EFL Instructors' Application of Scaffolding in Writing Lessons: The Case of Wollega University

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Abstract: The study aimed at exploring the extent to which EFL teachers scaffold their learners in the writing classrooms of Communicative English Language Skills II. To this end, a case study design in which six English instructors from Wollega University were selected purposively was used. They were video recorded while teaching writing lessons. Totally, fifteen sessions of the instructors were observed and data were taken from nine sessions. Then, the data were transcribed into text. Next, interactional episodes were separately identified and coded for contingency which involves scaffolding based on van de Pol's (2012) model of contingency teaching. The finding indicated that there was limited interaction in the writing classroom as teachers dominate the class. Besides, the interactions available in the writing classrooms were the traditional initiation-response-feedback (IRF) patterns that hinder students' learning and most of the extended interactions were characterized by short students' turns. Thus, it was concluded that teachers were not properly scaffolding the development of students' writing. This urges teachers to give attention to the concept of scaffolding in their teaching to provide proper assistance for their learners.

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1. Introduction

The core function of the teacher in the classroom is to help students to show progress in their learning. The help is termed scaffolding which is the promising metaphor for quality teaching (Michell and Sharpe, 2005). It was introduced by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) to describe temporary assistance offered by more knowledgeable others, a teacher or peer in this case, to support learning till independent knowledge construction (Gibbons, 2015; Hammond and Gibbons, 2006; Fisher and Frey, 2010). The help is only provided when the task or the concept is beyond the learner's current level of comprehension. In this case, the teacher guides the learner so that the learner reaches his/her potential level of competence. Although there are errors, the teacher's feedback and prompt enable the learner to achieve the goal of the task provided. As the learner progresses in mastering the task, the teacher gradually minimizes the scaffolding and then removes it totally as the learner becomes independent.

Here, the assumption drawn from the concept is that second language acquisition is facilitated when teachers provide the learners with the necessary assistance through the process of scaffolding. Supporting the effectiveness of scaffolding, Dare and Polias (2001: 102) argue that scaffolding "is most effective for the language development of all English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners when it is informed by understandings of a functional model of language, and when a language to talk about language-a meta-language- is shared as part of the scaffolding itself". This means instructors use the language to help students with the language itself. In this regard, the instructors are expected to identify the learners' actual level through interaction as learning is embodied in interaction (Seedhouse and Walsh, 2010).

It has to be noted that every talk in the classroom may not contribute to the learners' learning. Interaction in the classroom is meaningful when it helps the learners to mediate meaning from the classroom discourse. Kumaravadivelu (2006) also explains this idea by saying an input available but not comprehended is no more than a noise. Pritchard (2009: x) contends that "Effective learning is learning which is lasting and capable of being put to use in new and differing situations".

Effective teaching is not imparting knowledge into the learners' minds as it was viewed traditionally. It is rather helping the learners to construct knowledge through collaboration and socialization (McKenzie, 1999; Burns and Richards, 2009). This view is supported by the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Ohta, 2016; Walsh, 2006; Hammond and Gibbons, 2006). This process, where the learners develop their knowledge through shaping and refining, cannot be achieved overnight. It is achieved through scaffolding which instructors offer based on the learners' knowledge gap, and slowly removed as they become independent. By fulfilling this condition, it is possible to make learners show effective progress in language learning in this context. This could result in quality education in which students are provided the necessary assistance to achieve the desired goal (Totanes and Amarles, 2020). The advantage of doing this is many folds when applied to the foreign language classroom. The reasons are, among others, the learners' need to gain knowledge base training to develop their knowledge, and their need to become effective users of the language. If this is to be achieved, teachers have a responsibility to equip students in many ways as suggested by Burns and Richards (2009).

However, this issue seems neglected in the Ethiopian context as there is great dissatisfaction with the learners' English language performances, especially with the writing skills of learners in the country's context (Zeleke, 2017; Feda, 2014). Though the language is the medium of instruction beginning from secondary school in the country, and significant effort has been made to improve the situation including material and syllabus changes and the setting of quality control systems (Teka, 2009), still many are complaining that the problem is still increasing (Birbirso, 2014).

There are numerous of evidence that scaffolding can help learners to improve their writing skills. There are also researchers who focused on scaffolding in the writing classroom in specific. For example, Rababah and Almwajeh (2018), Faraj (2015), Le and Nguyen (2010), Ningrum (2012), and Kuiper, Smit, De Wachter, and Elen (2017) are some of these studies. Rababah and Almwajeh (2018) made a qualitative study aimed at investigating scaffolding strategies and techniques utilized by EFL

teachers in their writing instructions. The study was conducted on teachers selected with convenience sampling using interviews and observations. The results revealed that eight interviewees gave feedback about the use of scaffolding to enhance students' creativity in writing. Faraj (2015) conducted a study at Koya University/English Language Department with the aim of presenting the effect of scaffolding on EFL students' writing ability throughout the writing process. To this end, students started with a writing process approach such as Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing, and ended with Publishing. This helped to investigate the effect of teachers' scaffolding with the teaching writing process on improving students' writing. It was found out that students' achievement in post-test compared to pre-test revealed significant improvement. The study by Le and Nguyen (2010) and Ningrum (2012) aimed at looking at the effect of peer scaffolding on students' writing performance. It was found that students' writing improved when they helped each other.

Kuiper *et al*. (2017) aimed to explore how genre-based writing instruction can be used to scaffold students' writing. A five-week subject-specific writing was given as an intervention to see the scaffolded genre-based writing instruction's effect. Using a coding scheme for interactional scaffolding strategies, five interaction fragments were analyzed against the background of designed scaffolding and learning goals. The fragments indicated that the interplay of designed scaffolding (instructional materials and activities) and interactional scaffolding (teacher-student interactions) promoted students' writing performance over time.

Though there is evidence that scaffolding is effective in improving the students' writing as the core responsibility of the teacher is doing so, the writing skills of students appear to be below the expected standard at different educational levels in the country. For example, Zeleke (2017) examined the Ethiopian public university entrants' writing skills in the English language at Hawassa University through random sampling of the colleges and convenient sampling of student participants. The participants were asked to write an argumentative essay of five paragraphs to determine their writing abilities. The study found that the students are very poor at each aspect of writing.

There are some local studies that focus on scaffolding (Terefa and Barkessa, 2019; Enyew and Yigzaw, 2015; Buli, Basizew, and Abdisa, 2017). Terefa and Barkessa (2019) did an experimental study to see the effects of scaffolding strategies on high school students' writing and the result indicated that the strategies have a significant contribution to improving the learners' paragraph writing while the rest two used the same design to see the effects of scaffolding strategies on students' reading skills. Their result indicated that the scaffolding strategies use improved the students' performance of reading skills.

However, it seems that there are no studies that focus on the detailed exploration of EFL teachers' scaffolding through interaction in their writing classroom in higher education, as far as the researchers' knowledge is concerned. Hence this article aimed at looking at the extent of scaffolding and the nature of contingent interaction in the writing lessons. This is because the, learners' failure could be attributed to the teacher (Nunan 2003; Dam, 2000; Archana and Rani, 2017; TESOL, 2017). Had there been the appropriate way of scaffolding learners at higher institutions, there could have been an improvement in learners' language skills, and writing in specific according to this study (Dare and Polias, 2001).

2. Research Methods

2.1. Research Design

Case study design (Yin, 2003a; 2003b) was used to carry out this study as "It is a method of study in-depth rather than breadth" (Kothari, 1990: 113). In this study, a case study was preferred as it enables a careful and complete narration of the way teachers help learners in the classroom.

2.2. Research Setting

Wollega University was chosen purposively for two reasons. First, a tracer study conducted on the employability of the university's graduates showed that the graduates lack writing skills in general.

The tracer study was conducted by the university based on graduates of 2009-2014 students in 2016. Second, since one of the researchers is a staff member of English language and Literature at the university, there will be an opportunity to be a part of the solution in the future if any.

2.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

As this study is qualitative in nature, the issue of the sample size usually depends on the saturation of the data (Charmaz, 2006). However, Creswell (2014) suggested that four to five cases are acceptable stating that there is no rule of thumb to determine the number of participants to be involved in a qualitative data study. Accordingly, six participant teachers were purposively selected because of their rich experiences and varied level of educational levels. Besides, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner when using purposive sampling. Three of them were Ph.D. candidates, two were Ph.D. holders and one was an MA holder, and the minimum experience of the teachers is 9 years.

2.4. Data Gathering Instrument

Three sessions of three teachers and two sessions of the other three teachers were observed thereby video recording. Field notes were taken while observing. This supported the inclusion of the non-interactional activities of the teacher that could contribute to scaffold learners' learning. The first session of the observation was used as familiarization. Two sessions of three instructors and a session of the other three were used as the data source. Taking care of aspects to be observed, the researchers focused on interactional episodes as it is believed scaffolding could occur in them. Since the observer directly gathered the data needed from the participants without asking them, classroom observation enabled the observer to tap into the issue (Yin, 2011). It also helped to eliminate subjective bias.

Furthermore, since classroom observation is less demanding (Kothari, 2004) to the participants of the study, it was used to look at how the teacher or learner(s) communicated in the writing classroom. In the case of this study, thus, the observation was used to look at the actual practices, specifically the scaffolding of EFL teachers and students in writing lessons.

2.5. Method of Data Analysis

To analyze the data, in the beginning, familiarization with the qualitative data was carried out through watching to the videos that were recorded many times followed by transcription. The transcription was made by stating what the teachers or the students said in detail. After the transcription, interactional episodes concerning any issue were selected. These interactions include the content, classroom procedure, classroom behavior, and others. However, there must be at least three turns where the teacher or a student can initiate the interaction.

The interactional episodes were coded using the Model of Contingency Teaching (MCT) adapted from Van de Pol (2012) as shown below.
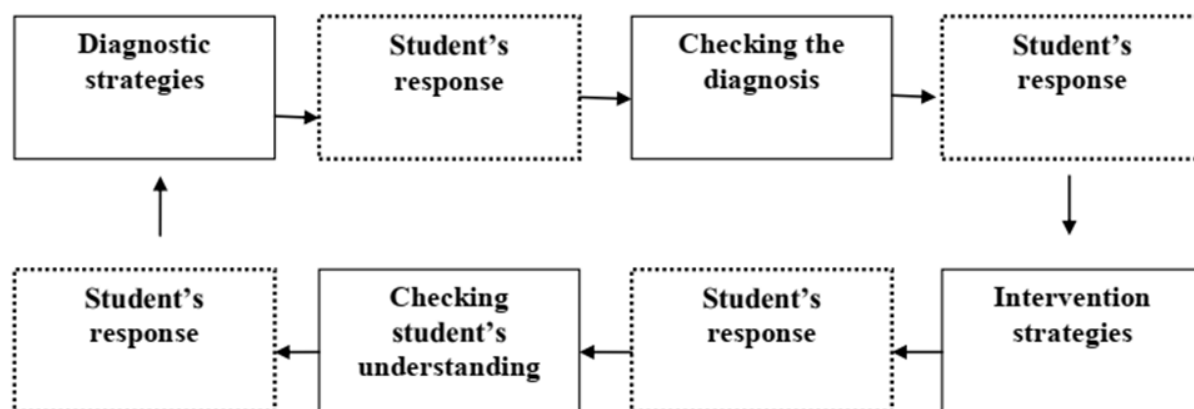
Figure 1: Model of Contingency Teaching (taken from van de Pol (2012))

This model was preferred for two main reasons. First, this model was used to measure scaffolding at the micro level which refers to the teacher's instant action to satisfy learners' immediate needs in the classroom (Razgulina-Lytsy, 2012) while other models like that of Spycher (2017) and Afitska (2015), for example focus on the macro scaffolding which involves process. Second, the model is relatively easy and clear to measure scaffolding objectively. According to this model, there are four steps that the teachers should pass through during an interaction to scaffold learners. The steps include four steps. The first is diagnostic strategy (DS) in which the teacher asks or looks at the student's work to identify their knowledge gap. The second is checking the diagnostic (CD) in which the teacher checks whether students have understood his/her question or understandings clearly through a question or repeating the students' utterances. The third is intervention strategy (IS) in which the teacher scaffolds students based on their gaps through different scaffolding strategies, and finally, checking of understanding (CU) which helps the teacher to confirm whether the students have taken the intervention as an input or not. Each step of the model is followed by students' responses.

By doing so, the feature of scaffolding i.e. contingency was measured. Each teacher's turns were coded with steps of the model, while the student's/s' turns were coded using four categories that include: *students' understanding cannot be determined (SUx), poor understanding (SU0), partial students' understanding (SU1), and good students' understanding (SU2)*. After coding, the episodes were analyzed for contingency teaching by counting the number of episodes containing the steps of the model to scaffold learners appropriately in the writing classrooms. Then the counting was changed into percentages to analyze the results.

In the measurement of scaffolding, an intervention was considered the basic element of the scaffolding process as this helps the learners to gain some insight from the teacher. However, this needs to identify what the learners already know about the content because schemata have a significant role in understanding the new information or intervention that the teacher is providing. Hence, in this research, if the first three strategies of the model of contingency teaching were used, the interaction is considered as contingent interaction, which means there is scaffolding in the interaction (Razgulina-Lytsy, 2012; Van de Pol, 2012; Anwar, Irawan, and As'ari, 2016). However, it was considered non-contingent when only one or two steps of the model were used in an interaction.

3. Results
3.1. The Extent of Scaffolding based on MCT
According to the data, most class time was taken by the teachers, and there was limited teacher-student(s) interaction in the writing lessons. Besides, there was a great variation in the number and length of interactions per session ranging from 0 to 17 among the teachers in their writing classroom. For example, T6 has never used interaction at all in a whole period. The teacher came to the class, tried to revise what had been done in the previous class, and then told the learners that they were going to write a descriptive paragraph. The teacher waited for almost all of the period until the

students' finished writing the paragraph. As opposed to this teacher, T1 used 17 interactional episodes during the first session of the classroom observation. The variation was not only among the teachers but also between the first and second session of the observed writing session with a given teacher. For example, as can be seen from Table 1 below, T3 used nine interactional episodes during the first observation while he used only two during the second observed session. The same is true for contingent teaching. That means, there was a great variation among the teachers in applying contingent teaching in which scaffolding occurred. Thus, Table 1 presents the data for each teacher with the number of contingent and non-contingent interactional episodes.

Table 1. Summary of EFL teachers' contingent teaching according to the MCT

Teacher's code	Total number of the episodes	Contingent		Non-contingent	
		No. of episodes	%	No. of episodes	%
T1	17	8	47.05	9	52.94
T2	9	1	11.11	8	88.88
T3	9	3	33.33	6	66.66
T4	14	0	0	14	100
T5	16	9	56.25	7	43.75
T6	0	0	0	0	0
T1 2	6	5	83.33	1	16.66
T2 2	10	7	70	3	30
T3 2	2	1	50	1	50
Total	83	34	40.96	49	59.03

Table 1 depicts that 83 interactional episodes were identified from the six teachers' lessons, of which 34 (40.96%) were contingent while 49 (59.03%), which means majority of the interactions, were found to be non-contingent. This signifies that there is limited scaffolding in the writing classrooms. In an effective writing classroom, the teacher had to use at least three of the steps of MCT.

According to the MCT, contingency is considered when the teacher and the learners follow the cycle in the model because it is believed that if the steps are taken, there can be a mutual understanding of the learners and the teacher. Hence, its existence determines the effectiveness of instruction in any classroom and the writing classroom in particular.

The interactions were broadly divided into two based on their purposes. The first categories are those interactions that were used for regulative purposes. There were ten (12.04%) interactional episodes of such kind. These kinds of interactions were used either to set the procedures of the classroom or to give instruction for students. They could also be used to explain concepts related to the content indirectly. The second categories are those interactions that were directly related to the content of the lesson, writing in this case. This comprises the majority (87.95%) of the interactions. This indicates that the majority of the contingent interactions were content-related talks which are believed to help the learners to benefit from the interactions.

3.1.1. Contingent interactions
From the total 83 interactional episodes, 34(40.96%) contingent interactional episodes were identified from the nine writing sessions of the teachers. While, 31 (91.17%) of this were content-related interactions, and 3(8.3) were for classroom regulative purposes.

Contingent episodes have different lengths with varying patterns of the steps of the MCT. The contingent interactions vary in length from 51 turns to 3 turns, and they begin with different steps of the model including diagnostic strategy, checking the diagnostic, intervention strategy, and checking students' understanding. The longer the turns of the interactions, the more they tend to include all the steps of the model. There were interactional episodes that began with a diagnostic strategy and went

on with the subsequent steps including all of them. In the following example of the interactions, we can see that the teacher used all the steps.

Extract 1

1. T1: Aman? (DS)
2. S2: a paragraph is a group of sentence discusses a given topic (SU2)
3. T1: a group of sentence that discuss? (CD)
4. S2: one main idea (SU2)
5. T1: good. One main idea. A group of sentence ok. (invite another student) (CD)
6. S3: a group of sentence with one idea. (SU2)
7. T1; a group of sentence, so should I say (wrote different unrelated sentences on the blackboard and asked the learners if that is a paragraph) a paragraph or no? (IS) If you say 'yes' why? If you say 'no', why? (CSU)
8. S3: no (SU1)
9. T1: why? (CSU)
10. S3: because not discuss (SU1)
11. T1: you said the group of words (CD)
12. S3: I said the group of sentences. (SU2)
13. T1: again this is a group of sentences (IS)
14. S3: Sentences do not go together (SU2)
15. T1: do not go together why? (CD)
16. S3: because they don't discuss one main idea. (SU2)
17. T1: one main idea (IS)
18. S3: yes (SU2)
19. T1: so? (CSU)
20. S3: so the sentences do not form paragraph. (SU2)
21. T1: ok, another. Paragraph or not? (invited a student) (DS)
22. S4: (inaudible) (SUx)
23. T1: make louder please? (DS)
24. S4: no (SU1)
25. T1: no, why? (DS)
26. S4: the paragraph has no topic sentence (SU1)
27. T1: topic sentence? (CD)
28. S4: yea (SU2)
29. T1: what does it mean topic sentence? (DS)
30. S4: (inaudible) SUx)
31. T1: I'm not happy; I'm not clear. (Invited another student) (DS)
32. S5: because paragraph is above five lines and one hundred and ten word. (SU1)
33. T1: paragraph is above five line and one hundred ten words? If not just that is not a paragraph. (invite another student) (CD)
34. S6: a paragraph is a group of words (SU1)
35. T1: a group of words… (CD)
36. S6: that is well organizes (SU2)
37. T1: so that is clear to be well organized. (IS)
38. S6: and which has only one topic (SU2)
39. T1: what about you? (to another student). Paragraph or not, first of all. (DS)
40. S7: not (SU2)
41. T1: not, so what? (DS)
42. S7: (inaudible) (SUx)

43.T1: the next? anyone who can say this is a paragraph? Raise your hands. Paragraph or not? ቁ ሱ ም ዝም መ ጽ ሃ ፉ ም ዝም (an Amharic proverb to show all are silent) paragraph ነ ዉ ወ ይ ስ አ ይ ደ ለ ም? (Is it a paragraph or not?) (CSU)

44.S: አ ይ ደ ለ ም (not) (SU2)

45.T1: ም ክ ኒ ያ ቱ ስ (why?) (CSU)

46.S: አ ን ድ አ ይ ነ ት አ ይ ደ ለ ም (they are not the same) (SU1)

47.T1: አ ን ድ አ ይ ነ ት አ ይ ደ ለ ም ማ ለ ት ም ን ማ ለ ት ነ ዉ? What do you mean?) አ ን ድ አ ይ ነ ት አ ይ ደ ለ ም ማ ለ ት እ ስ ኪ በ ም ታ ዉ ቁ ት ቋ ን ቋ እ ኔ ብ ዙ እ ሰ ማ ለ ሁ እ ን ግ ሊ ዘ ኛ ፣ አ ማ ር ኛ ና ኦ ሮ ም ኛ እ ሰ ማ ለ ሁ እ ኺ ን ገ ሩ ኛ ነ ዉ አ ይ ደ ለ ም አ ይ ደ ለ ም ብ ላ ች ሃ ል ለ ም ን በ ም ታ ዉ ቁ ት ቋ ን ቋ (tell me with any language you know. I can hear three languages- English, Afan Oromo and Amharic. You said it is not; why?) (DS)

48.S: not a paragraph (SU2)

49.T1: እ ኺ (ok) why? (CSU)

50.S: because a paragraph …this doesn't have a coherence. (SU2)

51.T1: good. You said paragraph is combination of sentences that focus on one idea. One here the combination of sentence here full criteria. The first one is a set of sentences. In this regard this fulfills. Because first sentence, second sentence, third sentence (the teacher shows on the blackboard) one, two (IS)

   Note: DS= diagnostic strategy, IS= intervention strategy, CD= checking the diagnostic, CSU= checking students' understanding, SU=students' understanding, SUx= cannot be determined, SU1= partial understanding, SU2=good understanding.

In the above episode, the teacher used a diagnostic strategy by inviting a learner to tell what a paragraph is. In the second turn, the learner responded. Then in the third and fifth turns, the teacher used checking the diagnostic strategies to confirm the student's responses. Then, the teacher used the intervention strategy by writing a collection of sentences on the blackboard to help students recognize whether a collection of sentences can form a paragraph. In the same turn, the teacher used a question to check if the students have recognized what a paragraph is. Thus, according to MCT, the first seven turns of the interaction are contingent. This means, there is scaffolding in these turns.

In the ninth turn, the teacher asked the students to justify their answers. After the students responded, in turn, ten, the teacher used checking the diagnostic strategy. Then, the teacher used an intervention strategy to help students recognize the difference between a group of sentences that can form a paragraph and a group of sentences that cannot form a paragraph. After using the checking diagnostic and intervention strategies respectively in the subsequent two turns, the teacher used the last step of the framework which is checking the students' understanding in the nineteenth turn which forms contingent interaction once more. In this case, again, the teacher used all the steps of the MCT framework.

In the other turns of the interactional episode, the teacher used at least three steps of the MCT including diagnostic strategy, checking the diagnostic and intervention strategy, which shows that the teacher scaffolded the students in the interaction.

The contingent interactions began with different steps of the model. Accordingly, the majority of them, 45 (58.82%), began with the first step of the model which is the diagnostic strategy while 12 (35.29%) of them began with intervention strategies and one began with checking students' understanding. This is evident that most of the interactional episodes began with the correct step of the model, as the teachers were expected to identify the knowledge of the learners before intervening. The sequences of the steps of the model were not mandatory for the interactions to be contingent. For example, the following interactional episode began with the intervention strategy and became contingent because there are two other steps of the model next to that.

Extract 2

T2: We basically focus up on the one better. Choosing topic and then narrowing the topic and then what else? (IS)

S1: (inaudible) (SUX)

T2: from today's topic…. Today's. After we chat on the topic then? (DS)

S2: Organizing or gathering ideas (SU2)

S3: generating idea (SU2)

T2: Generating idea, (CD) so look it says "generating idea" hear under pre-writing the main idea is generating idea. (IS)

Note: DS= diagnostic strategy, IS= intervention strategy, CD= checking the diagnostic, CSU= checking students' understanding, SU=students' understanding, SUx= cannot be determined, SU1= partial understanding, SU2=good understanding.

In this example, the teacher was telling his students what they should do to write something saying that one should choose a topic first and then narrow down the topic before beginning with writing in the first turn of the interaction. This is an intervention strategy-probing. Then, in the third turn, the teacher asked for the step that comes after narrowing down the topic in the process of writing which is considered a diagnostic strategy. Next in the sixth turn, the teacher repeated the student's utterance. That is checking the diagnostic step of the MCT model. In the same turn, the teacher used an intervention strategy which is provided through explanation. Hence, the three turns of the teacher after the first turn forms contingent interaction. As was indicated in this same section earlier, there were about 35% of contingent interactions that were formed like this.

Most three turn interactional episodes cannot fulfill the criteria of contingency as the teacher takes only two turn's model. In such cases, usually, the teacher used a diagnostic strategy and intervention strategy. In this study, 23 interactional episodes which comprise 27.71% of the total episodes were three turns. This indicates that the IRF (initiation, response, feedback) which are common in a traditional classroom are still common in writing classes nowadays. This does not contribute to the development of students' cognition. It is believed that the IRF pattern of interaction limits the opportunity in which students extend their interaction that can help them to construct knowledge or reshape the information they already had through talk with teacher.

However, in some cases, the teacher used two strategies in a single turn. Such interactions began with the diagnostic strategy in the first turn and included checking the diagnostic and intervention strategy together frequently in the second turn of the teacher. Consequently, the interaction becomes contingent. Two interactional episodes were found in this study with this feature. The following episode is an example.

Extract 3

T4: What does brainstorming mean? What does brainstorming mean? Nobody knows? You have learned. Yes, sis? (DS)

S: thinking about the topic SU2)

T4: thinking about what?-what we are going to what?-write. Or another answer, good. (CD) Another answer, when you see this topic, "my problem on note-taking" this is your topic. (IS)

Note: DS= diagnostic strategy, IS= intervention strategy, CD= checking the diagnostic, CSU= checking students' understanding, SU=students' understanding, SUx= cannot be determined, SU1= partial understanding, SU2=good understanding.

As can be seen from the above example the teacher used a diagnostic strategy in the first turn by asking what brainstorming means followed by checking the diagnostic strategy in which the teacher recast what the learner said in the last turn. It is in the same turn that the teacher explained that brainstorming is thinking about what we are going to write, and this served as an intervention strategy. Therefore, though the last step of MCT was not included, such interactional episodes were considered contingent in this study.

Longer interactional episodes are very helpful to the students' cognitive development. However, in this study, it was confirmed that only 27 interactional episodes (32.53%) contain more than one digit

turns. On the other hand, even if these interactions were a bit longer, students were involved by giving short responses. This shows that most of the interaction between the teacher and the students is short and may not help the learners to express their thought broadly. This may hinder critical thinking, which is the fundamental purpose of education at the university level.

Generally, according to the model of contingency teaching, there was limited scaffolding in the writing classroom. Boldly, the missing element in the writing classrooms is assessing what the students know about the lesson. According to the principle of the MCT, teachers are expected to diagnose the prior knowledge of the learners before providing intervention. However, like that of the traditional classrooms, the teachers provide much information to their learners. In the next section, such interactions were dealt with in detail.

3.1.2. Non-contingent (Non-scaffolded) interactions

Many of the interactions between teachers and student(s) were non-contingent in this study. As was indicated, of the 83 interactions, 49 of the interactions (59.03%) were non-contingent. This implies that in the majority of the interactional episodes, there was no effective scaffolding.

From Table 1, it is possible to learn that the majority of the teachers' interactional episodes are non-contingent except for the second session of T2. For example, T4 never used the steps of the MCT framework properly in a single case. This signifies that the teacher did not try to diagnose what the learners have about the content ahead of his intervention or he did not provide the intervention based on the learners' knowledge gap. Similarly, the majority of the teachers' interactions, ranging from 52.94-to 88.88%, were non-contingent for the same reason.

Another lesson from Table 1 is that the different sessions of the same teacher have different results. For example, in the first sessions of T1, T2, and T3, non-contingent interactions dominated while in their second sessions contingent interactions dominated their classes. Though this happened, in general, the majority (59.03%) of the interactional episodes in the writing classroom were non-contingent. This tells that EFL teachers were not properly carrying out the diagnosis of the learners' current level of knowledge about the content to be taught, did not check the diagnosis, provide intervention or check the students' understanding in most of their interactions in writing classrooms.

Non-contingent interactions have two possible patterns. The first pattern involved the same steps of the model in all turns of the teacher while the second involves only two steps of the model. For example, the teacher used only an intervention strategy in the following extract.

Extract 4

T1: It's individual work. Show by your pen, please. Indicate your friend's weakness correction problems and the like; either by underlining or deleting. Show your feedback by writing; by underlining. Mostly indicate it by any means. Indicate the problem. (IS)

T1: (after a while) hurry up please. (IS)

T1: is it yours? (IS)

S: it's his (SU2)

T1: x (calling a student's name) (IS)

S: yes

T1: hurry up (IS)

T1: (after a while) finished? You finished corrections, feedbacks and proofreading? (IS)

S: yes (SU1)

T1: I told you please indicate the problem. While your read just you can underline; you can circle; you can indicate the problem. …………..Even when you underline, when you give your comments on writing, you have to have… to you put signs with regards of the problem you underlined. (IS)

Note: DS= diagnostic strategy, IS= intervention strategy, CD= checking the diagnostic, CSU= checking students' understanding, SU=students' understanding, SUx= cannot be determined, SU1= partial understanding, SU2=good understanding.

In the above example, the teacher was facilitating peer evaluation on students' writing. He used an intervention strategy in all of his turns. Usually, teachers used more intervention strategies even without identifying the level of understanding of the learners. As a result, the interaction was not contingent and this shows that the teacher did not scaffold in the interaction.

When only two steps were used, the possible combinations were the diagnostic strategy and checking the diagnostic, diagnostic strategy and intervention strategy or intervention strategy and checking the diagnostic strategy. Below is an example of non-contingent interaction which involves only two different steps of the model:

Extract 5

T1: What is the topic? (DS)

S4: Market (SU1)

T1: can you tell us the grammar problem? (DS)

S4: (silent) (SUx)

T1: can you tell us the spelling problem? (DS)

S4: "market" (it was capitalized) (SU1)

T1: another? (DS)

S5: (was not audible) (SUx)

T1: make loud; make loud. (DS)

S5: (the student couldn't read the paper. (SU0)

T1: "ና እስቲ" (come on) (invite another student to read the paper) (DS)

S6: (read the paper) (SU2)

T1: would you tell us on your way about the paper you read? Give comment (IS)

S6: (he read the paper again) (SU2)

T1: anybody who can tell us the core activity you are given so far? Who can tell us or judge? Any voluntary who can comment on his friend's work? I want you to focus on the topic was about my village. I don't know where you bring the topics like "the market", "the weather". (IS)

In the above example, the teacher used a diagnostic strategy consecutively in six turns by asking questions. The last two turns of the teacher were intervention strategies. Hence, the interaction resulted in non-contingent interaction because only two steps of the model were involved. This interactional episode is evidently indicates that longer interactions can be non-contingent according to the MCT.

4. Discussions

As was already mentioned, 83 interactional episodes were identified from the six teachers' lessons, and of these, 34 (40.96%) were contingent since they include the contingency steps considered in the MCT model. However, all of the contingent interactions may not include all the four steps of the model because the last step may not exist in most cases as has been indicated before. The interactions can begin with different steps of the model as indicated in the previous section. Many of the interactions that were identified as contingent in this study include only three steps of the model of contingency teaching excluding the last step- checking to understand. This is because this step is limited in this study. Besides, much of the previous investigations on scaffolding have only focused on the assistance aspect of scaffolding (e.g., Pino-Pasternak, Whitebread and Tolmie, 2010; Van de Pol, Volman, Oort, and Beishuizen, 2015), and these previous studies suggest that it is mainly the contingency of teacher support that determines the effectiveness of the support in fostering students' learning (Chiu, 2004; Meloth and Deering, 1999; Webb, Franke, De, Chan, Freund, Shein and Melkonian, 2009).

According to this study, though there were contingent interactions in which the teacher and students' intersubjectivity is there, learners' responses were short. This limited the benefit of the students from the interactions. Walsh (2006) recommends that students' turn has to be more than a clause to help

them to construct their knowledge. Walsh (2012) indicates that promoting extended students' interaction must be the usual practice of teachers in language classes in order to create a successful space for learning. Hence, Walsh (2012) forwarded some suggestions including; increasing wait time; resisting the temptation to fill in silence- in other words, reducing teacher echo; allowing planning time; lack of teacher repair; signposting in instruction; seeking clarification, and shaping learner contributions. Worsening the situation, in this study, there were many three-turn interactions that minimize the scaffolding in the writing classrooms.

The length of the interaction, in most cases, determined the contingency because most three turn interactional episodes cannot fulfill the criteria of contingency according to the MCT since four steps of the teacher were expected to occur according to the model for scaffolding to take place. According to the result of this study, it was found that the teacher used a diagnostic strategy and intervention strategy usually. This can show that three-turn interactional episodes cannot be contingent, but there were occasions in which the teacher used two strategies in a single turn. This makes the study unique from the previous research on scaffolding. The result demonstrates the most frequent steps used together were checking the diagnostic and intervention strategy. This depicts that teachers do not wait for students' responses after asking questions.

According to MCT, many of the interactions among teachers and student(s) were found to be non-contingent in this study. The finding indicated that 49 (59.03%) interactional episodes were non-contingent. This implies that the majority of the interactional episodes were non-scaffolded. This finding is incongruent with Rodgers, D'Agostino, Harmey, Kelly, Brownfield's (2016) that states 84% of the teachers' interaction was contingent, and Van de Pol and Elbers (2013), who found that contingent instruction accounts for 60% for untrained teachers and more than 80% for trained ones. Thus, according to this model, it is possible to conclude that scaffolding is not effectively provided in the writing classroom. Connected with this, Van de Pol and Elbers (2013) and Wood *et al*. (1976) claim that the result could have been different as a significant difference was noticed between trained and untrained teachers in previous studies if the teachers had been trained. However, the researchers contend that the core responsibility of the teacher is to help the students to make progress, and this can be done if there is scaffolding. Non-contingent interactions have two patterns. That is, the teacher either uses the same steps of the model in his different turns or uses only two steps of the model which is incomplete.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that there was limited interaction between the teacher and the students in the writing classroom as much class time was taken by the teachers. This hampers the students' learning thereby hindering the development of their writing skills. Mainly, the number of contingent interaction which contains the teachers' scaffold were below the average. This show the interactions in the writing lessons were less productive as many of them were non-contingent. This happened because the teachers did not either identifies the students' knowledge gap properly before providing intervention or they never provided an appropriate intervention though they identified the learners' knowledge gap. Besides, the contingent teaching in which scaffolding occurred was characterized by short responses of the learners. This cannot give students a space to develop their writing skills as the limited responses hinder them to involve in ongoing interactions in which they can construct their knowledge. Therefore, EFL teachers should consciously regard diagnosing the learners' prior knowledge, check whether the students have understood what they are asking for correctly or not, and provide appropriate scaffolding to help students construct their own knowledge or refine the knowledge they had already gained. If the input they are providing is not changed into an input for the learners, the interaction they make with the students becomes useless. Thus, they must first identify the students' lack before providing an intervention; they should also provide appropriate intervention when they spot learners' gaps. Furthermore, they were expected to try to extend the students' turn by providing time for learners to think and plan; stopping unnecessary explanations on

the topic that students have enough knowledge about; motivating learners to involve in an extended interaction; looking for clarification and shaping learner contributions. By doing so, teachers can improve the writing skills of the learners in particular and their learning in general.

6. Acknowledgments

7. References

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