THE APPLICATION OF SCAFFOLDING STRATEGIES IN DEALING WITH CHALLENGES IN IELTS ONLINE WRITING CLASSES

Men Pham Thi[1]

Abstract: Under the adverse impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, an increasing number of schools and universities, institutions and centers have fully shifted from onsite learning to online learning.This transition has resulted in unplanned challenges, which draw attention and concerns of many teachers and scholars about teaching and learning effectiveness.In online classes, teachers should effectively scaffold students in order to facilitate the co-constructed learning process. Although there has been a large number of research on scaffolding students' learning in face-to-face ELT classes, little has been talked about effective teachers' scaffolding strategies in online classes, especially online IELTS writing; therefore, this is still worth receiving further considerations. The two main aims of this paper are (1) analyze the most noticeable difficulties that students encountered in the online IELTS writing classes, including low level of digital literacy, poor linguistic backgrounds, anxiety when receiving teachers' feedback, and unsuitable test types; (2) suggest some tools and practical recommendations so that the teachers could conduct scaffolding strategies effectively to support students overcome those difficulties in online IELTS writing classes.

Keywords: Online Learning, Online Teaching, Scaffolding Strategies, Online Ielts Writing

[1]Hai Phong University, Email: menpt@dhhp.edu.vn

1. Introduction

Scaffolding is a pedagogical concept which clarifies the assistance or intervention of experts with an aim to finely tune to the child's ongoing learning progress (Wood et al., 1976). This notion was coined by Wood et al. (1976) and widely applied in the field of education, referring to "all teacher support" (Verenikina, 2004, p. 5). There is a wide range of supports, namely participating structures, selection and sequencing of activities, semiotic systems and mediational texts (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005), classroom activities (Gibbons, 2015; van Lier, 1996), direct instruction (Verenikina, 2004), etc., which in most cases, represent "designed-in" (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005, p. 12) or non-contingent teaching (Volman & Beishuizen, 2011).

Due to the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies, it has been researched and applied in many fields in different contexts. LaScotte, (2018) and van de Pol et al., (2010) claimed that learning mediation through scaffolding strategies is efficacious in enhancing classroom interaction. Guzdial's (1994) and Zhang and Quintana's (2012) studies into scaffolding strategies in computer-based science and technology classes show that students' metacognitive scaffolding activities can enhance students' online skills such as programming, self-inquiry, and self-regulation. Another research by Ge et al. (2011) proves the promising potential of scaffolding strategies in expanding professional knowledge among liberal arts, social sciences, management, and engineering undergraduate students.

Under the widespread ues of the COVID-19, many educational institutions, schools and universities and centers have been forced to shift from tradition, from face-to-face education to an online setting as an emergency plan.They rely on online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet to continue their teaching and learning process. This adaptation of Internet-based classrooms has posed many concerns, including multitasking demand, distractions, low motivation, and low levels of interaction between lecturers and

students. Foremost among these is that ELT teachers are not familiar with technology, hence it leads to the hesitation and mishandling of in-class activities, especially in large classes.

In online classes, teachers should effectively scaffold students in order to facilitate the co-constructed learning process. There have been a large number of research on scaffolding students' learning in face-to-face ELT classes.The study of Clark & Graves, (2005) proves that reading instructors can scaffold students' uptake of relevant skills and knowledge before, during, and after their reading task. The same effects are also illustrated in listening comprehension (Ahmadi Safa & Rozati, 2017).Another research studied by Adillah (2019) shows that scaffolding impromptu speaking activities could reduce anxiety and enhance the oral presentation skills of Malaysian undergraduate students. However, little has been talked about effective teachers' scaffolding strategies in online classes, especially online IELTS writing; therefore, this is still worth receiving further considerations.

The twomain aims of this paper are to (1) analyze the most noticeable difficulties that students encountered in the online IELTS writing classes; (2) suggest some tools and practical recommendations so that the teachers could conduct scaffolding strategies effectively to support students to overcome those difficulties in online IELTS writing classes.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Scaffolding and sociocultural theory

According to the sociocultural theory, the development of human mind is the transformation of innate capacities by integrating them with socio-culturally constructed mediational tools (Vygotsky, 1981b) and internalizing the external psychological tools in mediated activities (Vygotsky, 1978). The development first occurs "between people as an inter-psychological category, and then within the child as

an intra-psychological category" (Vygotsky, 1981b, p. 163).It means that the higher psychological function of humans is the result of a process, transforming from the external interpersonal social process to the internal intrapersonal process, called internalization (Vygotsky, 1978). There are shifts from object-regulation, other-regulation to self-regulation in the learning process of the learners. (Vygotsky, 1981a).

The zone of actual development and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) are concepts proposed by Vygotsky (1978). he also suggested that every child has both those zones.While the zone of actual development refers what individuals can accomplish alone, or "a child's mental functions that have been established as a result of certain already completed developmental cycles", the ZPD is defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers".From Vygotsky's standpoint, learning is influenced by social interactions in meaningful contexts, that is the reason why a child or a novice learns with an adult or a more capable peer, and learning occurs within the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD).

2.1.1. Scaffolding definition

Scaffolding is a pedagogical concept which clarifies the assistance or intervention of experts with an aim to finely tune to the child's ongoing learning progress (Wood et al., 1976). This notion was coined by Wood et al. (1976) and widely applied in the field of education, referring to "all teacher support" (Verenikina, 2004, p. 5).

"Interactional scaffolding" is the concept referring to the notion of Scaffolding via collaborative and interactional language (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005, p. 20). While Maybin et al. (1992) claimed that effective scaffolding from this perspective is largely determined by

the quality of teacher language, Aljaafreh & Lantolf (1994) stated that it is mostly determined during feedback and is distinguished by several core features. Quite a few researchers considered contingency one of the most important features of scaffolding (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005; Smit et al., 2013; Wood et al., 1978), which means on-going adjustment of expert help offered based on the success or failure of a task.To be more detailed, if a child succeeds, less help is offered in the next step, but if the child fails, then more control is exercised in the following task, and assistance is provided only when the children need it.The contingency principle needs to be taken into account when actualizing independence of learners when the teachers help them within their ZPD. The reason is mainly because it is the continual adjustment of scaffolding in quantity and quality that makes the assistance sensitive to learning within the ZPD and thus establishing the opportunity for internalization.

2.1.2. Scaffolding Classification

Approaches to classify scaffolding vary during the development of this term, in general, there are three main types, including vertical, sequential, and instructional. The author of this article summarizes the classification and their primary features based on the literature review of Quang (2022)

The second framework of scaffolding that the author based on is the one proposed by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2012). The seven interactional scaffolding strategies were classified into three general types, that is, implicit scaffolding, implicit and explicit scaffolding, and explicit scaffolding - based on their degrees of explicitness: that is, the quantity of information provided by the teachers to assist learners during interactions (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2012; Ohta, 2001).
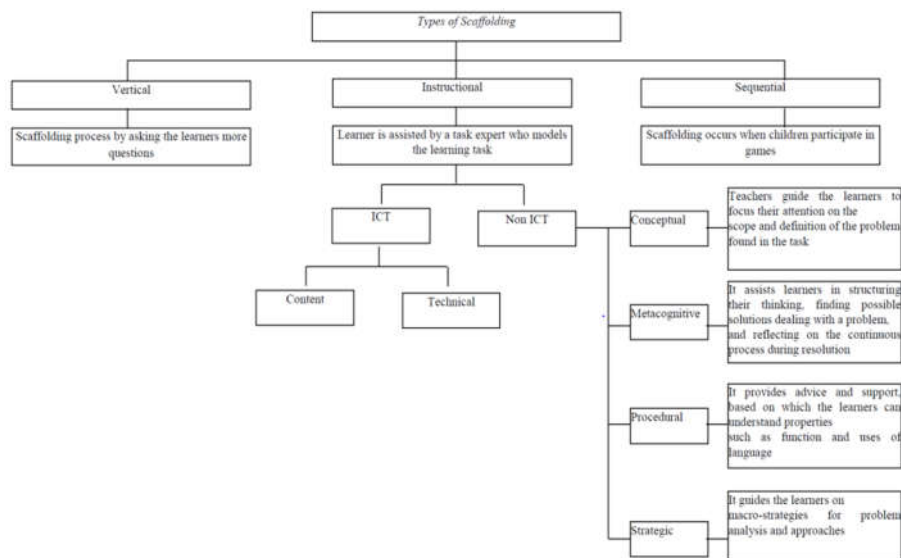
Figure 1: Classification of Scaffolding strategies (Quang, 2022)

Table 1: Interactional Scaffolding Strategies and Their Descriptions.

Types of scaffolding	Interactional scaffolding Description Type	Description
Type 1: Implicit scaffolding	Elicitation (Hammond &Gibbons, 2005)	The teacher offers verbal or gestural hints during interactions to elicit students' responses or ideas via (a) questioning (sometimes with incomplete sentences in arising tone), (b) offering linguistic cues or options and (c) making gestures.
	Prompting (Ohta, 2001)	The teacher indicates a problem by repeating elements in preceding utterance with a rising tone or sayingWhat?"offering a similar form, or explaining the meaning of a wrong word to elicit the correct one.
Type 2: Implicit andexplicit scaffolding	Negotiation	The teacher's verbal behavior that confirms the choice of linguistic forms or meaning with the students by asking confirmation questions.
	Co-construction (Ohta,2001)	The teacher spontaneously contributes a syllable, a morpheme, a word, ora phrase to help students complete utterances.

Types of scaffolding	Interactional scaffolding Description Type	Description
Type 3: Explicit scaffolding	Direct repair	The teacher directly corrects an error committed by a student via focusing on the erroneous part without paying attention to discoursal meaning.
	Instruction	The teacher teaches students language forms unknown to them. If the forms are the designed-in objective of the lesson, (a) the teacher models reading to guide the students to read them, otherwise not, (b) the teacher explains, or (c) the teacher asks the peer students to explain the meaning of the words to those who don't understand.

2.2. Challenges of online learning

In the online environment, there are three main types of e-learning, namely Synchronous, Asynchronous, and Hybrid E-Learning. Synchronous e-learning is the interactions between teachers and students via a simulated cyber classroom in real-time while asynchronous e-learning works on the premise that learners interact with the resources that are created by a learning community stored on the Internet. A hybrid e-learning model occurs when the teachers combine synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication in an English language classroom. This mode contributes to boosting strengths of both those approaches.

There are a wide variety of attempts, trying to find out and classify the challenges that learners encounter when studying with online classes. Rojabi (2020) pointed out that in online teaching and learning, teachers are unable to see their student's body language. It means that there is a lack of nonverbal hint expressions of confusion on the students' faces which helps the teacher measure their

students'understanding.Sun (2014) claimed that online learning lacks an organized schedule, repeated studying, and self-motivation.In his study, Fortune et al. (2011) observed that dimensions of online learning comprise face-to-face communication, learning environment, technology, preferences, and collaboration. These factors have impacts on teaching and learning writing online.

2.3. Previous studies

Through the history of research in language acquisition, learning, and teaching, many scholars have deeply studied the appropriate employment of scaffolding strategies in order to maximize the effectiveness of teaching and learning process.

Scaffolding is a term coined by Wood et al. (1976). Since its introduction, this term has gained popularity in English language teaching, which refers to strategies that facilitate the co-constructed learning process. Ghanizadeh et al. (2020) stated that the practice of scaffolding is used to reduce the difficulty of the learning process and simultaneously allow students to focus on high-order thinking activities to construct new knowledge.According to Alavi & Esmaeilifard, (2021) and Sheen (2008), scaffolding contributed to reducing classroom anxiety. In his study in 2003, Mercer claimed that those kinds of strategies help increase willingness to communicate. Particularly in ELT, scaffolding is also effective in enhancing learner writing performance in different genres, for example, creative narrative (Rababah & Almwajeh, 2018) or persuasive (Felton & Herko, 2004).

In terms of the incorporation of scaffolding in online classes, the study scrutinized by Guzdial's (1994) and Zhang and Quintana's (2012) found that students' online skills such as programming, self-inquiry, and self-regulation could improve thanks to metacognitive scaffolding activities. The result of the study by Zhang and Quintana (2012) also shows that the scaffolding strategies could work along with teachers' and peers' support in facilitating students' online inquiry processes.

In the study on Scaffolding Strategies in Internet-based ELT Classes, Quang (2022) found that a limitation of several contemporary studies into scaffolding is their failures to address that scaffolding language learning and acquisition should be both universal and differential as each learner has their own Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The significant and criticalliterature in Quang's study is that he not only provided an overall picture of how to scaffold ELT learners in the e-learning environment, but he also reminded the readers that it is of paramount important for the teachers to understand that scaffolding should not be considered as perfect teaching techniques but should be applied with thoughtful and differentiated consideration according to learners' characteristics and classroom contexts.

In conclusion, the findings from previous study prove the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in both face-to-face and online teaching and learning process. In a broad sense, scaffolding is the episode of guidance. The author of this article strongly agrees with Quang's viewpoint that it is the teachers' responsibility to conduct reflective teaching based on the fundamental knowledge of scaffolding strategies so that it can best suit their current teaching situation.

2.4. Research Questions

The purposes of this study were to identify the challenges that students confronted in the online IELTS writing classes, and give some pedagogical implications about scaffolding strategies which are useful and practical for certain contexts of teaching and learning English.

To achieve those aims, the study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What challenges did the students of EFA English center face in online IELTS writing courses?

2. What are the suggested scaffolding strategies to deal with those problems for more effective learning and teaching?

3. Methodology

3.1. Settings

The research was conducted in two classes in a private language center. They were selected because they were conducted by using an online platform and it was started in August, 2021. They are students who have suffered from the negative effects of COVID-19 and have experienced studying a one-year online IELTS writing course.

3.2. Participants

This study was conducted in two online IELTS writing classes at EFA English center. 40 learners from these two writing classes participated in the study. They were grade 10th and grade 11th students, and they took this course with an aim to get their target IELTS Writing task 1 band score, at around 6.0 to 7.0. The students are at pre-intermediate level. They just can communicate using frequently used expressions in everyday situations. However, they lack the foundation and skills of IELTS report writing.After finishing the fifteen-week IELTS Writing task 1 course, the students completed the 11-item questionnaire about their challenges in IELTS online Writing task 1 class.

3.3. Research design

After taking the aims of the research into consideration, the author determined the research questions and identified the theoretical framework as well as the methodology for the study. In the next step, the author scrutinized the target population, the sample size, and sampling method. The fourth step continues with the data collection instrument (the questionnaire) being chosen. Subsequently, the data

collection procedures and data analysis strategies are planned and decided.

3.4. Instrument(s)

This study employed a mixed-method to collect the data. Based on the literature review, specifically those focusing on the challenges of online learning and the authors' own experiences in her online teaching process, the author self-designed the questionnaire for the research.The questionnaire consisted of 11 items in which there were 10 items in the form of 5-point Likert (1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neutral; 4: agree; and 5: strongly agree), and one item for the open-ended question. The questionnaire survey was delivered and collected to examine the students' challenges in their Online IELTS writing class.

All the responses to the questionnaire were collected online through Google Forms. In addition to that, the data obtained from the questionnaire were presented in the form of tables to indicate the challenges that the students of EFA English center faced in their IELTS online Writing task 1.The result of the "open - ended" questions were also thoroughly considered.After analyzing all the students' open-ended answers relating to their challenges in the online IELTSwriting class, the author synthesized that there was no new problem suggested by students in comparison with the framework including the questionnaire with the 10 primary challengesdesigned by the author.All the comments of difficulties in the learning process of online IELTS writing suggested by the students in the open-ended questions then were categorized into 10 major problems presented in the 5 - point Likert questionnaire. Those are evidence for the author to better identify and analyze the most noticeable challenges that learners have faced in the online IELTS class. Based on those findings, the author gives some suggestions from the author's own personal experience and pedagogical implications from other scholars about

common tools that are easily accessible to teachers to scaffold students in online writing lessons.

3.5. Design of the study

The study has 8 main parts, including the introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, pedagogical implications, conclusion, and references. While the introduction gives the overview of the study, the literature goes in-deep into critically reviewing knowledge of scaffolding types, functions, and strategies in contemporary research. The methodology details the settings, participants, instruments of the study and clearly explains the process of data collection and analysis.The next part, findings clarify the problems that students in IELTS online writing class encountered, which would be the foundation for the author to give some pedagogical implications so that teachers could apply those different scaffolding strategies to improve their teaching.

4. Data Collection & Analysis

The 11-item questionnaire was designed to collect data for quantitative and qualitative analysis, as shown in Table 3. The data analysis provided the percentages of the student's answers to the first ten questions of the questionnaire.

Table 3: Questionnaire for challenges of IELTS online writing learning

Difficulties that students encountered in the online IELTS writing classes	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I have technical problems when Itake this online IELTS writing class.	68.7%	0%	26.3 %	5 %	0%
I find it difficult to write the report due to my poor linguistic background.	0%	1.6 %	33%	46 %	19.4%

Difficulties that students encountered in the online IELTS writing classes	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I find it is hard to analyze the data and group information in the IELTS writing task 1 question.	0%	4.8%	23.8%	38.1%	33.3%
I find it is easy to be distracted by the surrounding environment during the online IELTS writing class.	4.9%	19%	23.8%	19%	33.3%
There is a lack of student – student interaction when I take this online IELTS writing course.	9.5%	23.4%	14.3%	52 %	19%
I am anxious when the teacher shows my answer on the screen then tries to correct the mistakes in my writing in front of the class.	4.8%	63.2%	28 %	0 %	4 %
I have some psychological problems when I take this online writing class.	0%	0%	28.6%	56%	15.4%
I found it is moredifficult to gain knowledge when I take the online IELTS writing class	0%	14.3 %	42.9%	28.6%	14.2%
Some students in my groups are too dominated in terms of digital skills so that I became more passive when working in a group.	4.8%	23.8%	33.3%	38.1%	0%
I would like to take other writing test types.	0%	0%	14.3%	76.2%	9.5%

5. Findings & discussion

5.1. Technical problems

Most of the students (68.7%) reported that they had no technical difficulties when studying the Online IELTS writing class.This figure

is significantly higher than the teacher's anticipation. Most of them found it easy and intriguing to use and study with a combination of websites and solf-wares, such as Quizizz, Slido, and Google drive, Google form in their IELTS writing lessons. Most of them are equipped with enough digital devices and equipment to study online. Only a small number of students stated that the slow internet transmission or wifi had adverse impacts on their online writing learning. This is not in line with the findings in the study of Mahyoob (2020) which describes that EFL learners in some remote towns are incompetent in using online applications such as Google Classrooms or Microsoft Teams.

5.2. Poor Linguistic background

Nearly a half of the surveyed students admitted that one of their most serious problems is their poor English proficiency.Many of them claimed that they lacked advanced vocabulary and structures to write the report to analyze the chart, graph and maps. Some of them listed the poor paraphrasing skill as their biggest problem because they struggled to find collocations to rewrite keywords in the questions.

5.3. Low critical thinking skill

A large proportion of students admitted that they struggled to analyze the data provided in the charts, maps or diagrams. Many of them stated that they found it was hard to summarize the key features of the graph "*I could not interpret the data given in the chart*". Others had problems with grouping information and finding the main pattern "*I could not group the information and find the common trend of different items shown in the chart*".Besides, some students were unable to identify the most significant features of the chart "*There were so many details in the chart, so I could not decide what is the most important feature to report in my writing*". The author of the research supposed that this is one of the most serious problems that

both teachers and learners need to thoroughly discuss and find out the feasible solutions in order to contribute to better report writing products. The difficulty of low critical thinking skill significantly differs from the results of previous studies that the author has reviewed.The author found no challenge of the online writing class relating to low critical thinking analyzed in previous research; therefore, this result could be considered as one of the most important findings in this study.

5.4. Low concentration

Low concentration and interaction is one of the problems that many other scholars mentioned in their previous studies. Similarly, in this study, over a half of the students complained about the problem of distractions from the surrounding environment which disrupted and adversely affected their studying effectiveness.

5.5. Low interaction

The findings revealed that 52% of the students agreed that they needed more interaction with teachers and classmates, and 19% of them strongly agreed that they lacked direct interaction when they studied writing online. This is one of the factors curbing the effectiveness of their studying process.

5.6. Anxiety when receiving teachers' feedback

Surprisingly, a large proportion of students (68%) did not feel nervous when the teachers showed their answers on the screen then tried to correct the mistakes in their writing in front of the class.This differs from results reported in Gherhes et al.(2021) thatstudents have many concerns, including shyness, anxiety when receiving synchronous feedback, fear of exposing personal space, or other people's interference in the background. In contrast, most of them reported that they hope that teachers could spend more time directly correcting the mistakes in their writing in the synchronous e-learning

writing class because this online type of correction seems to be easier for them to follow and comprehensively understand the teachers' feedback. They also agreed that their writing has improved through carefully studying from their own mistakes and avoiding repeating those in other writing tests.

5.7. Psychological problems

The findings also indicated that over a half of the students (56%) had some psychological problems when they studied writing courses online. They thought that staying away from school made them uncomfortable. Maybe the most serious problem is the feeling of isolation and demotivation during the online writing course.This finding is in accordance with those suggested by Gillett-Swan, (2017) in her study about challenges of online learning, which indicates that teachers and facilitators should minimize student barriers of psychological problems in their learning process.

5.8 Different technical proficiencies

Different levels of digital literacy is one of the problems agreed by many researchers as the inhibiting factors which negatively affect online learning.In this study, one-third of the total made complaints about some over-dominated students who took too much time talking, working or even violating the studying time of other members in the group. In addition to that many students are better at technology while some are not skill-full enough to follow the pace of all the online writing activities instructed and implemented by the teacher in the IELTS online writing class.

8.9. Unsuitable test types

According to Hill (2010), exam-oriented classrooms are still popular among many EFL classrooms, particularly in Asian countries. In a high-stakes exam context, the ultimate objective is for students to pass an exam with high marks. Regarding the test types, this study

revealed that 86% of the students agreed and strongly agreed that they would like to take other test types instead of repeatedly writing the report in 20 minutes as the requirements of the official IELTS writing test. Some reported that this type of test put them under high pressure, so that they desired to have opportunities to experience and practice with other writing test types with lower pressure.

6. Pedagogical Implications

Based on the findings about the problems students of IELTS online writing class have faced during their learning process, the author gives some suggestions in order that other teachers could find them practical and helpful in dealing with those obstacles, providing micro-strategies that lead learners step by step to reach their development.

In this part, the author tries to discuss both differential and universal scaffolding in different contexts. The following suggestions are based on both the framework mentioned in the literature review and personal experience.

6.1. Technical problems

For this problem, the teachers should give students an orientation session and software navigation guidance before dividing students into groups. Also, the teacher should move around each virtual room to scaffold students technically so that they can use digital tools successfully in completing their tasks. Another technique is that the teachers could assign the students better at technology skill to be the technical leader to support other members in the group. Zoom's breakout room, Google Meet are suggested ICT tools that the teachers could use for those activities.

6.2. Poor Linguistic background

If students have problems with their linguistic competence, teachers also need an in depth understanding of the learners' linguistic

backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses so that they can comprehensively support students. Teachers can provide the students at beginner level materials and instructions both in Vietnamese and English, which reduces the linguistic loads so that students can comprehend the lesson more easily. Moreover, teachers should provide students with certain sets of vocabulary and structures which are simple to use and easy to remember to apply in each type of IELTS writing task 1.In order to effectively carry out those activities, some ICT tools highly recommended by expert teachers are such as Emails, YouTube, Google Classroom, Groups on social networking sites

6.3. Low critical thinking skill

Low critical thinking skills are one of the most serious problems that deter students from completing the IELTS writing task 1. Dealing with this problem, teachers should scaffold the students by asking them more critical questions to analyze the charts or diagrams in the process of brainstorming for the outline of the writing.For example, here are some questions students should raise and answer when brainstorming for writing a report about the maps "*What has been made bigger? What has been improved or changed in some other ways? What has been replaced with something new? What has been kept the same?",* and so on. Besides, teachers also should equip students with the skills to group information and find the common pattern for that group. ICT tools which could be helpful when teachers apply those activities are Zoom screen-sharing function, whiteboard, annotation, real-time online mind-mapping platforms (e.g. Miro, Mindmeiser), Project management platforms (Trello, Basecamp).

6.4. Low concentration

A large number of students complained about the low concentration due to their short attention span when learning online. In this situation, teachers can pair the more experienced students with their less-experienced counterparts and assign specific roles to each student in

order that they could make an effort and contribute to the common goal of the team. Teachers should vary online activities and set appropriate time limitations for each activity which is suitable for short attention span of students in online studying.Some ICT tools teachers could use to lighten the atmosphere are online team quiz games (Kahoot, Quizlet), Zoom's breakout room, Slido, Google Docs's collaborator invitation, Microsoft Office's share-to-cloud mode.

6.5. Low interaction

Many teachers find students' low interaction tobe a problem that could prevent the effectiveness of the learning and teaching process.Teachers should divide the large number of students in a class into smaller groups in virtual rooms where four or five students can work together and switch among those groups to provide adequate scaffolding for each group.In addition,teachers should foster good rapport between group members and establish supportive dynamics among them to guarantee that they are willing to collaborate without constant attention from the teachers. Another scaffolding strategy worth considering is that teachers may assign specific roles to each student in a group so that they can report any problems back to the teachers or call for teacher scaffolding if necessary. In those cases, the online voting system of Google forms, or Vote feature of Facebook Messenger, Breakout room's raise hand function are considered the most suitable ICT tools to support the teaching and learning process.

6.6. Anxiety when receiving teachers' feedback

If the students experience anxiety when receiving teachers' feedback, teachers may consider delaying feedback by sending comments in asynchronous platforms to avoid the fear of the feeling of losing face of some students in online writing class. Another peer-scaffolding strategy is that teachers can also encourage the students to

make peer-feedback which could contribute to improving students' self-organization, inter-dependence, and independence in learning. In the online learning environment, virtual gifts, such as digital icons, reward tags, and free e-books are rewards many students would be excited if they receive from the teachers. It would contribute to easing the anxious feelings of students when receiving feedback from the teachers.

6.7. Psychological problems

Psychological problems are unavoidable which result from long periods of studying online and social lockout.Teachers should arrange consulting periods to listen to the students' emotional issues and support them emotionally by giving them advice and particular support for each student's problems. Also, teachers and students could share their perspectives in the form of a video clip or discussion thread uploaded on the classroom platform, class Zalo or Facebook to create a sense of belonging and a virtual community for sharing ideas and opinions.

6.8. Unsuitable test types

As regards to the problem of unsuitable test types, teachers can direct students to discuss in online groups and help them identify some typical exam traps instead of letting them just individually write a report in a fixed time.Teachers also could ask students to co-operate to analyze the writing questions, make the outline and then each one will be responsible for writing one part of the report. In order to reduce the students' anxiety during exam preparation, teachers may occasionally administer mock tests with topics closely related to the students' interests, experience, career, study, or background knowledge. Online voting system of Google forms, or Vote feature of Facebook Messenger, Quizzi test are ICT tools which can effectively aid the teachers in applying those scaffolding strategies.

7. Conclusion

The study critically reviews knowledge of scaffolding types, functions, and strategies in contemporary research as well as the challenges that students encountered in online classes.The author thoroughly analyzes the problems that students in EFA center have faced during the process of studying IELTS online writing class.Based on those findings, the author has also presented specific tools and recommendations for teachers to scaffold students in certain situations in IELTS online class. Both differential and universal scaffolding in different contexts is suggested so that teachers could maximize the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies. The study suggests both one-on-one scaffolding and small-group scaffolding, both teacher scaffolding and peer scaffolding together with technical scaffolding. It is the teachers who should base on the comprehensive understanding of their learners to take the most suitable scaffolding strategies for them and combine different scaffolding strategies in order to help the students reach their full potential.

There are some limitations of the study that should be addressed in future research. First, the data involved in this study was collected from a small group of students at EFA center, so it is not completely generalizable. Second, due to the limitation of time and the difficulties during the COVID-19 period, the data collected seems not rich enough since the data collection tool is only a questionnaire. Therefore, the instruments applied in future studies should cover more research tools, such as interviews or observations to ensure the validity of the research.

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