



Investigating Iranian EFL Learners' Negotiation Types in Writing with Different Scaffolding Patterns

Research Article

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Aysheh Mohammadzadeh¹

Touran Ahour*²

Mahnaz Saedi³

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Abstract

Learner-centered approaches in second language acquisition and process approach in writing pedagogy has stimulated quite a number of researchers to focus on learners' voices in collaboration passing through multiple drafts and revisions. This study based on the concept of scaffolding learning in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and process writing approach to second language writing investigated Iranian EFL learners' negotiation types in small groups of different scaffolding patterns; symmetrical and asymmetrical. To this end, 15 students at High and Low Intermediate Proficiency levels were assigned into three groups in different scaffolding patterns; one asymmetrical group with two High Intermediate - three Low Intermediate learners (H-L), two symmetrical groups with five High Intermediate learners (H-H), another with five Low Intermediate learners (L-L). Small group interactions were observed and recorded. Transcriptions were analyzed to identify negotiation types in terms of language functions among different groups. Therefore, two main categories, Responding and Requesting and their subcategories were found. The subcategories of "agreeing", "explaining", "giving opinions", "instructing", "restating" and "suggesting" were related to the first main category; "comprehension checking", "eliciting opinions" and "questioning" were related to the second main category. According to Chi-square test results, negotiation types were significantly related to the scaffolding pattern as the asymmetrical (H-L) group was superior in the number of language functions used over the symmetrical (L-L, H-H) groups. Nevertheless, members in all groups enjoyed high equality and mutuality in interaction. The findings suggest teachers raise learners' awareness of the diverse strengths and abilities that different scaffolding patterns give them.

keywords: asymmetrical scaffolding, collaborative writing, EFL learners, negotiation types, symmetrical scaffolding

* Corresponding Author

¹ PhD Candidate, Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran. Mohammadzadeh79@gonbadiau.ac.ir

² Assistant Professor, Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran. ahour@iaut.ac.ir; touranahour@yahoo.com

³ Associate Professor, Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran. m_saeidi@iaut.ac.ir

Introduction

During the last three decades, the Process Writing Approach (PWA) has gained very much attention in the second language writing. Within the writing process, collaborative writing (CW) in which learners work together in order to accomplish a writing task, has roots in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the concept of scaffolding. CW focuses on interaction by activating the social resources of the learners (Storch, 2005) and emphasizes students' negotiation of meaning which leads to their accountability for their own learning and decision-making power in the class (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). In other words, it asserts that students are not passive, but rather they learn through active, dialogic interactions with their teachers, peers, and the context (Lantolf, 2000). Accordingly, researchers have been impressed by interaction in small writing group tasks in the last few decades (Storch, 2002).

Nevertheless, reviewing the literature indicates that the use of CW in writing classes is not emphasized in the Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (Biria & Jafari, 2013; Jafari & Nejad Ansari, 2012), and the number of studies specifically regarding the investigation of negotiation types in the interaction of small groups of different scaffolding patterns is scant. Some studies in the context of Iran (Biria & Jafari, 2013; Jafari & Nejad Ansari, 2012; Khodabakhshzadeh & Samadi, 2018; Soleimani et al., 2015) compared collaborative work with individuals or paired work but they did not investigate interactive patterns and negotiation types altogether. However, the nature of interaction in writing tasks while learners working within small groups, deserves further investigation.

In this regard, the present study based on Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory aimed at uncovering what happens in small interactive writing groups regarding the negotiation types in terms of language functions. Moreover, it investigated EFL students' interaction during a writing task in small groups of different scaffolding patterns namely symmetrical and asymmetrical.

Literature Review

The Process Writing Approach

The Process Writing Approach (PWA) used in classrooms today is a teaching approach which originates from Piaget's constructivist theory and also from Vygotsky's socio-cognitive theory which focuses on 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) and 'more knowledgeable other' (MKO) concepts. Scaffolding, collaborative learning and apprenticeship are more concepts from Vygotskian theory. Social cognitive theory also sheds light on social, affective and motivational components of learning (McCutchen et al., 2008).

The effectiveness of PWA is attributed to the cognitive activities when students plan, draft and revise (Rijlaarsdam & Van den Berg, 2006). Graham and Sandmel (2011) hypothesize that its effectiveness is also due to using some components to improve writing such as mini-lessons and writing conferences, and methods to increase motivation such as collaboration and positive learning environment. In second language (L2) classrooms where collaborative learning is emphasized, learners are involved at different proficiency levels, so exploring the effects of proficiency differences on interaction is prevalent.

Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory (SCT) places social context at the

heart of the learning and communication process. According to his theory, students' ability to learn and write does not occur only through their own personal and individual cognitive activities. It is also influenced and contributed both - consciously and unconsciously by individuals' social and cultural context that surrounds them in the same way. In other words, for an individual to become a proficient learner, the mastery of the language is achieved through people's participation to negotiate meaning (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). Moreover, the theory emphasizes the interconnections among teachers, learners and tasks, and encourages interactions among individuals (Fung, 2006). Ellis (2000) states that the interaction helps learners to scaffold the new tasks while they are in the process of learning.

Conceptual and cultural learning occur through dialogue in Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD), that is, the difference between the actual developmental level and the potential development level under the guidance or in collaboration with a more able peer. It is important to note that learning in a ZPD may be effectively scaffolded by either teachers or fellow learners. However, the concept of ZPD has been the subject of many studies. Ohta (2001), for instance redefined it in second language learning as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production, and the level of potential development as determined through language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer" (p. 9).

Scaffolding and its Different Patterns. Scaffolding is typically associated with the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978). It is an instructional technique whereby the teachers or more proficient participants model the appropriate learning strategy or task and gradually give the responsibility to the less proficient students. As the interaction continues, the interpretations are refined and reconciled dialectically in the process of mutual learning.

Scaffolding is a general concept with different divisions. Two types of scaffolding include the symmetrical and asymmetrical forms. "Symmetrical scaffolding rests on the fact that learners discover new knowledge through cooperation and interaction", (Baleghizadeh et al., 2010, p. 105). In other words, students with the same ZPDs cooperate with each other (Baleghizadeh, et al., 2010).

In the asymmetrical scaffolding, the learners with different ZPDs work with each other. In fact, asymmetrical scaffolding is a typical kind of scaffolding in which there is always a learner who is more knowledgeable than others (Baleghizadeh et al., 2010). As a result, the concepts of scaffolding and ZPD principally encompass the provision of asymmetrical scaffolding in teaching and learning.

Negotiation in Collaborative Writing

Many researchers (e.g., Biria & Jafari, 2013; Fahim & Haghani, 2012; Farrah, 2012; Storch, 2005) have indicated that in a collaborative writing (CW), writers are active in decision making about the language they want to state their ideas and making the structure to state those ideas together. Wells (2000), states that "knowledge is created and re-created in the discourse between people doing things together" (p. 71). Thus, knowledge building is the result of collaborative work through discourse and "the constructive and creative effort involved in saying and in responding to what was said" (Wells, 2000, p. 74).

According to Ellis (2000), when L2 learners have communicative problems and at the same time have the opportunity to negotiate with others, they can acquire

language better. Negotiation is therefore necessary to make the input comprehensible. It can enhance mutual understanding and contribute to the development of learner autonomy (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). Learners in this way, have the opportunity to consider their own learning process and share resources. According to Yu (2008), “the notion of negotiation is generally defined as the discussion to reach agreement” (p. 48). Negotiation has an important role in the interaction of the classroom because the learners find more opportunities to negotiate their problems (Yu, 2008).

Studies of adult language learners (e.g., Shortreed, 1993; Yule & MacDonald, 1990) have indicated that the amount of negotiating for meaning is closely related to the proficiency level. That is, Non-Native Speaker_ Native Speaker (NNS-NS) pairs negotiate for meaning more than their Native Speaker_ Native Speaker (NS-NS) counterparts in order to resolve misunderstandings between partners. On the other hand, other studies (e.g., Foster & Ohta, 2005; Ohta, 2001) claim when learners support each other, share meanings, and modify their own and each other's utterances while monitoring, more ZPDs are created as learners rely on one another to proceed regardless of their language proficiency. So, grouping learners in different patterns of learning for example scaffolding patterns or according to their language proficiency to examine how negotiation proceeds, seems necessary in this regard.

Empirical Studies

Although CW is widely studied in EFL writing instruction, little is known about the nature of the interaction and negotiation types between peers in small different scaffolding groups. A few studies in the literature have inquired negotiation types in pairs not in groups. Mendoca and Johnson's (1994) seminal work is almost the first study that investigated peer review negotiations. Twelve ESL learners who were advanced international graduate students with different educational fields took part in the study. Audio-taped peer review transcripts and also first and revised drafts analyses, and then post-interviews were gathered. The study found that students used peers' comments in revising the essays and certain types of negotiations like questioning, explaining, suggesting, restating, and correcting grammar mistakes occurred frequently. Post interviews revealed that generally they found peer reviews useful.

Storch's (2002) influential study investigated interaction patterns in a context of adult second language learning. The data were obtained from 10 pairs in three tasks; composing, editing and text reconstructing. Pair talks were audio-recorded and salient traits were analyzed. Four patterns were emerged describing the role relationships; collaborative, dominant/ dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/ novice. According to the results, collaborative pattern predominated and was stable regardless of the task and time. In addition, the transfer of knowledge was more evident in collaborative and the expert/novice dyads than in dominant/dominant and dominant/passive dyads. Storch explained these results referring to the cognitive development theory of Vygotsky as members co-constructed, appropriated, and internalized the knowledge.

Watanabe (2008) asserted the importance of interaction, in contrast to language proficiency, in the writing performance of learners. Students participated in a writing task with higher and lower proficiency levels. The transcribed pair talks were analyzed regarding words, language episodes, and pair interaction patterns. He

demonstrated higher- and lower-proficiency pairs both enjoyed chances of learning in a collaborative pattern, and shared reciprocal ideas and contributed in writing equally.

Memari Hanjani and Li (2014) explored learners' interaction in a collaborative revision task and its impact on the writing performance. Some pairs of L2 students who enrolled in an essay-writing course participated in the study at a university in Iran. Each pair took part in a collaborative revision session and revised argumentative texts jointly. Students applied different functions in their negotiations. Their revision interactions included evaluative (scaffolding and non-scaffolding), social (on-task and off-task), and procedural negotiations. It was revealed that the joint revision task was beneficial for both partners.

Li and Kim (2016) investigated the interactions of two ESL groups in two collaborative writing tasks working in a Wiki space. They examined language functions which learners employed during task negotiation, writing change functions and scaffolding strategies. The two groups' wiki activities were recorded as main data sources. The results drawn on sociocultural theory showed that learners utilized the target language as a mediating tool in interacting with group members to perform writing tasks and to negotiate social relationships. Exploring writing change functions showed an ongoing joint writing process at both writing and revising stages. Unlike Storch (2002) who discovered relatively stable interaction patterns that pairs revealed, Li and Kim (2016) indicated the changing of interaction patterns and the fluidity of scaffolding.

Li and Zhu (2017) examined the connections between writing products and interaction patterns in the wiki writing task environment. According to the results, the group with the collective pattern, produced a higher writing quality, especially in the rhetorical structure and coherence. Next group with high quality showed an expert/novice pattern. Groups which showed a dominant/defensive and a cooperating-in-parallel pattern produced research proposals of relatively low quality. Interactions in Wiki and writing products were linked to the concept of scaffolding.

Although the findings of these studies support negotiation in writing, research is still needed to consider the nature of negotiation in different patterns of learning; for instance, symmetrical and asymmetrical scaffolding patterns. Reviewing the previous literature revealed that mostly peer interaction in revising the writing tasks has been explored. Few studies have probed negotiation in small groups with regard to different patterns of scaffolding. Therefore, the present endeavor attempted to bridge this gap and probe what types of negotiation EFL students engage in while working in small groups of different scaffolding patterns; that is, symmetrical with (High-High) H-H, (Low-Low) L-L groups and asymmetrical with (High-Low) H-L group.

According to Ohta (2001), learners involving in collaborative dialogues, may pool their strengths and weaknesses and co-construct more knowledge as a group, regardless of their high differences or degrees of homogeneity in proficiency levels. Therefore, scaffolding patterns were scrutinized in this study to see the nature of collaborative orientation of groups or how interaction is shaped among learners. In this regard, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: What types of negotiation are used in small writing groups with different patterns of scaffolding?

RQ2: Is negotiation type significantly related to the scaffolding pattern?

RQ3: What are patterns of interaction that occur in each scaffolding group?

Method

Participants

The present study was drawn from a larger study, which probed the effects of symmetrical and asymmetrical scaffolding on L2 writing fluency, complexity and accuracy. In order to have groups of different scaffolding patterns, a pool of 117 intermediate female EFL learners from seven intact classes at a language institute in Gonbad Kavous, Iran took part in the study. According to the results of Preliminary English Test (PET), 90 students whose scores fell one standard deviation below (low proficiency = 45) and above (high proficiency = 45) the mean were chosen as the participants of the study. Next, they were randomly assigned to three groups (30 in each group), namely; one asymmetrical group with 15 high and 15 low level students, one symmetrical group with 30 high level students, and another symmetrical group with 30 low level students. Then, the members of three participant groups were divided into the small groups. For the purpose of this study one group from each pattern was selected. So, generally 15 participants worked in three groups (5 students in each group) with three different scaffolding patterns.

The participants were within the age range of 18-22 and had been studying English at the institute at least for two years. They had started learning English as a compulsory subject since grade seven at schools. They were all Persian native speakers and had no formal, systematic previous exposure to any writing courses or collaborative writing activities. With respect to the fact that the study was conducted in a private language institute, the socioeconomic status of the participants was deemed to be middle to upper-middle.

Instruments and Materials

Preliminary English Test (PET). PET tests the test takers' writing, reading, listening and speaking skills. The reading and writing sections were taken together in 90 minutes. The listening part lasted for 30 minutes and the interview stage was conducted in 10 minutes. The maximum score on this test is 170.

Observation. In order to probe the types of negotiation used in the interaction of the small groups in three scaffolding patterns, observation was employed. That is, the researchers placed one digital audio recorder next to each group to audio-record one session of each small group (as a focus group) in the symmetrical and asymmetrical scaffolding patterns.

Procedures

At the outset of the study, the purpose and the learners' right to withdraw from the study at any time was explained to the participants. In all groups, participants were informed of the collaboration rules, for instance, having complementary roles, planning, generating, suggesting alternative ideas, and listening to each other, etc. They were also instructed with some rules of composing cohesive and unified one-paragraph essays. The teacher asked them to write a descriptive composition on a given topic by discussing with each other. Each session, they were asked to write a maximum of 200-250-word one-paragraph essay. In other words, they were asked to interact with each other and collaboratively write the compositions.

Students' writing process took 30 minutes in each session. In the asymmetrical class different level learners in small groups worked together to achieve the purpose of the group work, and in the symmetrical classes, either low

level learners or high level learners worked together for this reason.

Learners underwent three phases while composing; planning, composing, and revising. In the planning phase which took longer than the other two phases, they brainstormed on the topic before starting their writings. Participants shared their ideas by discussing the content and organization of the writings in this phase. In the revising phase, they did not spend much time as they corrected the errors and provided feedback in the composing phase. Since the study aimed at capturing the types of negotiation taking place in each group, an audio recording was carried out while learners worked together passing the different phases.

For the purpose of this study the fourth session was audio recorded. Because the learners were experiencing writing in a group for the first time, the first three sessions served as just warm up. Due to the large number of groups working at the same time, the audio recording was based upon one focus group in each scaffolding pattern to find negotiation types between the members.

Students were to select among these topics in the fourth session: *"what makes a film great?"*, *"description of a desert"*, *"life in crowded cities"*, and *"my favorite restaurant"*. The audio recording was made by the researchers during the time that participants were working to complete the writing tasks.

Design and Data Analysis

Regarding the first research question, the interactions of the group members in each scaffolding pattern were analyzed qualitatively. So the focus group audio-recordings were listened to and transcribed using the standard orthography. Their contents were analyzed inductively for language functions that were used in the interaction between the members of the small groups for coding instances of negotiation. Descriptive categories were concluded through a grounded approach in which subcategories are examined, compared and connected to each other to identify core categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The inter-rater reliability agreement came 85% by an outside researcher as an acceptable level of coding reliability. Therefore, emerging categories were compared in three groups to find the similarities and differences in the negotiation of three scaffolding patterns (H-L, H-H, and L-L).

As for the second research question, descriptive statistics including frequency of the negotiation types in each group were determined and then they were compared quantitatively through Chi-Square to find whether negotiation types were significantly related to the scaffolding pattern or not. To answer the third research question, patterns of interaction were analyzed based on two indexes of peer engagement; that is, equality and mutuality (Storch, 2002). Equality means all members taking control rather than submitting to a one-way direction from others in contributing the task; and mutuality means all members enjoying the same level of engagement in the contribution. The aim was to discover the nature of relationships learners had in different scaffolding patterns.

Results

RQ1: What Types of Negotiations Are Used in the Three Scaffolding Groups?

Small groups' interactions were examined through analyzing group members' negotiation regarding language functions performed during the writing task. In this way, two main categories and their subcategories were found. Table 1 presents the definitions for these categories and subcategories found in this regard.

Table 1*Taxonomy of Language Functions Found in the Groups' Interactions*

Language Functions	Definitions
Agreeing	Expressing agreement with other members' ideas
Explaining	Explaining the meaning of a term or idea that is not clear to each other
Giving opinions	Members giving ideas or comments
Instructing	Teaching, for example, grammatical structures or writing the essay
Restating	Rephrasing what has been written or said to show understanding or rereading sections
Suggesting	Suggesting or recommending other ways to change the words, content, or organization
Comprehension checking	Checking for understanding the meaning of a term or idea or what has been said
Eliciting opinions	Members draw ideas or comments
Questioning	Asking questions where something is unclear
Main categories	
Responding	Giving answers or reacting to other members' requests
Requesting	Making requests where something is unclear

According to Table 1, among language functions, "agreeing", "explaining", "giving opinions", "instructing", "restating" and "suggesting" were related to the first main category of Responding. So, "comprehension checking", "eliciting opinions" and "questioning" were related to the second main category, that is, Requesting.

RQ2: Is Negotiation Type Significantly Related to the Scaffolding Pattern?

In order to answer the research question two, a Chi-square test for independence was applied. Table 2 shows the results of the Chi-square test, which include the frequency of the nine language functions for the three scaffolding groups.

Table 2*Frequency of Language Functions among Groups*

Language Functions	Group			Total	Chi-Square	df	Sig
	H-L	H-H	L-L				
Agreeing	11	10	4	25			
Explaining	51	19	21	91			
Giving ideas	31	36	15	82			
Instructing	49	25	20	94			
Restating	53	27	18	98			
Suggesting	50	49	22	121	86.608	16	.000
Comprehension checking	44	20	19	83			
Eliciting opinion	55	14	10	79			
Questioning	20	25	48	93			
Total	364	225	177	766			

As the results of Chi-square test for a (3 scaffolding patterns and 9 language functions) contingency table (Table 2) shows, there was a significant relationship between the scaffolding patterns and negotiation types, $\chi^2 = 86.61$, $df =$

16, $p = .000$.

Based on the results, compared to the H-H and L-L groups, the H-L group has the highest frequency in all functions except for the functions of “giving ideas” and “questioning” that are frequently used functions in the H-H and L-L groups, respectively. As six and three language functions are, respectively, related to the categories of Responding and Requesting, another Chi-square test was carried out to find the relationship between the main categories and scaffolding patterns. Table 3 indicates the results.

Table 3
Frequency of the two Categories among Groups

Language Functions	Group			Total	Chi-Square	df	Sig
	H-H	H-L	L-L				
Responding	166	245	100	511			
Requesting	59	119	77	255	13.433	2	.001
Total	225	364	177	766			

The results in Table 3 demonstrate a significant relationship between the two main categories and the three scaffolding patterns (2×3 contingency table), $\chi^2 = 13.43$, $df = 2$, $p = .001$. As the results reflect, while the category of Responding has the highest frequencies in all three scaffolding groups, the H-L group has the highest frequency of using the functions of Responding and Requesting compared to the H-H and L-L groups. In this regard, the second research question is answered positively.

RQ3: What Are Patterns of Interaction That Occur in Each Scaffolding Group?

To answer the third research question regarding the interaction patterns in each group, Storch's (2002) model was adapted that used indexes of “equality” (i.e., the degree of contribution and control over the direction of writing) and “mutuality” (i.e., the extent of engagement with each other's contribution). In her influential work on the nature of peer interaction in collaborative writing tasks, Storch (2002) introduced four types of interaction patterns in ESL pair writing processes: collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice.

In this regard, frequency and language function types that members performed in small groups were examined (Li & Kim, 2016; Li & Zhu, 2017). Instances of contributions from all members of the group in terms of language functions suggested high equality. That is, equality was defined according to the degree of contribution of all members while working on the task. Whether the group enjoys balanced contribution or only some members take the control of the flow of negotiation by dictating their ideas was the concern of equality. Mutuality was examined by frequency of language functions such as giving opinions, suggesting, instructing, and agreeing. The goal was to discern if all members engage with each other to proceed the task.

Group 1 (H-L). Comparing the higher number of functions, negotiation seems to proceed better in this asymmetrical group than the other two symmetrical groups. This can be ascribed to the high ability members' understanding that their low level peers had problems in group interactions or task completions and therefore attempted to assure whether they could reach their level by consistently checking

their comprehension. In the excerpts 1 and 2 in the planning phase, there are samples of "instructing", "explaining" and "comprehension checking" that suggest high ability members' effort to actively participate in the task along with all low ability members. Generally, "eliciting opinions", "restating", "explaining", "suggesting", "instructing", and "comprehension checking" were used more in this group in comparison to other two symmetrical groups.

The interaction pattern in this group was tutor/tutee or expert/novice, as the number of language functions related to the category of Responding such as "eliciting opinions", and language functions for the category of Requesting like "restating", "explaining" and "suggesting" exceeded other language functions. However, low ability members also actively collaborated in the task as they felt free in "questioning" as a sign of equality in the group. That is, contribution to the task came from all directions not from only high ability members. As a result, the group enjoyed high equality as all members contributed jointly to the task and none took the control. In addition, they used language function of "giving ideas", as well as samples of "agreeing". Therefore, while high ability members expected to take the control of the task, low ability members were not passive (high mutuality). According to Storch (2002) the expert/novice interaction pattern is collaborative in nature. Therefore, it can be claimed that the collaborative pattern was evident in this group.

In the following excerpts A, B, and E are high, and C and D are low ability members. The topic selected by this group was: *"life in crowded cities."*

Excerpt 1:

A: Well, I'm not sure too much emotional moment make the film boring (*giving an opinion*), maybe if it ends too quickly I get bored (*explaining*)...which do you think is important? (*comprehension check*)

B: I think....I agree (*agreeing*) because when you don't understand the end of a film you become bored (*restating*) and think that waste your money (*giving an idea*).

A: Right? (*Comprehension check*) Once it happened to me (acknowledging) ...I don't like going to cinemas (*giving an opinion*)...I usually buy CDs and watch in home (*explaining*).

C: What was that boring film for you? (*questioning*)

D: Ayneh Baghal [Side-view Mirror: the name of the film] (*explaining*)

A: No need to mention the names of the movies in the essay instead we should mention the characteristics. (*instructing*)

Excerpt 2:

A: Let's write about actors and actresses (*suggesting*)

C: They act should look real. (*giving an opinion*)

B: Right (*agreeing*)

D: Yes (*agreeing*)

E: Directors are important too, someone like Asghar Farhadi. Everybody likes his movies. (*giving an opinion*)

Group 2 (H-H): Analyzing some selected excerpts, it is assumed that some H-H peers did not dominate others through dictating their own opinions. All members were at ease in "giving opinions" and "suggesting" rather than "explaining" or "eliciting opinions", since they had a good command over the topic and interactions. Due to the equal roles members had regarding each other, directions

equally came from all members. Since all members enjoyed balanced contributions to the task the group enjoyed high equality. While some members presented opinions and gave new suggestions, others agreed and restated them to outline related ideas jointly. Therefore, the group enjoyed high mutuality as members engaged in the task using different language functions such as "suggesting" and "giving ideas" to accomplish it collaboratively.

Hence, according to Storch (2002), the interaction pattern in this group was collaborative. In the following episodes of excerpts; for instance, members all contribute to the task in the planning phase. There are agreements and contributions to the suggestions and restating them by other members. So it is claimed that the group was high in equality and mutuality. The topic chosen was "My favorite restaurant":

Excerpt 3:

- D: We can start with different kinds of restaurants. (*suggesting*).
A: Restaurants which serve traditional food are healthier (*giving an opinion*).
B: Yes I see (*agreeing*), I love fast food too (*giving an opinion*)
C: You can have traditional food at home and fast food out (*suggesting*).
D: what about the location? (*eliciting an opinion*)
E: It's very important, clean and modern, city center or out in the country? (*suggesting*)
A: Ok, so let's write about first different kinds, then... (*restating*)
B: it's very important the restaurant be clean...clean kitchen, clean plates, and clean environment. (*restating*)
B: I agree with you there. (*agreeing*)
C: Don't forget the variety in food. (*suggesting*)
D: You can find variety in just larger cities like Tehran. (*giving an opinion*)
E: Yes, nothing about Chinese or Italian foods here in our city (*explaining*). We can end the essay with this point. (*suggesting*)

Excerpt 4:

- C: and bad points? (*suggesting*)
D: Why do you say that you like it? (*questioning*)
A: My favorite restaurant cooks not just fast food, but also some traditional food like GhormehSabzi. (*explaining*)
C: Does it accept phone orders? (*questioning*)
A: Yes, but sometimes it gets late in bringing the food and the food becomes cold! (*explaining*)
D: I think if they can't bring food on time, they shouldn't accept home orders (*giving an opinion*).
C: So we can write it as a negative point. (*restating*)

Group 3 (L-L). Although lower number of language functions was found in this group, none was passive in terms of equality among members. All participants contributed to accomplish the task (high equality). As samples of language functions used in this group reveal in the following excerpts, in terms of mutuality, members' using "suggesting" and "instructing" demonstrated a good degree of mutuality. Hence, the dominant interaction pattern was collaborative in this group, too. The following excerpts in the planning phase show some samples of negotiation in this group. The topic was "life in crowded cities".

Excerpt 5:

A: What about stick in traffic...Is it correct? (*questioning*)

B: Yes, it's right (*agreeing*). I heard it before, sticking in traffic (*restating*)

A: I think it's not enough to just say you don't like to live in crowded cities (*giving an opinion*)...you should give some explanation and examples and compare the disadvantages and advantages of life in cities to country side (*explaining*)...for example, sometimes I find the heavy traffic too much and want to free up my mind from all the routine works (*suggesting*).

B: Yes, like crowded streets, big supermarkets (*explaining*)...what do you say if you want to tell very heavy traffic? (*questioning*)

A: I heard bumper to bumper (*suggesting*). When you can't move your car and you wait for hours on the road then you can say traffic jam and bumper to bumper (*explaining*).

Excerpt 6:

A: for example, like Tehran...it's a crowded city and always full of people. If I live there I wish to escape and go to some green places...maybe parks.

B: Yes, a lot of trees in the park help people in crowded cities enjoy their life (*restating*).

C: Or you can go to different national parks outside the city... (*suggesting*).

D: Yes, it's great.

Excerpt 7:

A: I note all negative points about large cities.

B: Maybe...we could also talk about positive points and in this way we make the content more understandable and others can compare the advantages and disadvantages for themselves...also if we only talk about bad points, it looks like we hate cities, but I think I like some things about them (*suggestion*).

D: Like what? (*questioning*)

C: For example, we can say a lot of schools, shopping malls, entertainment, hospital and etc. (*suggesting*).

Discussion

This study attempted to document small groups' negotiation types in the interaction of different scaffolding patterns while writing in the second language. Unlike most previous studies (e.g., Memari Hanjani & Li, 2014; Mendoca & Johnson, 1994; Storch, 2002) that investigated patterns of interaction in pairs in the revision phase, the present study explored interaction patterns in the negotiation of learners working in small groups accomplishing the writing task in different phases mostly in the planning phase.

Analyzing members' negotiation types in terms of language functions, two main categories (i.e., Responding and Requesting) and their subcategories (i.e., agreeing, explaining, giving opinions, instructing, restating, suggesting, comprehension checking, eliciting opinions, and questioning) were found, which were mostly in common with Li and Kim (2016) and Mendoca and Johnson (1994). In addition, some of the language functions found in this study such as "instructing", "restating", and "comprehension checking" overlapped Memari Hanjani and Li's (2014) scaffolding and non-scaffolding language function respectively, which they called them as evaluative negotiations.

Results of Chi-square demonstrated that negotiation types were significantly related to the scaffolding pattern. The asymmetrical (H-L) group was superior in the number of negotiation types used over other symmetrical (L-L, H-H) groups. This suggests negotiation proceeds more successfully in the asymmetrical type of scaffolding pattern in which learners who are less able benefit from the help of more competent members in a supportive group environment. This can be explained according to Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding which asserts the social aspect of learning in a joint collaboration between more knowledgeable and less knowledgeable individuals. In this group, "explaining", "restating", "suggesting" and "eliciting opinion" found to be the most frequent negotiated language functions, suggesting that from a social point of view, negotiation needs to proceed by the smooth flow of exchanges among the members of the group in which more competent members try to scaffold less competent ones. For instance, less able members' requests for more explanations suggest that they looked to more able ones to get more feedback.

"Giving ideas" and "suggesting" occurred more frequently in the H-H group with the symmetrical pattern. This is in line with Shortreed (1993) and Yule & MacDonald (1990) that found more proficient second language learners' pairs display features similar to the characteristics of Native Speaker- Native Speaker (NS- NS) dyads than Native Speaker- non-Native Speaker (NS- NNS) dyads probably due to their confidence over the topic. That is, NNS-NS dyads negotiate for meaning more than their NS-NS counterparts due to misunderstandings between language partners. The frequency of negotiation types also proved this finding in that they were less in number in comparison to the H-L group. Accordingly, it is suggested that grouping students in asymmetrical patterns creates a high supportive context. In contrast, in the L-L group, the total number of the negotiation types was the least. The most frequent language function in this group was "questioning" which suggests that too many requests for clarification may create uneasy social relationships.

Nevertheless, in the present study, the analysis of interaction patterns (as evident in sample excerpts) supported that students in all three groups with different scaffolding patterns were capable of providing assistance and feedback in writing as they enjoyed high mutuality and equality. Different scaffolding groups of the study, fit within Storch's (2002) collaborative pattern of interaction: a collaborative pattern (collaborative and expert/novice) against a non-collaborative pattern (dominant/dominant and dominant/passive).

Although the H-H and H-L groups met this general expectation, the unexpected finding was revealed to be the L-L members' exemplification of the collaborative pattern of interaction, too. This indicates that social mediation comes not only from experts such as teachers and more capable peers but also even from less proficient peers. This is in line with Ohta (2001) who stated that a learner is not universally less or more able than his/her peer and each learner shows a collection of weaknesses and strengths that might be complementary.

Moreover, in contrast to previous studies (Memari Hanjani & Li, 2014; Mendoca & Johnson, 1994; Storch, 2002) which found peers' concern over forms (e.g., structure and wording) in the revision phase, the findings of this study are in line with Li and Kim (2016). They claimed when academic writing tasks focus on the application of emerging genre knowledge, language forms receive much less attention. Although the participants in this study were novice writers, few samples

related to language forms were found. Instead, members used different language functions related to the content topic at least in the planning phase, as analyzed in the episodes of different group members' utterances.

Conclusion

This study was an attempt to document second language learners' negotiation types in writing while interacting in small groups with different scaffolding patterns. Negotiation types, analyzed in terms of language functions, were significantly related to the scaffolding pattern, so that the asymmetrical (H-L) group was superior in the number of negotiation types used such as "eliciting opinions", "restating", "explaining", "suggesting", "instructing", and "comprehension checking" over other symmetrical groups (L-L, H-H). This finding suggested the successful proceeding of negotiation in the asymmetrical type of scaffolding pattern in which learners who are less able benefit from the help of more able members in a supportive group context. However, the collaborative nature of interaction in all three groups proved that social mediation can come even from less proficient peers.

The findings of this study would be of great benefit to practitioners and theoreticians in the field of language teaching in general and teaching writing in particular. EFL teachers can encourage the learners' autonomy by providing insights on the scaffolding and collaboration in EFL settings. They can provide opportunities for learners to interact and work collaboratively in small groups of asymmetrical and symmetrical patterns. Thus, it is thought that investigating CW would help language teachers to be aware of the effectiveness of scaffolding in an EFL context. The findings also suggest teachers to create an atmosphere of interdependence among the EFL learners by encouraging them to support one another spontaneously with their diverse strengths and abilities. Students also benefit from the results of this study as CW in different scaffolding patterns gives them a sense of accountability for their group members' engagement.

Due to some limitations, the participants of this study were only among female EFL learners. Exploring the role of gender in group interaction and its possible association with the nature of negotiation in scaffolding learning patterns also looks appealing, as it may provide opportunities for a better understanding. Especially in an EFL context like Iran where education is affected by cultural norms and religious beliefs of the society, probing the effect of gender can be quite required and open new insights to the field.

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