

## DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SCAFFOLDING MATERIALS FOR ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING: AN IDEA FOR TEACHING INTERMEDIATE WRITING SKILLS

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### **Abstract**

*Materials are generally used to provide a stimulus to writing or discussion, as a starting point for language input and analysis, and as ideas for organizing lesson activities. In EFL context, materials play particular important roles because they may be the only contact that learners have with English and offer the only opportunities for them to study target texts. One of the important roles of instructional materials is to provide the foundation for learners' understandings of writing and language use. They are often used to present a focus for language, such as to scaffold learners' evolving control of different texts. Materials that assist learners toward producing clear and accurate sentences and cohesive texts are obviously very important when learning to write. This paper aims at discussing the development of language scaffolding materials in the writing activity which is based on the genre-based approach. "Scaffolding" in this case is the activity to provide any kind of support for students while they are establishing their understanding of a text and their linguistic competence to create the text. The materials provide input, tasks, and instruction that can be used to encourage and as well as to challenge students. The discussion will be focused on developing materials on four main steps of scaffolding for students of English Department. They are language familiarization, model analysis and manipulation, controlled composition, and guided composition.*

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**Keywords:** *scaffolding, argumentative writing, learning materials, linguistic competence, language familiarization*

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### **Introduction**

Writing teachers usually ask a key question concerning the necessity to focus on linguistic form and when this kind of language activity occurs in writing tasks. The answer to this question is language activities are central to genre-oriented writing classes and language exercises are a staple of ESL writing instruction and most teachers acknowledge that language proficiency can seriously frustrate their L2 students' attempts to create effective texts. Moreover, despite variations in teaching practices, there is a strong case for providing learners with the linguistic and rhetorical resources they need to express themselves at

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the point they need them: when they are beginning to draft, especially disadvantaging weaker learners.

Because teachers are concerned with how learners use language, it is often a good idea to begin language scaffolding by working down from the entire text rather than approaching it in a piecemeal fashion from the bottom up. This involves considering how a text is organized at the level of the text in relation to its purpose, audience, and message, then working on how all parts of the text, such as paragraphs and sentences, are structured, organized, and coded so as to make the text effective as written communication.

This paper aims at discussing the development of language scaffolding materials in the writing activity which is based on the genre-based approach. "Scaffolding" in this case is the activity to provide any kind of support for students while they are establishing their understanding of a text and their linguistic competence to create the text. The materials provide input, tasks, and instruction that can be used to encourage and as well as to challenge students. The discussion will be focused on developing materials on four main steps of scaffolding for students of English Department. They are language familiarization, model analysis and manipulation, controlled composition, and guided composition.

#### **A. Argumentative Writing**

When we hear the word argument, do we envision a disagreement, perhaps one involving shouts, accusations, or maybe even slammed doors? Think back to the last heated exchange we had with a loved one or friend, a boss or coworker. Were we both behaving logically? Possible, like many people, we were so emotionally involved that we were not reasoning carefully or stating our argument clearly. We might have been too caught up in the heat of the moment.

In contrast to the above scenario, the writing strategy classified as argument involves persuading an audience to agree with the writer on a controversial issue (Anderson, 2002). To persuade the readers, the writer use evidence to support his/her opinion. And while argumentative essays do often include a writer's personal opinion and revolve around a heated or controversial dispute, they need to be controlled and reasonable in order to be effective.

Anderson (2002: 279) mentions some characteristics of an argumentative essay. They are as follows:

- The subject is debatable.
- The thesis makes a reasonable claim, a statement that can be supported by evidence.
- The opposition is acknowledged and refuted

- The argument is developed with reliable and up-to-date evidence
- Appeals are used to advance the writer's argument

One of the models for argument widely used is Toulmin's model. Wood (2001) states that the Toulmin model of argument consists of six parts. The first three parts are essential to all argument. They are the claim, the data (which we are calling support), and the warrant. Arguments may also contain one or more of three of additional elements. They are the backing, the rebuttal, and the qualifier.

First, **claim** is what the author is trying to prove or the main point of the argument. Support is the additional information that the writer supplies to convince the audience of the claim. Second, **support** provides the evidence, reasoning, examples, and factual information about a claim that make it possible for the audience to accept it. Then, **warrant** are the assumptions, general principles, conventions of specific disciplines, widely held values, commonly accepted beliefs, and appeals to human motives that are an important part of any argument.

Warrant itself may require its own support to make it more acceptable to an audience, particularly if the audience does not happen to share it with the writer. The writer may provide **backing** or additional evidence to back up a warrant. A **rebuttal** establishes what is wrong, invalid, or unacceptable about an argument and may also present counter-arguments, or new arguments that represent entirely different perspectives or points of view on the issue. Finally, **Qualifiers** are used to soften the degree of certainty to become probability or possibility.

Anderson (2002) proposes two orders of argument. The first model is 'claim, opposition, evidence'. After beginning an essay with a claim, the writer then acknowledges the opposition. After that, he/she elaborates the ideas with evidence to support his/her claim. The second model is 'premise, opposition, claim'. A writer may also advance his/her argument by beginning with a premise, a specific piece of evidence, proceeding with acknowledgement of opposition. Then he/she offers more evidence that refutes the opposition. Finally, he/she concludes the essay with a claim.

If viewed from genre based teaching, the genre of arguing is an important and influential language process, essential for dealing with many aspects of school knowledge and effective social participation. It is the process that involves reasoning, evaluation and persuasion (Knapp and Watkin, 2005: 187). It is the genre that covers text types, such as analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, discussion, and persuasion. Depending on the purpose of and particular context, the genre of arguing can take on different textual forms. However, the very common generic structure of this type of genre should contain a thesis, some arguments (for and/or against), and conclusion/recommendation.

Moreover, Knapp and Watkin (2005: 188-190) say that the genre of arguing exhibits some specific grammatical features. They are:

- Mental verbs are used when expressing opinion
- Certain types of connectives, such as temporal, causal conditional, and comparative, are used to maintain logical relation and to link points
- There is a movement from personal to impersonal voice
- Modality is used in arguing to position the writer and reader
- Nominalization is used in argument to allow the writer to condense information and deal with abstract issue. This process can also have the effect of removing agency.

### **Teaching/Learning Materials**

Teaching/learning material is anything that is used by teachers or students to facilitate language learning, to increase knowledge and/or language experience. Teaching material can be in form of a textbook, student workbook, recorded materials on tapes, the material in a CD-ROM, a video, materials from newspapers, or anything that presents or informs about the language being studied. Development of teaching materials is what the writers, teachers or students to provide feedback source variety of experiences designed to enhance language learning (Tomlinson, 2003: 2).

Teaching/learning materials generally consist of knowledge, skills and attitudes that students should learn in order to achieve a predetermined standard of competency. In detail, the teaching materials consist of knowledge, which is composed of facts, principles and procedures, skills and attitudes or values. Facts are material types such as object names, place names, personal name, symbol, and historical events, the name of a body part or component, and so forth. Concept materials might contain definition, nature, and the core content. Principle materials might contain formulas, postulates, paradigm, and/or theorems. Procedural material types can be either the steps to do things in sequence. Affective aspects of learning materials include providing a response, acceptance, appreciation, internalization, and assessment. Motor aspects of learning material consist of early movements, semi-routine and routine.

Graves (2001: 149) said that material development is the planning process by which a teacher, a lecturer, or an instructor creates units and lessons within those units to carry out the goal and objectives of the course. Development of material is the activity to select or customize, and organize materials and activities so that students can achieve goals that will help them achieve their learning goals. The material development is also affected by the writers' belief and understanding on the principles language teaching/learning as they apply them to specific

teaching programs and specific contexts. In this case, the material development process includes a decision about putting these learning principles into practice.

Furthermore, Graves also noted several considerations in developing the material. The First is the consideration of aspects of learners. In this case, the material must be made relevant to their experience and background, the material must be relevant to their target needs (outside of class), and the material must be relevant to their affective needs. The second aspect is learning. In this case, the material must include the process of discovery, problem solving, and analysis. The material should also develop specific strategies and skills. The third aspect is language. Material should include target relevant aspects relevant language (grammar, language functions, vocabulary, etc.). The material must integrate the four language skills (Listening, speaking, reading and writing). Furthermore, the materials must use authentic texts. The next aspect is the social context. In this case, the material must also focus on developing cross-cultural and critical social awareness. The fifth aspect is the type of activity. The material should aims for authentic task, vary roles and groupings, and vary activities and purposes. The last aspect is the material itself. The material itself must be authentic (in the form of text or realia), and varied (printed materials, visual, audio, etc.).

Hyland (2003: 85) says that learning materials have an important role in learning to write and is widely used to provide stimulus, the model and supports the process of writing itself. These materials are generally printed materials (printed materials), but now many are also emerging materials in the form of audio, visual, computer-based materials, and tangible objects. All this material acts as a provider of input and exposure to written language learners in the class received. Because the outcome or the impact of learning also depend on learning materials, we must make sure that materials used are closely related to the profile of learners, learning objectives, and teachers' belief. This means that teachers must be able to develop clear principles and procedures in the use of learning resources that exist and create their own teaching materials.

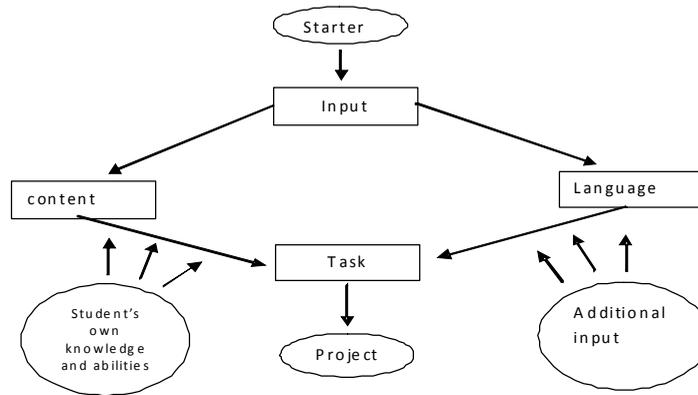
Regarding the role of teaching materials, especially textbooks, Cunningsworth (1995: 7) concludes that there are some important roles in the learning of teaching materials, namely:

- As a resource for presentation material (written and spoken)
- As a source of exercises and activities for learners of communicative interaction
- As a reference grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and others for learners
- As with a source of stimulation and ideas for activities in the classroom

- For a syllabus, which reflects the learning objectives that have been defined
- As a supporter for the less experienced teachers who want to achieve a self-confidence in teaching

With regard to writing, Hyland argues that the material is generally used to provide stimulus to the process of writing and discussion, as a starting point for input and analysis of language, and as ideas for learning activities. In the context of English as a foreign or second language, the material has an important role in learning to write in terms of (a) as a language scaffolding, (b) model, (c) references, and (d) stimulus.

The process of creating new materials and modifying existing ones are very similar. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) suggest a framework for material design that includes both adaptation and creation in a model which incorporates input, content, language, and a task. Input is typically a text in the writing class, although it may be a dialogue, video, picture, or any communication data. This provides (1) a stimulus for thought, discussion and writing, (2) new language items or the representation of earlier items, (3) a context and a purpose for writing, (4) genre models and exemplars of target texts, (4) spur to the use of writing process skills such as pre-writing, drafting, editing, (5) opportunities for information processing, and (6) opportunities for learners to use and build on prior knowledge. Content focus includes topics, situations, information, and other nonlinguistic content to generate meaningful communication. Next, language focus should involve opportunities for analyses of texts and for students to integrate new knowledge into the writing task. Finally, task includes the materials that should lead toward a communicative task, in which learners use the content and language of the unit, and ultimately to a writing assignment. These components can be described as follows:



### Language Scaffolding Materials

The above diagram shows that the input of the materials can be both in forms of content and language. Then, both of them are transferred into a wide variety of tasks. The tasks themselves are designed by considering additional input and students' own knowledge and abilities. The final product is teaching/learning materials.

Task is one of the most important elements in teaching/learning material. There are many tasks can be done to improve students' language competencies for writing. Hyland (2003) classifies these tasks into four main groups. They are language familiarization, model analysis, controlled composition and guided composition. These scaffolding tasks are designed to gradually increase learners' independence and control, moving from basic noticing activities through manipulation of models to tasks that vary the degree of guidance.

The main concern of familiarization tasks is raising awareness of language forms and patterns without requiring production. They link tasks closely with texts, drawing students' attention to how language is used in relevant contexts and helping them to see that the language they are learning is directly relevant to creating their target genres. These tasks also allow learners to examine aspects of the whole text and then go on to identify and practice selected features of grammar and vocabulary. At the text level it is possible to look at the visual layout of a text, its move structure, its use of headings, or the way it is divided into paragraphs.

The next step in language scaffolding is manipulation of models. Models are important for familiarization tasks because they encourage students to reflect on the features of target texts. In the next stage in learners' acquisition of a language competence for writing, models are sources of manipulation activities. Good models therefore provide

students with a reliable genre schema to prepare them effectively for authentic writing situations.

There are many types of activities that can be done in model-based tasks. Those kinds of activities involve students in combining, inserting, reordering, or deleting text segments. Combining tasks enable the students to match the first part of a sentence with an appropriate second part, a cause with an effect, an event with a consequence, and so on. Insertion tasks include cloze activities, where target words or features such as topic sentences have to be inserted into a text, and storyboarding, where students use their knowledge of format and topic to predict all the language needed to recreate a text from a skeleton. Deletion tasks are often designed to encourage succinctness and good style, while reordering tasks require students to (re)construct a cut-up text like a "jigsaw" or to reorder scrambled sentences or other elements into a coherent whole. In all cases students use their knowledge of a model to carry out the activity.

Model texts can also provide the foundation for controlled composition tasks, developing learners' confidence and fluency by providing a text frame to complete, a parallel text to write, a draft text to edit, or other activities that involve reworking or finishing a model. Example activities include rewriting a text from another viewpoint, writing the middle or end of a story, or writing a shorter version of a text.

As students gain familiarity with the genre, they can move away from models and use their increasing knowledge of purpose, structure, and language to create texts in specified contexts and with controlled input. Hyland (2003) says that more guided composition tasks may include:

- Information gap, where two students must exchange information to complete a writing task
- Information transfer, where information is translated into text form from a graph, a table, or notes
- Key word writing, where students write from a given set of key words
- Picture writing, where a text is produced from a picture sequence

These kinds of controlled and guided tasks are primarily intended for beginning and intermediate level students and those trying to gain familiarity with a new genre.

#### **Language Scaffolding Materials for Argumentative Writing**

Knapp and Watkins (2005) state that the genre of arguing is a language process central to dealing with content from across all of the learning areas of the curriculum. In the initial stages of teaching a topic, however, it is necessary to access content through the genres of describing and explaining. Issues that arise once students have a thorough knowledge of the field in which they are working may then be

best treated through the genre of arguing. To be meaningful and most effective, the teaching of language needs to be contextually based. In other words, a unit of work should not simply be about teaching a genre, or a specific text type, but teaching language processes through the content under focus. As teachers we need to think carefully about the connections between content and language, especially when developing language activities for our students.

The following materials are some examples of materials that can be used in language scaffolding activities for improving students' ability in producing argumentative essay. The materials are adapted from the ideas proposed by Knapp and Watkins (2005). The activities are dealing with connectives, identifying verbs, personal voice, objective/subjective argument, modality, and nominalization.

### **Mr Drake's letter to the Editor of the *Meldrum Gazette***

Sir,

Are you aware that a pile of rubbish and junk has been dumped recently in the Beatrice Binker Reserve? It constitutes a health hazard and a complete lack of civic pride. Something should be done about it immediately. The Beatrice Binker Reserve is a memorial park, and the Council should see that it is kept impeccably tidy at all times. I wish to see this abhorrence removed immediately.

Henry Drake, rate-payer

#### *1. Identifying Verbs*

The activity might include asking students to identify the verbs in their draft and to record them on a grid under the headings of action, mental, and relational verbs. Investigate when students have used mental verbs.

- How many students have a mental verb in their thesis and in the reiteration of their thesis?
- Why might a mental verb be used in these stages of the text?
- Have they used mental verbs in other stages of their text?

As an introduction to the notion of personal voice, record some of these responses on the board; for example,

- I think that Mr. Drake is wrong in calling the playhouse in the local reserve an abhorrence.
- I believe the local kids should be congratulated for building the castle in the Beatrice Binker Reserve.

Ask students for other opening sentences which do not use a mental verb and record these responses in a separate list. These examples might include:

- You shouldn't remove the Junk Castle from the Beatrice Binker Reserve because kids need somewhere to play.
- You shouldn't listen to angry old men who want to spoil children's fun, even if he is a ratepayer.

## 2. *Personal Voice*

Responses which don't make use of the second person pronoun *you* should be recorded in a third list. These responses might include:

- The local children's playhouse should not be removed from the local reserve.
- Mr. Drake's letter which says there is a pile of rubbish in the Beatrice Binker Reserve is wrong.

Ask students to identify the personal pronouns in each group of sentences. Discuss the use of voice in each of the different opening sentences by posing the following questions:

- Why is the first person pronoun *I* used in the first group of sentences? Explain that the writer is giving his or her personal viewpoint. This is called the writer's voice or personal voice.
- In what way is the first and second set of sentences different?

Focus discussion on the use of the second person pronoun, *You*.

- Who is the *You* in these sentences? Explain to students that the *You* is the reader.
- Why does the writer start the sentence this way? Explain that the writer is speaking directly to the reader. This is a different example of personal voice.
- What other types of writing do these sentences sound like?

Explain how these sentences sound very much like instructions. Discuss other examples.

- Is the writer's voice obvious in the third set of sentences?

Explain that the writer's voice is not obvious and that this is called impersonal voice.

- How is the audience addressed in these sentences?
- In what way is the use of personal and impersonal voice different?
- Why is it important to consider how the audience is addressed when writing an argument?

Conduct exercises on moving from the personal to the impersonal voice. Refer to the school issues discussed earlier in the unit outline; for example,

Personal	Impersonal
I think the school needs more playground equipment	The school needs more playground equipment
You shouldn't throw things in class	Things shouldn't be thrown in class

### 3. Objective/Subjective Arguments

Ask students to consider the shift that has occurred in the grammar in moving from the personal to the impersonal voice by posing the following questions:

- Which example sounds more like an opinion and which seems more like a fact?
- Which sounds more authoritative or important?
- Could the different forms be used for different audiences?
- In what circumstances are the different forms more appropriate?

### 4. Modality

The grammatical resources of voice and modality are closely linked. Together they function as the key rhetorical devices of arguing, yet they can be examined from the earliest years of schooling. To begin an examination of modality, return to some of the students' opening 'I think' statements. As well as indicating the personal voice of the writer, ask students what other effect the use of *I think* has on the statement. That is, it provides some qualification or modality. The writer is saying *I think* this, it is only my viewpoint and nobody else's. In certain circumstances this may be a more effective way of expressing opinion. The use of impersonal voice may be far too dogmatic. Remind students that arguing is not merely about presenting an argument, but also about convincing the writer of its worth.

Examine other ways of qualifying or modalising statements with students. Write a proposition on the board; for example,

- Running in the hall is dangerous.

Ask students for ways they might modalise this statement and record their responses; for example,

- Running in the hall could be dangerous.
- Running in the hall might be dangerous.
- It is possible that running in the hall is dangerous.
- It is probable that running in the hall is dangerous.
- Running in the hall is certainly dangerous.

Ask students to consider the audience for each of these statements.

Who would be more likely to use 'is' as opposed to 'might'?

The degree of modality could also be considered. Have students discuss whether a word is expressing low, medium or high modality, and record their responses on a class grid, as below:

Low	Medium	High
may	will	must
possibly	probably	certainly

Depending on the ability of students and the time available within a unit, students could also begin to identify the range of grammatical forms that express modality; for example,

Nouns	Auxiliary verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
possibility	can	possible	possibly
	might		

Return to Mr Drake's letter and discuss with students how he uses modality in his argument.

### 5. Nominalization

Nominalization is a grammatical feature of the arguments of more mature writers in that it is essential for dealing with abstract knowledge. It begins to become evident in students' writing as early as mid to late primary. The process of nominalization can also be taught to students as an editing strategy. The knowledge of nominalization, and its effect on writing, can assist students in making the transition from a purely speech-oriented form of writing, which is heavily action, or verb based, to a more thing, or noun-based written construction.

As a starting point for understanding nominalization, ask students to refer to the action verbs they have already identified in their draft exposition. Compile a list of these verbs on the board and as a class exercise turn these processes (verbs) into things (nouns); for example,

remove/removal  
 need to play/recreation  
 should be congratulated/congratulations  
 building/construction

Choose a couple of these verbs and ask students for the sentence in which they are found. Record these sentences on the board, and with the class rewrite the sentence using the noun form of the verb; for example,

Before the process of nominalization	After the process of nominalization
You shouldn't remove the Junk Castle from the Beatrice Binker Reserve because kids need somewhere to play.	The removal of the Junk Castle from the Beatrice Binker Reserve would seriously impede local children's recreation.
I believe the local kids should be congratulated for building the	Congratulations are due to the local kids for the construction of

castle in the Beatrice Binker Reserve.	the castle in the Beatrice Binker Reserve.
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Ask students to edit their draft expositions using the same process. Explain that they need not use all the noun forms, only those that they consider may improve their draft. Depending on the ability level of students and the time available, consideration can be given to using a range of these grammatical editing strategies in completing the revision of the draft expositions.

### Concluding Remark

Vygotsky's (1978) views of collaborative learning and Bruner's (1986) ideas of scaffolding are two influential things in genre-based approach. This approach is often presented in the form of a cycle of teaching and learning which is designed to enable students understand what is to be learned and to build their confidence and ability to write effectively. Intermediate L2 writers require greater support during the early stages of working with an unfamiliar genre. The teacher scaffolds their progress by providing information, appropriate language, and opportunities for guided practice. When they are able to control this new genre, the scaffolding matters are gradually removed and more responsibility shifted to the students.

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