tutee's response by stretching the utterance "my::: and my:::". Through the invitation, the tutor seems to try to make the tutee repair her own erroneous sentence written in lower cases, i.e., early child education. However, the tutee's filled pause "uhm:::" and 3.3s pause seems to show that she fails to repair her error as seen in line 2. At the next turn in line 3, the tutor corrected the tutee's error. The tutor emphasized the capitalized letter of each word with a high volume such as "Early Childhood Education". After that, within the ZPD she added the utterance "because it's a name" that supposes to explain why each word should start with upper cases. In line 5, the tutor re-explained that they, i.e., the first letters, should be capitalized, utilizing verbal instructional scaffolding. Likewise, as described in Excerpt 3, the tutor utilized n verbal instructional scaffolding to instruct linguistic rules.

Ⅵ. CONCLUSIONS

There are only a few studies on tutor's verbal-only scaffolding in L2 writing. Although some previous studies (e.g., Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2014) probed the relationship between scaffolding and writing, they did consider verbal-only scaffolding in L1 writing. Therefore, this study aims to examine how tutor verbal-only modality plays a role in scaffolding tutee's L2 writing within the ZPD, using the descriptive analytic method. This paper explored the function of verbal-only scaffolding for L2 writing development. For that exploration, this study posed three research questions and will summarize the answers and discussions below.

First, how often does the tutor produce verbal-only scaffolding modality? The tutor employed 115 instances (out of 558, 21%) of verbal-only scaffolding. We should not ignore the verbal tutoring patterns since that scaffolding is a main part of the story to show the interactional dynamics between tutor and tutee.

Second, if so, which type of verbal-only scaffolding did the tutor produce most frequently, instruction, cognitive, or motivational and why? The tutor employed

motivational scaffolding most frequently, cognitive scaffolding second, and instruction least. This result is in contrast to the finding of Mackiewicz and Thompson's (2014) research in which the writing tutor used instruction most frequently, cognitive scaffolding second frequently, and motivational scaffolding the least. Through the finding of this study, we can see that verbal-only scaffolding serves to encourage the tutee to participate in the interaction and promote her motivation.

The last question was "How does each type of the tutor verbal-only scaffolding function for interactions between the tutor and the tutee?" With regard to the function, let me show, first how motivational scaffolding works in detail. The most frequent motivational scaffolding of verbal-only modality was positive verbal feedback such as "you are right" or "that is correct." This tends to mean that the tutor relied more on verbal-only scaffolding, especially positive feedback, for the motivational purpose. Cognitive scaffolding was used second frequently. The verbal cognitive scaffolding served mostly to double-check the tutee's answer and error correction. This implies that verbal cognitive scaffolding does not function dynamically because it serves primarily for the confirmation check of tutee's response. In some cases, verbal-only scaffolding was utilized to explain why the rule works.

Likewise, if we took close look at verbal-only scaffolding, we could see that modality has its own function for L2 tutee's writing scaffolding. Through this research we checked the different role of each verbal-only scaffolding. Therefore, we can assume that we cannot see the whole picture of interaction between tutor and tutee in the process of L2 writing until we see consider different modalities of verbal-only scaffolding . In this vein, this study contributes to helping L2 researchers and educators to understand the interactional architecture of verbal-only L2 writing scaffolding. Since this study is a case study with one tutor and one tutee, further research needs to investigate interactional dynamics using a bigger database such as more cases and participants.

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Appendix A

CA transcription conventions (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998)

(0.4) The number in parentheses indicates the duration of silence measured in tenths of a second.

(.) A dot in parentheses indicates a hearable silence less than two-tenths of a second

. , ? Punctuation marks are *not* used to indicate grammar, but are instead used to indicate the nuclear tone on a pitch unit. A period '.' indicates falling tone; a question mark '?' indicates rising tone, and a comma ',' indicates a slight rise or level tone.

:: Colons indicate the prolongation or stretching of the preceding sound. More colons indicate a longer sound.

( ) Empty parentheses indicate that something was said but that the transcriber cannot recognize what it was.

↑↓ Up and down arrows indicate a hearably greater range of pitch movement.

CAPS Relatively high volume

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: College

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