

论文摘要

随着英语作为国际语言的普及,其作为沟通交流工具的作用也越大越大,英语教学在我国也得到了前所未有的高度重视。然而,尽管学校、教师及学生都付出了大量的努力,英语教学的效果并不理想,学生的书面语言表达能力还不尽人意。特别是针对大学生最常遇到的议论文,如何运用英语有效地表达自己的思想成为了困扰英语学习者的一大难题。在此,笔者尝试着将支架式教学法运用到英语议论文教学中,目的在于寻求一种更为有效的议论文写作教学方法。研究的结果可以帮助大学英语教师对支架式教学法在英语议论文写作教学中的应用获得更深入的了解。

在文献综述部分,笔者对有关支架式教学的研究与应用进行了回顾,介绍了英语议论文教学在中国大学中的现有情况,指出了将支架式教学法运用于课堂的可行性。

本实验由两个部分组成。第一个部分是一个为期三个月的课堂实验,实验对象是两个由写作水平相当的非英语专业大一学生组成的平行班级,一组被看作实验组,另一组被看作对照组。这两组均由笔者进行课堂教学。在实验组中,通过分组学习、课堂互动以及老师的指导来实现支架的搭建。而在对照组,在同样的教学时间中,仍然采用传统的写作教学方法,即以练促写的方法。三个月后,两个班级会同时进行一次写作测评,对学生的文章从主旨、一致性、过渡、主题句以及地道性这五个方面进行分析,看支架式教学法在这些方面是否有效。第二部分是在实验组中进行的问卷调查,以了解学生对支架式教学法的效果与方法有怎样的看法。

研究表明,在三个月的实验过程中,支架式教学方法在除了一致性这个方面的效果不理想外,在其他四个方面都获得了明显的收效。大多数实验组的同学也都认为这种方法比传统的写作教学法都有效,并且愿意在今后的教学中继续采用这种方法。

关键词: 支架式教学法; 大学英语议论文写作教学

Abstract

The thesis intends to find a more effective and efficient way for the instruction of argumentative writing in Chinese universities. The result of the research can help college English teachers gain insights into the theory of scaffolding instruction and its application to writing classes.

The thesis reviews the development of scaffolding approach, which derives from Vygotsky's theory of Zone of Proximal Development. The current situation of English argumentative writing in Chinese universities has also been introduced. Since scaffolding approach is feasible in the argumentative writing class, a research was conducted to find out its effectiveness.

The research consists of two phases. The first phase was a three-month experiment. Two classes of freshmen were selected, one class as experimental class and the other as control class. In the experimental class, "scaffolding" was built for the subjects to facilitate their writing process, while the control class still used the traditional method. After three months' instruction, a final test was given for both classes for the purpose of comparing the testing results in terms of theme, unity, transition, topic sentences and idiomatic writing. The second phase was a survey with questionnaires conducted in the experimental class to find the subjects' feelings about the new approach and the steps taken during the instruction.

According to data analysis, the scaffolding approach was proved to be effective in all the aspects except the area of unity. The majority of the students in the experimental class was satisfied with this new approach and preferred it to continue.

Key words: scaffolding approach; the Zone of Proximal Development; English argumentative writing

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Chapter I : Introduction

1.1 Significance of the study

Although English learning and teaching have received much attention, writing has not been attached the importance it deserves in the advanced education in China. Due to the fact that there is no writing class specified for non-English majors according to the curriculum and students prevalently lack interest in it, the current situation of writing instruction is not so desirable. Most of the instruction of writing still follows the conventional process: the teacher assigns a task, and the students think about it individually, put down their words and then hand in their products (Zheng, 2003). In particular, argumentative writing, as one of the major writing styles university students of non-English majors are dealing with, is in need of a more effective instruction that can raise students' interest and involvement.

While scholars are searching for a more effective pedagogy for the writing instruction, an approach based on the scaffolding theory that is originally applied as a cognitive improvement tool comes about to become a choice for the instruction of argumentative writing. As the name implies, scaffolding approach is to provide necessary assistance for the learners during the learning process. The opportunity lies in the fact that teachers and more competent learners, under the guided circumstance, have the ability to build a source of knowledge, a new source that can provide scaffolding for less competent learners. The assistance from scaffolding can facilitate learners' acquisition process. As the learners have commanded the new skills independently afterwards, the original scaffolding can then be removed. The scaffolding approach derives from Russian psychologist Vygotsky's theory of zone of proximal development, which will be explained in detail in the second chapter.

Although this kind of approach has been studied and applied to some instructions in Western countries, its application in China is not very common. The learning process for the improvement of argumentative writing is similar to other knowledge acquisition process. Therefore, this study tries to apply scaffolding approach, as a

relatively new one in China, to the instruction of argumentative writing. The effectiveness of the instruction is to be evaluated through the final writing task for the students at the end of a three-month experiment. In addition, a survey on students' opinion on scaffolding instruction applied to argumentative writing has been conducted. The ultimate purpose is to find out a more effective method to improve argumentative writing skills of university students.

1.2 The research questions

The research questions addressed in this thesis are as follows:

- (1) Does scaffolding instruction contribute to students' better performance in general in terms of argumentative writing?
- (2) If it does strengthen students' general ability in argumentative writing, in what particular aspects does it contribute to better performance: theme, unity, topic sentences, transition or idiomatic writing?
- (3) Are the approaches of scaffolding instruction effective and efficient in terms of improving the performance of the students in the experimental group?

The research questions will be studied one by one through the three-month experiment as well as the analysis on the collected data.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The first chapter presents an introduction to the background and the layout of the thesis, while a literature review on scaffolding instruction, an introduction of the nature of argumentative writing and the background of writing instruction for non-English majors in the universities of China are covered in the next section. In addition, demonstrating the feasibility of applying scaffolding instruction to argumentative writing, the way has been paved for the conduct of experiment mentioned.

The thesis then presents a detailed description on the designing of the three-month research conducted in two classes, one as experimental group and the

other as control group. A survey has also been conducted in forms of questionnaire for the purpose of collecting and analyzing the students' opinions on this new approach. The detailed research procedures are introduced in the next chapter, and an empirical case of scaffolding approach applied in the experimental class is provided.

The fifth chapter analyzes the data collected, including the results of the final writing test of both the control class and the experimental class and the questionnaires for the experimental class. Based on the analysis, the effect of scaffolding approach applied to the instruction of argumentative writing is shown through a comparison between the test results of the two classes and the analysis on the questionnaires.

The whole study of the thesis is summarized in the last chapter. It is a conclusion on the application of the scaffolding approach, which includes the implication for both teachers and students. It also points out some limitations of this study, which need to be overcome in the actual application in the future.

Chapter II : Theories of scaffolding instruction and argumentative writing

2.1 Scaffolding instruction

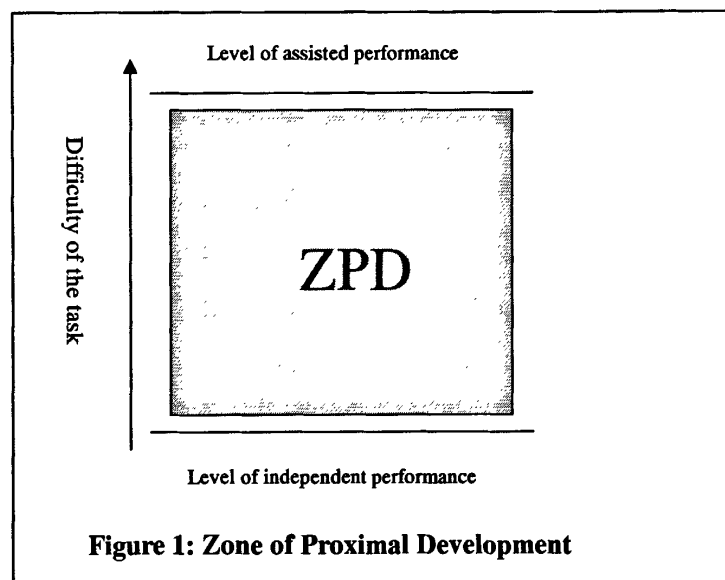
2.1.1 The zone of proximal development

The concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) is first introduced by the Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978) in relation to his concerns with instruction, psychological testing, and as part of a broader discussion of the relationship of learning and development. Vygotsky's writing is of substantial importance to the theory and practice of cognitive psychology and its application to education. ZPD, as one of his primary contentions, is designed to accelerate children's cognitive development, rather than providing existing experience at the individuals' current level of cognitive maturity. He claims that learning and development are interrelated from a child's very first day of life (Vygotsky, 1978: 84), and the process of development is dynamic rather than static. That is, the learning capacity of children cannot be defined through only one development level. It is actually determined by two developmental levels, i.e. actual development level and potential development level.

The actual development level is defined as functions that have already matured, that is, the end products of development (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). Tasks that can be achieved independently by a child without any assistance from the others can demonstrate his or her actual development level. Traditionally, if a child can complete some task through imitation or an adult's help, it would not be deemed as indicative of the child's mental development. That's why when we are using traditional tests to determine a child's mental development level we are almost always dealing with the actual mental development level. If it were the truth, the process of development would be confined statically. For instance, two 7-year-old children are both upon entrance into primary school. Their intellectual levels are similarly categorized into the 7-year-old level, because their actual capacities of independently solving problems

are both at this level. However, can we make the conclusion that the two children are of the same mental development level? The answer is probably no. With same and proper assistance from adult or more competent peers, the two children may demonstrate different levels of learning capacities.

In order to explain the above phenomenon, Vygotsky proposes the concept of the zone of proximal development. It is the distance between the actual development level determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problems solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). In other words, the zone covers the distance between an individual's level of assisted performance and the level of independent performance (see Figure 1[Deborah & Elena, 1998]).



What attracts Vygotsky so much is neither the developed, matured development level nor independent, isolated activities, but the developing or maturing mental functions that are fostered and assessed through collaborative activities. As Vygotsky suggests:

The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed the “buds” or

“flowers” of development rather than the “fruits” of development. The actual development level characterizes mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively. (1978: 86)

For Vygotsky, an individual's actual and potential development levels vary independently with the potential level playing a more central role because it represents a window into the person's future mental growth. As Vygotsky saw things, a learner who responds to help (or regulation¹) from someone else, "must be considered to be at a more advanced developmental level than the one who fails to do so, because the learner who responds to help can be expected to show a more rapid rate of actual development" (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994: 468). In Vygotsky's own word, "what is in the zone of proximal development today will be the actual development level tomorrow" (Vygotsky, 1978: 87).

Further reading of Vygotsky's theory reveals that what he emphasized was a sociocultural context in which individuals are developing. Vygotsky himself pioneers in the notion that children learn within communities, rather than strictly as individuals. His notions have become the foundational concepts of sociocultural theory. Underlying this theory is the belief that human beings are social by nature. Therefore, human cognition develops first through social interaction. Born into a certain society, a child learns his or her world through participation in the experiences within the certain context. Then, it is of course important to keep in mind that "any line of action that a person is pursuing is always carried out in relation to a specific environment" (Kendon, 1990: 247). How individuals mediate understanding, create a sense of identity, attempt self-regulation, and so forth, then, have much to do with what is available to them (Van Lier, 2000). In connection to this notion, it is critical to realize that "people in interaction become environments for each other" (Erickson & Schultz,

1 A child, in the early stage of cognitive development, relies on the environment to accomplish certain tasks. This stage is called object regulation. The next stage is other regulation, in which a child depends on his or her parent or a more capable peer for assistance. A child will then grow into the self-regulation stage. A child is finally independent and capable of exerting control over his or her environment. This is not to say, however, he or she has total control over all the tasks for all time (Lantolf & Appel, 1994).

1997: 22, citing McDermott, 1976). Also, the background or larger contexts influence activities.

2.1.2 The concept of Scaffolding

As is mentioned in the previous section, the concept of ZPD is put forward by Vygotsky in the research on cognitive development process of children. However, his theory is later broadened by contemporary Vygotskian scholars to serve as a general metaphor for human development in a sociocultural context (Newman & Holzman, 1993). Interaction in this context not only facilitates language learning but is a causative force in acquisition.

Vygotsky argues that meaning is socially constructed, and hence learning and cognitive development is affected by interactions that an individual has with another who is more skilled or knowledgeable. Here two concepts have been introduced to explain the manner in which an individual gains knowledge: mediation and internalization (Ashman, 2002: 96). Mediation refers to the need for someone other than the learner to translate knowledge about the society and culture so that it can be internalized by the learner. Internalization refers to the learner's "ownership" of concepts or meaning that has been provided through instruction. That is, children must understand meaning and integrate the knowledge into their own thinking. In other words, they transform external stimuli to internal "codes" that are consistent with their own knowledge base by changing and modifying the original ideas, and applying their unique character to them.

Of such a great importance in the acquisition, interaction should thus be encouraged during the instruction process. Through interaction, learners can maintain assistance from more competent peer learners as well as instructors and realize the process of mediation and internalization. Problem-solving abilities of learners will also be enhanced during the process.

One way of providing the necessary interaction and assistance is to scaffold the learning of individuals. The term "scaffolding" derives from the comparison of

learning to a construction of a building. Whenever a construction project starts, scaffolding is always needed outside the main body of the building for the purpose of facilitating the construction. As long as the construction has been completed, the scaffolding shall be removed. This term in the area of acquisition and instruction was coined by Bruner (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) to specify the types of assistance that make it possible for learners to function at higher levels of their ZPD. “Scaffolding” is currently used to describe how an expert can facilitate the learner’s transition from assisted to independent performance (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Meyer, 1993). According to Ashman and Conway, scaffolding refers to the provision of a temporary, adjustable support that is provided by a teacher to assist students in developing and extending their skills in the early phases of instruction (2002: 97). The teacher models the desired behavior and other learning skills to facilitate the learning process in the beginning. While the learners have made progress through the scaffolding (i.e. the teacher’s support), the scaffolding is then gradually removed. This withdrawal of direction enables the gradual transfer of responsibility for the instructional input from the teacher to the students (Rogoff and Gardner, 1984).

Though different scholars have defined “scaffolding” from different angles and with different words, it is worth mentioning that all of their definitions can reflect two inherent notions of scaffolding. Firstly, there must be a reciprocal relationship between the instructor or more competent learner and the individual. The former (usually the instructor) provides the content and focus on appropriate processes, and the latter is actively involved in gaining both knowledge and skill. Secondly, there must be a progressive transfer of responsibility for initiating learning from the teacher to the learner.

2.1.3 Instructional implications

Since scaffolding is a term proposed for the purpose of better providing assistance to learners, it definitely has its implications in terms of instructions. Based on the principle of facilitating the cognitive development within the ZPD, there are

also criteria for scaffolding. That is to say, not all kinds of assistance in the process of instruction belong to scaffolding. From Vygotsky's definition of ZPD, it can be known that the assistance of scaffolding can come from both instructors and more competent learners.

For scaffolding to be successful, instructors must help learners develop strategies that can be applied to novel problems they will encounter, rather than just provide answers to specific questions. An instructor can scaffold problem solving by prompting the learner to use strategies within his or her range. Eventually, the learner no longer need the instructor's assistance and can activate the necessary strategy initiatively.

In terms of scaffolding instruction, scholars have proposed related components as well as issues that need to pay attention to. According to Wertsch (1985), six functions constitute the process of scaffolding and are deployed dynamically as experts negotiate task definitions with novices, assess their level of competence, and determine what type of assistance they need to accomplish a particular part of the task²:

1. Recruitment (R) --- Drawing the novice's attention to the task.
2. Reduction in degrees of freedom (RDF) --- Simplifying or limiting the task demands.
3. Direction maintenance (DM) --- Maintaining motivation and progress toward the goals of the task.
4. Marking critical features (MCF) --- Calling the novice's attention to important aspects of the task.
5. Frustration control (FC) --- Decreasing the novice's stress.
6. Demonstration (D) --- Modeling the preferred procedures to achieve the goals. (Wertsch, 1985: 52)

² In terms of L2 Learning, task refers to any interaction during a class whereby students are expected to participate in speech or writing, generate a solution or answer, or derive an understanding from new material. Specifically, a task can take the form of expressing one's opinion in a group discussion about a video or text, engaging in form-focused exercises or problem-solving activity, or arriving at generalizations about the L2, target language cultural information, or the meaning of new vocabulary (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000)

During the process, the role of an instructor is a mediator. He or she provides the learner with a scaffolding environment, which can recruit the learner's interest, keep the learner focused and oriented towards task-related goals, and provide models of what appropriate questions and answers should be like. The purpose is to build a bridge between what the learner knows and can do and what the learner needs to be able to know and do.

In addition, according to Arbitman-Smith and his colleagues, the instructor-initiated activities that can occur in this process include:

- assisting the learner to focus on the task by reducing the number and complexity of stimuli
- providing opportunities for learners to have repeated exposure to important stimuli
- providing opportunities for learners to perceive and understand relationships between previous and current experiences
- providing opportunities for learners to generalize their experiences (Arbitman-Smith, et al.1984: 171)

Vygotsky, when introducing the concept of Zone of Proximal Development, declares that "more competent peers", as well as adults, can aid children's development (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). He argues that learners gain relevant information, new patterns of thought, and problem-solving strategies from the interactions they have with their peers. This argument can also be applied to the cognitive process of adult learners. Interaction with a more competent peer, no matter in terms of children or adult learners, has been shown to be highly effective in inducing cognitive development. During the process of instruction, teacher can encourage collaborative and cooperative learning among learners, through which the teacher can manage large numbers of students and ensure that their time is spent productively. Based on such interaction, students can maintain the chance to be active members of a group, and thus construct the necessary scaffolding for their peer learners.

2.2 Argumentative writing

2.2.1 The nature of writing and argumentative writing

The physical act of writing is sometimes thought of as mainly the result of cognitive effort on the part of an individual writer. However, it is important to view writing not only as an individual task, but also as a social and cultural act. Writing is “an act that takes place within a context, that accomplishes a particular purpose, and that is appropriately shaped for its intended audience” (Hamp-Lyons and Kroll, 1997: 8). In a similar vein, Sperling (1996: 55) notes that “writing, like language in general, is a meaning-making activity that is socially and culturally shaped and individually and socially purposeful.”

As one of the most common and widely-used writing styles nowadays, argumentative writing plays an important role in both daily life and academic study. People need to use this writing style whenever there is a need to resolve an uncertainty about something, to respond to an assertion or question or challenge something which is believed to be certain by a significant party. In other words, argumentation is a kind of dialogue, oral or written, while the argument produced is intended to persuade and convince another party.

Deriving from the ancient Greek rhetoric and having experienced a thousand years' polishing, argumentation has already developed a distinctive set of features and mechanism. Scholars have defined argument or argumentation based on their studies as well as the basic features. One of the most influential theories currently in the U.S. was proposed by Toulmin mainly in his two books: the *Uses of Argument* (1958) and *An Introduction to Reasoning* (Rieke and Janik, 1979). Toulmin's theory is very popular in America, and the teaching of argumentative writing in the U.S. is mostly founded thereon.

Argumentation is defined by Toulmin as “the whole activity of making claims, challenging them, backing them up by producing reasons, criticizing those reasons, rebutting those criticisms” (Toulmin, Rieke & Janik, 1979: 13). Argumentation refers to an interactive activity which evolves round a central claim supported by data. For

Toulmin, and in fact for many other scholars, logic should be based on the actuality of life, being content-based rather than purely form-centered:

Logic is concerned with the soundness of the claims we make – with the solidity of the grounds we produce to support them, the firmness of the backing we provide for them – or, to change the metaphor, with the sort of case we present in defense of our claims. (Toulmin, 1958: 7)

For the same purpose of convincing people of a belief or an argument, argumentative writing also follows the track. That is, first make a claim or statement about a certain event or issue, and then provide essential support for it through related data, whose relevance to the claim is established by the underlying assumptions, which are in turn built on backing. Due to the fact that a claim cannot be true in all circumstances, appropriate modal qualifiers are needed to contain the claim.

In fully complying with these rules, one should keep in mind that his or her writing is supposed to assert a claim through reasoning among known or unknown audience. Rorrenberg (1997) depicts this dialog nature of argumentation in the following words:

Even when our audience is unknown, we write to persuade the unconvinced, to acquaint them with good reasons for changing their minds. (Rorrenberg, 1997: 4)

Often the writer of an argument about a public issue is responding to another writer or speaker who has made a claim that needs to be supported or opposed. (Rorrenberg, 1997: 13)

In conclusion, argumentative writing features in a sequence of interactive activities or steps of reasoning with a purpose of persuading or convincing the other people (audience) of a claim or an assertion.

2.2.2 Teaching of argumentative writing in universities of China

With a high practical value, argumentative writing is strongly emphasized in the English teaching of universities. Writing tasks that university students undertake most

frequently are argumentative writing. Language fluency testing carried out for learners of English as a second language, such as TOEFL and IELTS, prevalently prefer to adopt argumentative writing to test the examinees. Strongly featuring in different characteristics from other writing styles, i.e. narration, exposition, etc., argumentative writing demands a different way of instruction.

On the current situation of argumentative writing instruction in universities, many researches and investigations have been carried out. In most universities of China, the curricula for English class of non-English majors are similarly scheduled. Based on the basic skills of English as a language, there are intensive reading, oral English and listening practice. While there is no course particularly scheduled for writing, this skill is always cultivated on intensive reading class as a “by-product”. As a matter of fact, since there are at most four teaching hours for this course per week, writing can only be taught at most once two weeks. All of the major writing styles should be involved, and hence even less time is left for argumentative writing. Limited teaching hours, the inherent difficulty in writing in a second language and students’ lack of interest have all become obstacles against the successful improvement of argumentative writing for the non-English majors.

For reference, the present author has observed and recorded a writing class for freshmen in a college (the same college where the experiment for this study has been conducted) as a sample. It was the second class for this writing style. The task during this 45-minutes’ class session was to practice argumentative writing. The class procedures were as follows:

1. The teacher reviewed the characteristics of argumentative writing with the students and put an emphasis on the structure. The students were told that argumentative writing was one of the most common writing styles in our daily life, and its purpose was to persuade other people. Then the teacher pointed out that a good argumentative writing was consisted of a clear theme, at least three supporting ideas, and a brief conclusion. This session took about 8 minutes.
2. A sample piece of argumentative writing was distributed to the students to obtain a visual understanding on the structure of this writing style. This session took about 6 minutes.

3. A writing task was assigned to the students. The topic was “the understanding of winning”, and they were asked to hand in their writings of about 150 words after 30 minutes.

This writing session was arranged compactly due to the time limit. The class was over when the students finished writing. There was no time for other activities during the class. According to the teacher, there is usually little time for arranging group activities during the class, and the students’ writings will be graded by the teacher after class. The teacher seldom has time during class to analyze the results of the previous writing.

A research in Shanghai Jiao Tong University (Wang Yi et al., 2006) can better illustrate the writing teaching for non-English majors in universities. The subjects of this research were non-English major freshmen in Shanghai Jiao Tong University. It is found that the average number of writing tasks per semester is 5 to 8, half of which are usually argumentative writing. The common practice is that the teachers often assign writing tasks as homework with a requirement on the number of words after the completion of text instruction. As for correction, teachers usually underline improper grammatical usages in red and then mark the paper. Sometimes there will be generalized comments. The writings are later given back to students and occasionally discussed in class with a focus on correction of grammar and collocations. Questionnaires for 2783 freshmen in this research have shown the degree of students’ satisfaction on this kind of instruction. The results are quoted in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Degree of satisfaction on writing instruction

	Very unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Just fine	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Number of students	122	329	1138	1012	182
Percentage	4%	12%	41%	36%	7%

(Wang Yi et al., 2006)

It can be seen from this form that more than half of the students are not satisfied with the writing instruction in university (only 43% of them are satisfied). As a key comprehensive university in China, Shanghai Jiao Tong University can, to a large degree, represent the general situation of writing instruction in universities, which is a very serious problem. Dissatisfaction with the instruction can cause lack of interest which will be an obstacle difficult to surmount. That is why there is an urgent need to carry out reform on the traditional writing instruction as well as the curricula.

2.2.3 Feasibility of applying scaffolding instruction to argumentative writing

The possibility of successfully applying scaffolding instruction to argumentative writing has been enabled by two factors.

First of all, scaffolding instruction, with ZPD as its theoretical basis, features in an interactive class instruction. The theory of ZPD emphasizes enhancing cognitive development level of children through assistance, especially from adults. Contemporary Vygotskian scholars, such as Newman and Holzman (1993), later broadened the concept of ZPD to be applied to the overall human development in a sociocultural context. That is, this theory is also applicable to adult learners within an interactive context.

Second, the nature of writing, especially argumentative writing, as is previously mentioned, makes it necessary as well as possible to apply scaffolding instruction. According to Ding et al. (1994), argumentative writing can be defined as:

While an expository paper makes known something and explains it to make the reader understand, an argumentative essay tries to make the reader agree with its point of view and support it, to persuade him to change his mind or behavior, and to approve a policy or a course of action that it proposes (Ding, et al. 1994:234).

It can be seen that the major purpose of argumentative writing is to convince other people of a certain point of view. This fact determines the nature of this writing style

which is communicative and interactive.

For ESL students who have grown up in a culturally and socially different environment with English natives, it is necessary to forge such an English-oriented environment through class instruction and interaction. On the other hand, featuring in reasoning and persuading, argumentative writing has an inherent relationship with interaction with the audience, known or unknown. Therefore, instruction of this writing style should be fully consistent with the nature of the writing. The potential of learners in this area can then be explored and realized.

Generally speaking, the nature of argumentative writing and scaffolding instruction has shared the common ground, that is, an emphasis on interaction. That is why scaffolding approach, if appropriately organized, can be successfully applied to the instruction of argumentative writing.

2.3 Features of scaffolding instruction applied to argumentative writing

In *Scaffolding for Success*, Jamie McKenzie describes eight characteristics of scaffolding. The first six describe aspects of scaffolding instruction. The last two refer to outcomes resulting from scaffolding instruction. According to McKenzie scaffolding:

1. Provides clear direction and reduces students' confusion – Educators anticipate problems that students might encounter and then develop step by step instructions, which explain what a student must do to meet expectations.
2. Clarifies purpose – Scaffolding helps students understand why they are doing the work and why it is important.
3. Keeps students on task – By providing structure, the scaffolded lesson or research project, provides pathways for the learners. The student can make decisions about which path to choose or what things to explore along the path but they cannot wander off of the path, which is the designated task.
4. Clarifies expectations and incorporates assessment and feedback – Expectations are clear from the beginning of the activity since examples of exemplary work, rubrics, and standards of excellence are shown to the students.
5. Points students to worthy sources – Educators provide sources to reduce confusion, frustration, and time. The students may then decide which of these sources to use.

6. Reduces uncertainty, surprise, and disappointment – Educators test their lessons to determine possible problem areas and then refine the lesson to eliminate difficulties so that learning is maximized.

7. Delivers efficiency – Since the work is structured, focused, and glitches have been reduced or eliminated prior to initiation, time on task is increased and efficiency in completing the activity is increased.

8. Creates momentum – Through the structure provided by scaffolding, students spend less time searching and more time on learning and discovering, resulting in quicker learning (McKenzie, 1999).

Scaffolding instruction applied to argumentative writing features in the same characteristics. Activities and tasks adopted to provide scaffolding for the students should also be arranged step by step to facilitate the learning process. According to Bransford, et al, the scaffolds provided are activities and tasks that:

- Motivate or enlist the learner’s interest related to the task
 - Simplify the task to make it more manageable and achievable for a learner
 - Provide some direction in order to help the learner focus on achieving the goal
 - Clearly indicate differences between the learner’s work and the standard or desired solution
 - Reduce frustration and risk
 - Model and clearly define the expectations of the activity to be performed
- (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000).

Therefore, the activities for scaffolding the students in argumentative writing are arranged in three stages, i.e., pre-writing stage, writing stage and post-writing stage. (The detailed activities of each stage are specified in the next chapter.) Through each of the stage students can be fully exposed to the stimuli and then internalize the knowledge or skills. Groups should be organized as learning units in order to facilitate the interaction of peer learners and tailored instruction from the teacher. Within this particular atmosphere, scaffolding will be constructed step by step on the basis of the above theories.

Another feature of scaffolding for argumentative writing is that it must be temporary. As long as the scaffolding has helped learners command the skills and knowledge within their ZPD, it must be removed to leave space for a more advanced

one to be constructed. Jamie McKenzie provides a visual image analogy of how scaffolding works, “The workers cleaning the face of the Washington Monument do not confuse the scaffolding with the monument itself. The scaffolding is secondary. The building is primary.” (McKenzie, 1999) That is why the students should write independently after certain period of assistance.

Chapter III: Research method

After the theoretical discussions so far, the question that arises is whether the writing pedagogy conducted under the scaffolding instruction really works in terms of improving students' English language proficiency. Consequently, a study designed to measure the different academic performance between an experimental class and a control class is expected. This chapter, therefore, is to report the research carried out in the two classes.

3.1 Hypothesis

The preconceived hypothesis of the study was that there is a positive correlation between the practice of the scaffolding approach to the teaching of argumentative writing and students' performance on this writing style.

3.2 Subjects

Since the focus of this thesis is on non-English majors, two classes of first-year students in a military academy taught by the same teacher have been selected as subjects for this study.

For the purpose of facilitating the English instruction, it has been a tradition in this academy that students are divided into different classes according to their English proficiency, while the criterion was their performance in the English test of the College Entrance Examination. As a matter of fact, the two classes I have selected were advanced classes whose English proficiency was approximately at the same level. The range of their scores in the English test was from 100 to 132. In addition, since all of the students are male, the variable of sex difference can be excluded in the research. In one class, which has 34 students, scaffolding instruction was applied to argumentative writing, while in the other class, in which there were 33 students, the instruction would remain as the same. After a three-month's instruction by the same teacher with different approaches, a final test was rendered to collect data from the

two classes. The data were then analyzed through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), and finally the results were rendered into the form of table.

In order to facilitate the scaffolding instruction in the experimental class, the 34 students were divided into 17 groups based on their scores of the English test in the University Entrance Examination. Since scaffolding for a learner is constructed by more competent peer learners in addition to the teacher, the student with the highest score and the one with the lowest score in this class were put into one group. In this case, in each of the 17 groups, one member was relatively more competent than the other in terms of English proficiency. Two members of a group sitting together became partners in the writing class.

3.3 Research design

During the three-month experimenting period, the teacher has assigned eight writing tasks to the experimental class and twelve tasks to the control group³. Instruction and completion of each writing task was conducted during class time. For the experimental class, each task took about three hours, i.e. one and half of each lesson.

In the experimental class, process of each writing task was divided into three stages, i.e. pre-writing stage, writing stage and post writing stage. During each of the stages, scaffolding was built deliberately by the teacher or more competent student under the guidance of teacher in order to facilitate the cognitive development of the students. (The detailed description on scaffolding the students in the three stages is in the next chapter.)

At the end of the three-month period, a final writing task is rendered in both of

³ Due to the fact that the amount of time for the additional writing instruction should remain the same in both the experimental and control classes but the traditional instruction of writing in the control class could not spend as much time as that in the experimental class for each writing task, four more writing tasks have been assigned in the control class during the three-month period.

the classes. For this task, no activities are held, and the students are given just enough time to finish their writing. This is to make sure that the students are writing under the same condition and it guarantees the comparability between the test results of the two classes.

After the final task, a survey is conducted in the experimental class in the form of questionnaires.

3.4 The questionnaire

As the center of this kind of instruction, students have experienced a lot during class time in the three months. Having participated in many group activities and interactions, the students are supposed to have obtained some feelings about scaffolding instruction. Therefore, a questionnaire is designed by the author for the purpose of collecting information on students' feelings on the approach applied to the instruction of argumentative writing.

The subjects of the questionnaire are all of the students in the experimental class. With a clear objective, this questionnaire takes the form of closed format. Since each question is to measure a single variable, five answers are provided over a complete range with the degree from the most to the least.

Since the questionnaire is to supplement the analysis on the results of the final test and a short questionnaire can better reflect the subjects' feelings, twelve questions in all have been designed in this questionnaire. The design of the questionnaire follows the logical order. The first question focuses on the general feelings of the students, i.e. what do they think about the scaffolding instruction, is it useful in enhancing their argumentative writing ability in general? The second question to the sixth attach an emphasis on different aspects of the writing. Since the students' writings are evaluated from five aspects, including theme, unity, transition, topic sentences and idiomatic writing, these aspects are reflected respectively in the questionnaire. The students are asked whether scaffolding approach is effective in improving either of the aspect. The seventh question to the eleventh focus on the

measures taken in the scaffolding instruction. For each step there is a question, investigating students' opinions on the effectiveness of certain activity. The last question is to discover students' willingness to continue this kind of instruction in their future class.

Subjects' answers of the twelve questions can help obtain a closer understanding on the effectiveness of scaffolding approach applied to the instruction of argumentative writing. The questionnaire was designed in the form of a scale mode. Each item of the overall 12 questions was scaled into five levels, from positive to negative, which can facilitate the analysis on the questionnaires later.

3.5 Data collection

At the end of the three-month experiment, there was a final writing task for both the experimental class and the control class. The form, of course, was quite different from what was implemented in the experimental class for the previous three months. A short news report about some young Chinese girls spending a large amount of money to have plastic surgery for better appearance was the material given to the students (Appendix I). An important hint on the theme was also provided, and the task for the students in both classes was to choose a reasonable stand and develop their argumentation within the time limit. Since this testing form was similar to that adopted in the control class for the previous three months, the purpose of testing the students in this way was to facilitate the comparison between two classes.

The students' final writings were analyzed in the five aspects of theme, topic sentences, transition, unity and idiomatic writing. Holistic scoring was applied in evaluating these points. That is, the evaluator gave the scores based on the general impression of the whole passage. To increase the reliability of the grading, it was the same teacher who evaluated the writings of both classes according to the same marking scale. The full score of each aspect is 10 points, and it is divided into four categories according to the marking scale (Appendix II). The teacher first grades the final writings in terms of the five aspects above, and then adds the five scores to get a

final score for the writing. The questions to be answered focus upon the areas in which scaffolding instruction is more effective and the areas in which the approach is less effective.

After the experiment, a survey is carried out for the 34 students in the experimental class in the form of questionnaires. The subjects' answers were categorized and analyzed in order to find their opinions on the effectiveness and steps of scaffolding approach applied to the instruction of English argumentative writing (Appendix V).

Chapter IV: The research procedures

Since March, 2007, I have begun to undertake the writing teaching task for two classes in a military academy. Due to the fact that each class only had three hours per week for English lesson, I chose to teach them during evening class organized by the academy. Two hours were specified for my writing class per week for each of the classes. From the very beginning, I titled one of the classes the experimental class, and the other, the control class. Two sets of totally different pedagogy were prepared for them. The control class was instructed under the traditional approach introduced in the second chapter, while the scaffolding approach was exploited in the experimental class. The instruction process is divided into three stages, i.e., pre-writing stage, writing stage and post-writing stage. Activities in each of the stage are designed according to the theories concerning scaffolding instruction and they are depicted in the following section.

4.1 Pre-writing stage

It is a common phenomenon for Chinese students that when they are given a topic to write in English, their minds are blank. It is difficult for them to choose an appropriate stand or to provide solid argumentation for their ideas. It is not because of their lack of experiences, sometimes they just cannot connect their actual lives to the topics they are facing. Under such a circumstance, it will be stimulating to scaffold the thinking process of the students. Scaffolding can be constructed through the interaction between peer learners, or through the guidance from the teacher. Based on this principle, certain activities have been conceived to facilitate the construction of scaffolding for the students.

According to McKenzie (1999), the first two characteristics of scaffolding instruction are to provide clear direction and reduce students' confusion. Therefore, for each writing task in the experimental class, a passage was firstly provided to the students as a reading material. Basically, it was a report or discussion about a social

problem to which the students were likely to be familiar. Usually, the reading material would be of certain difficulty for the freshmen to read (in most cases, some new words or sentence patterns would hinder their understanding). During this process, therefore, certain assistance was needed from the teacher in addition to the mutual help between the group members. The purpose was that through discussion and group work they could find the social problem hiding behind this phenomenon. In other words, they could pinpoint the exact theme they would adopt in their writings through all the activities during the pre-writing stage.

During the pre-writing stage after providing the related material, a class discussion or brainstorming was held on what was the major issue of this particular material. This activity is for the purpose of reducing students' confusion about certain topics. After a brief discussion between the two group members of each group, students were encouraged to list all of the ideas concerning this material they could think of, no matter the ideas could be used or not. In the initial stage of the experiment, the teacher listed useful ideas on the blackboard and made appropriate remarks on them, if necessary. The students could be fully warmed up through this process and have begun to think actively on what they can write about the certain theme they had chosen.

The next step is designed based on McKenzie's theory of pointing students to worthy sources (1999). The purpose of this step is to reduce confusion and frustration of the students through providing them with some useful sources to choose. Therefore, some other materials concerning the related issues collected from newspaper or the internet were distributed for the groups to read and discuss. These materials included news report, comment or public response on the particular social issue, which served as hints to the students. Time was given to the groups to discuss whether these materials were useful or not and why. During the discussion, the teacher walked around the class. On the one hand, the teacher could provide prompt help to the groups, and on the other hand, the discussion could thus be monitored. For the first three tasks, the teacher selected and made comments on some materials as models for the students. In illustrating the structure, content and language of the materials written

by people with higher English proficiency, the students could grow familiar with the characteristics of argumentative writing as well as the way to writing a good piece.

Prior to the beginning of writing, the students were required to list an outline for their argumentation, during which theme and topic sentences were emphasized. As key components of an argumentative writing, theme represents the central idea of the writing, while topic sentences serve as support and guideline of a whole passage. In facilitating the construction of scaffolding, group work was also needed in this process. Each group should decide on their theme and topic sentences through discussion. The teacher was responsible for making suggestions on improving each outlines during the discussion. This step is to simplify the writing task to make it more manageable and achievable for the students (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000).

4.2 Writing stage

The students were then required to complete the composition of about 150 words based on their outlines within a limited time, which was usually 45 minutes. Compared with the traditional writing instruction, this time limit was about 15 minutes longer. The additional time was given to the students in case that they have questions to ask or discuss during the writing process.

According to Bransford et al. (2000), scaffolding in the instruction must reduce frustration and risk of the learners. When Chinese students are writing compositions, especially at the initial stage, it is common for them to feel difficult to arrange the structure or find appropriate words to express their opinions. When this kind of difficulties occurs several times during the writing process, the students will be frustrated and daunted to continue. If there is no one for them to rely on for advice, they will sometimes risk using some wrong expressions. Traditionally, students are not allowed to talk during the writing process, and since the time for in-class writing task is often limited within 30 minutes, the students barely have time to discuss or ask any questions if they want to finish writing in time. As a result, the quality of the writings is sometimes undesirable.

Therefore, it is also necessary to scaffold the students even during the writing process. That is why during the experimental period, the students were given 15 minutes longer for each writing task than the traditional arrangement. The students were allowed to ask for help from the teacher in terms of a more appropriate substitute for a word or the design of the structure of the composition, or, they could interact with their partner in the same group. Of course, the interaction must be concerning the writing itself. The students could discuss the usability of a certain piece of example, or whether the topic sentences accord with the following paragraphs. The assistance provided by the teacher and more competent students can greatly scaffold the students' writing process.

4.3 Post writing stage

According to McKenzie (1999), scaffolding instruction should clarify expectations and incorporate assessment and feedback. This characteristic can be reflected in the post writing stage. Instead of handing in their writings, the students were required to switch the compositions with their partners when the limited time was due. The next step was for the students to correct writings of their partners. Before the first time for them to do so, the teacher listed the points that need to be checked and corrected on the blackboard. They included theme, unity, topic sentences, transition and idiomatic issues (including diction, spelling, sentence and tense). As factors of evaluating criteria, these points were emphasized in class so that the students can attach importance to them. As a result, the next time when they are writing they will pay more attention to these points. During this mutual correcting process, the teacher also walked around the classroom to provide prompt assistance for all of the groups.

After the mutual grading, considering the fact that the student with lower proficiency in each group can not fulfill the job as well as his partner, the teacher asked all of the students to hand in their corrected writings. It was then the teacher's responsibility to supplement the grading made by the students. The purpose was to

make sure that the writings of students with higher proficiency level can also be well improved. The teacher marked out on the students' writings all the unnecessary corrections made by the partners and the mistakes that haven't been found. For similar mistakes appearing in the same writing, the teacher gave one right answer as a model for the correction of the others. In addition, lack of unity or transitional words was also pointed out for the awareness of the students.

During the next lesson, two to three sample writings were copied and distributed to the students for reference. The sample writings should be outstanding in terms of both structure and diction. The teacher asked the groups to discuss and then talk about their ideas on what made the writing a good piece of work and how the writings could become better. This step is to show the expectation for the students. They are shown what an excellent piece of writing should be like. Through the discussion, students can obtain a direct impression on the features of a good writing; through the process of thinking deeply on the merits and points-to-be-improved, the actual development level of the students can be strengthened and raised.

4.4 A case of scaffolding approach applied to the instruction of argumentative writing

For the purpose of better illustrating the scaffolding approach applied to argumentative writing, an English writing class is presented as an example. It was the first among the overall eight tasks. The steps taken were as follows:

Pre-writing stage:

Step 1:

A news report about a cyber-addicted middle school student stopping going to school and killed his mother just because of her refusal to give him money (Appendix VI) was provided to the students. Ten minutes was given to them to read the report, and if there was any question concerning the passage, the students asked the teacher or their partners. A dialogue between a group of students and the teacher was recorded to illustrate the interaction:

Student A: Shall we ask you a question?

Teacher: Sure, please.

Student A: What does "fled the scene" here mean?

Teacher: "Fled" is the past tense of flee, which means run away. "Scene" is the place where some event happens. This phrase means the boy ran away from the place where he killed his mother and injured his father.

Student B: But why did the boy run away?

Student A: He did these terrible things. He planned to kill his parents so of course he would run away, because he didn't want to be caught by the police.

Teacher: That's right! The boy used too much time on the internet and he needed money to do so. He hated to obey his parents and tried to kill them. So do you have any other questions?

Student B: Not yet. Thank you!

Step 2:

After reading the material, a brainstorming was conducted in the class. The students were encouraged to speak out their ideas concerning the material they have read. This section took about fifteen minutes. The ideas listed by the teacher on the blackboard are as follows:

Spending too much time on internet is not a good thing.

It is harmful for students to use internet too often.

The government should punish the owners of cyber bars because they allow children to enter.

Psychological centers must be established for this kind of children to consult about their expectations and feelings.

It will be better for schools to provide free internet access to the students.

Parents had better not control their children too tightly.

Parents should provide some understanding to their children and talk to them without a fight.

Parents should not give their children pocket money, because most children will use the money on something bad.

The teacher pointed to the students that all of the listed ideas can be used in the writings, but what must be noticed is that no matter which idea is chosen, the writing should remain coherent and unified.

Step 3:

After the discussion, another piece of related material (Appendix VII) was distributed to the students as reference. Fifteen minutes was given to the students to read and discuss about this passage. The students were also encouraged to raise questions on anything they were not sure about. The

following is the record of one of the conversations between a group and the teacher:

Student A: So, this report is talking about the situation of internet addiction in China, isn't it?

Student B: I think so. And it is talking about young people. They love using internet.

Teacher (joining the conversation voluntarily): You are right. But have you found some other aspects besides the situation of internet addiction in China?

Student B: It also mentions two examples of internet addiction.

Teacher: Yes, the two examples are provided by the clinic.

Student A: Some doctor in the clinic tells the symptoms and reasons of internet addiction in China.

Teacher: Great!

Student A: The number of internet addiction is not high. But it is serious for individual family.

Student B: So these clinics are useful to help the young people to overcome their bad habit.

Teacher: Very good! You can keep discussing about what ideas in this passage can be used in your own writings.

Step 4:

After the discussion, the students were required to choose a stand about the issue of internet. Then the students were given 10 minutes to write an outline including theme and topic sentences based on the stand they have chosen. During this process the teacher also provided prompt assistance to the students.

Writing stage

45 minutes was then given to the students to complete their writings according to the outlines they have listed. During the writing process, the students were allowed to discuss and ask questions concerning their writings. The following is a conversation recorded:

Student A: I think internet is a good thing. Can I write like this?

Teacher: Yes of course. When writing an argumentation, the most important thing is to keep your writing focusing on the theme. If you think internet is good, you can take it as your theme and support this theme by your arguments.

Student A: Do I have to give examples in the real life?

Teacher: It will be good to give examples. They can make your writing more solid. It is also OK you don't have real-life examples. As long as your argument is reasonable, it will be OK.

Student A: Thank you!

Post-writing stage

Step 1:

As the students have finished writing, they were asked to switch their writings with each other in the same group. The next step was mutual correcting. The teacher gave an explanation on how the theme, topic sentences should be like, and the students used pencils to mark out all the problems in their partners' writings. If they were not sure about whether it was a problem, they could ask for help from the teacher. This step would take about 25 minutes and after the mutual correcting, all of the writings were handed in to the teacher.

Step 2:

Before the next time of class, the teacher corrected all the writings. When it was time for class, two pieces of good writings were selected out for the other students to read. Through commenting on the example writings, the teacher can further scaffold the students for better understanding on what makes a good argumentative writing. This procedure took about 30 minutes.

The above is the major process for one writing task in the experimental class. It can be seen that scaffolding is deliberately constructed in each of the steps to facilitate the learning process.

In the pre-writing stage, the scaffolding constructed through the interaction between students and the active involvement of the teacher have provided clear direction and reduced students' confusion, which is in compliance with McKenzie's definition of characteristics of scaffolding instruction. In providing the students with related reading materials, access to worthy sources (McKenzie, 1999) is thus available in the classroom instruction. In addition, the requirement on the students to list their ideas and an outline of the writing is for the purpose that confused students can be appropriately directed.

In the writing stage, it is a preliminary characteristic that the students are allowed to ask question concerning their writings. Through this activity, frustration and risks of the students can be minimized to a large degree, which is in accordance with Bransford's (2000) description on scaffolding instruction.

In the post-writing stage, mutual correction can keep the students on the task and provide them with a better understanding on what makes a good piece of writing.

Through pointing out the aspects that need to be corrected, the teacher manages to mark critical features and call the students' attention to important aspects of the task (Wertsch, 1985). Then, discussion on the sample writing also provides worthy sources to most of the other students.

During the three months' period, there are in all eight writing tasks in the experimental class. Through these activities, the students have benefited a lot from the scaffolding constructed by the teacher and their partners in the guided direction.

Chapter V: Data analysis

5.1 Comparison in terms of holistic scores

In order to make the comparison more valid and precise, the scores of each class in the final writing test were divided into three groups in descending order, with each group consisted of 11 to 12 students. Through the comparisons between two groups of the same level, the instructional effectiveness can be observed and analyzed more clearly. In addition, the scores in terms of each evaluated item were also processed and compared by T-test of SPSS between the two classes. To facilitate the operation by the software, the experimental class was named Class 1, and the control class was named Class 2.

The first-level group of each class was of the highest scores, representing the top eleven students, and the comparing result of the means, std. deviation, std. error mean and independent samples test are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4 respectively as followed.

Figure 3: Comparison of the first level between the two classes

班级		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
成绩	1	11	43.73	3.636	1.096
	2	11	42.91	2.982	.899

The mean score of Class 1 is 0.82 higher than that of Class 2.

Figure 4 Independent sample test of the first level between the two classes

		Levene's Test for quality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
成绩	Equal variance assumed	1.475	.239	.577	20	.570	.818	1.418	-2.139	3.775
	Equal variance not assumed			.577	19.262	.571	.818	1.418	-2.146	3.783

As is shown in Figure 4, Independent samples test demonstrates two results of T-test, namely, Equal variance assumed and Equal variance not assumed. Which one of them is valid depends on the result of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. In this case, the Significant level of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.239, which is higher than 0.05. It means that the result of Equal variance assumed is valid. The significant level in this case is 0.570, which is also higher than 0.05. Therefore, under a validity of 95%, there is no significant difference between the instructions of the two classes in terms of the first level. That is to say, after the three month of experiment, the top students in the experimental class did not make significant progress according to the results of the final test.

The comparison results of the second-level groups are shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

Figure 5: Comparison of the second level between the two classes

班级		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
成绩	1	11	33.82	2.359	.711
	2	11	30.64	4.319	1.302

The mean score of Class 1 is 3.18 points higher than that of Class 2.

Figure 6: Independent sample test of the second level between the two classes

		Levene's Test for quality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
成绩	Equal variance assumed	.646	.431	2.150	20	.044	3.091	1.437	.093	6.089
	Equal variance not assumed			2.150	19.558	.044	3.091	1.437	.088	6.094

In this case, the Significant level of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.431, which is higher than 0.05. It means that the result of Equal variance assumed is valid. The significant level in this case is 0.044, which is lower than 0.05. Therefore, under a validity of 95%, there is a significant difference between the instructions of the two classes in terms of the second level. It means that students of the second level in the experimental class have made a significant progress and their performance in the final test was significantly higher than that of the control class.

The comparison results of the third-level groups are shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

Figure 7: Comparison of the third level between the two classes

班级		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
成绩	1	12	22.75	4.245	1.226
	2	11	18.64	4.884	1.473

For this level, the mean score of Class 1 is 4.11 points higher than that of Class 2.

Figure 8: Independent sample test of the third level between the two classes

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
成绩	Equal variance assumed	2.699	.115	2.136	21	.045	3.985	1.865	.106	7.864
	Equal variance not assumed			2.089	15.781	.053	3.985	1.908	-.064	8.034

In this case, the Significant level of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.115, which is higher than 0.05. It means that the result of Equal variance assumed is valid. The significant level in this case is 0.045, which is lower than 0.05. Therefore, under a validity of 95%, there is a significant difference between the instructions of the two classes in terms of the third level. After the three months' experiment, the progress made by the students of the third level in the experimental class is significantly greater than that in the control class.

5.2 Comparison in terms of each aspect

In order to find which aspects could be effectively improved through applying scaffolding instruction, the performance of the students in both classes is compared in terms of each aspect adopted in evaluating the writings. The full score of each aspect is 10 (further divided into four categories), and the detailed criteria are listed in Appendix II. The scores are recorded when evaluating the writings. There is no group division in this comparison, and a class is taken into consideration holistically.

In terms of theme, comparison on the scores is shown in Figure 9 and Figure 10.

Figure 9: Group statistics of theme

班级		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
成绩	1	34	8.21	1.533	.263
	2	33	7.33	1.947	.339

The mean score for theme in Class 1 is 0.88 points higher than that of Class 2. With a full score of 10 points, the students in the experimental class have a mean score of 8.21 points, which is pretty high. In comparison with students in the control class, there is also a significant progress.

Figure 10: Independent samples test of theme

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
成绩 Equal variance assumed	1.301	.258	2.041	65	.045	.873	.427	.019	1.726
Equal variance not assumed			2.034	60.760	.046	.873	.429	.015	1.730

The Significant level of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.258, which is higher than 0.05. It means that the result of Equal variance assumed is valid. The significant level in this case is 0.045, which is lower than 0.05. Therefore, under a validity of 95%, there is a significant difference between the instructions of the two classes in terms of theme. That is to say scaffolding instruction is effective in terms of enhancing students' performance of theme in the argumentative writing.

The second aspect is unity, the comparison results of which are demonstrated through Figure 11 and 12.

Figure 11: Group statistics of unity

班级	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
成绩 1	34	6.82	1.604	.275
2	33	6.67	1.915	.333

The means of scores obtained under this criterion are of insignificant disparity between the two classes. Mean of Class 1 is only 0.05 points higher than that of Class

2. It means that students in the experimental class have not made a great progress in dealing with unity of argumentative writing.

Figure 12: Independent samples test of unity

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
成绩	2.298	.134	.364	65	.717	.157	.431	-.704	1.018
Equal variance assumed									
Equal variance not assumed			.363	62.380	.718	.157	.432	-.707	1.021

The Significant level of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.134, which is higher than 0.05. It means that the result of Equal variance assumed is valid. The significant level in this case is 0.717, which is much higher than 0.05. Therefore, under a validity of 95%, there is no significant difference between the instructions of the two classes in terms of unity.

The third aspect is transition, and the comparisons are shown in Figure 13 and 14 as follows.

Figure 13: Group statistics of transition

班级	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
成绩 1	34	6.62	1.923	.330
2	33	5.61	2.120	.369

The means of the two classes have a larger gap for this category, which is 1.01 points. The great disparity between the two classes in terms of this aspect can show that the scaffolding instruction is quite effective in improving students' performance of transition.

Figure 14: Independent samples test of transition

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
成绩	Equal variance assumed	.087	.769	2.047	65	.045	1.012	.494	.024	1.999
	Equal variance not assumed			2.044	63.959	.045	1.012	.495	.023	2.000

The Significant level of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.769, which is higher than 0.05. Therefore, the result of Equal variance assumed is valid. The significant level in this case is 0.045, which is lower than 0.05. That is to say, under a validity of 95%, there is a significant difference between the instructions of the two classes in terms of transition.

The fourth aspect is topic sentences, and the comparison results are shown in Figure 15 and 16.

Figure 15: Group statistics of topic sentences

班级		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
成绩	1	34	7.88	1.409	.242
	2	33	7.12	1.474	.257

The mean score of Class 1 is 7.88, 0.76 points higher than 7.12, which is the mean score of Class 2. Compared with control class, the experimental class has made a little progress in terms of topic sentences.

Figure 16: Independent samples test of topic sentences

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
成绩	Equal variance assumed	.026	.872	2.161	65	.034	.761	.352	.058	1.465
	Equal variance not assumed			2.159	64.635	.035	.761	.352	.057	1.465

The Significant level of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.872, which is higher than 0.05. So the result of Equal variance assumed is valid. The significant level for this category is 0.034, which is lower than 0.05. That is to say, under a validity of 95%, there is a significant difference between the instructions of the two classes in terms of topic sentences.

As for the last aspect, idiomatic writing, the comparison process is same with the above criteria, and the results are shown in Figure 17 and 18 in the following.

Figure 17 Group statistics of idiomatic writing

班级	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
成绩 1	34	6.74	1.928	.331
2	33	5.73	2.096	.365

For idiomatic writing, the mean score of Class 1 is 1.01 points higher than that of Class 2. This gap indicates that the students in the experimental class did a better job than the students in the control class in terms of idiomatic writing in the argumentation.

Figure 18 Independent samples test of idiomatic writing

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
成绩	Equal variance assumed	.216	.644	2.050	65	.044	1.008	.492	.026	1.990
	Equal variance not assumed			2.047	64.172	.045	1.008	.492	.025	1.991

The Significant level of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.644, which is higher than 0.05. So the result of Equal variance assumed is valid. The significant level for this category is 0.044, which is lower than 0.05. That is to say, under a validity of 95%, there is a significant difference between the instructions of the two classes in terms of idiomatic writing.

From the above comparisons, it can be seen that there is an obvious disparity between the results of the two classes. The students in the experimental class obviously have got higher scores than the students in the control class. This fact indicates that scaffolding approach is more effective in the instruction of argumentative writing.

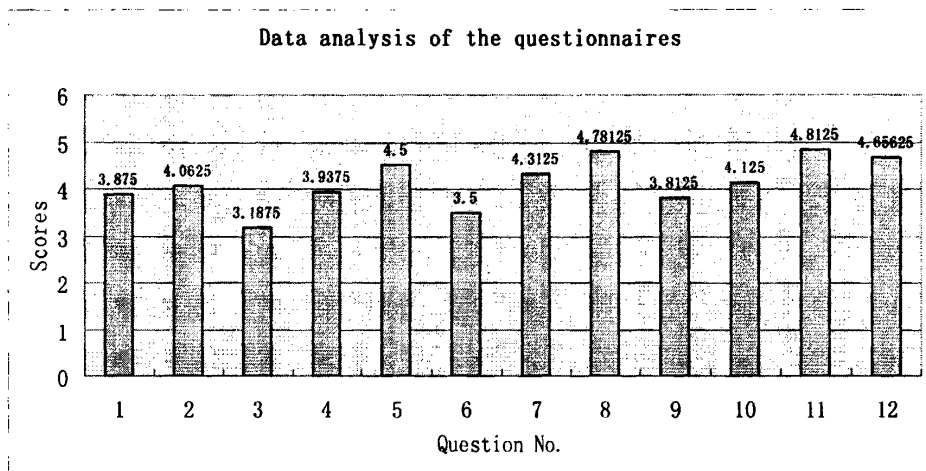
According to the data, scaffolding instruction is not so effective for the first level students as for the second and third level, and as a matter of fact, disparity in terms of mean between the two classes grew larger from the first groups to the third. In addition, there are also some differences in terms of its effectiveness in different evaluated items.

5.3 Analysis on the questionnaires

The analysis was conducted on the basis of the average scores of each question, which is shown through Figure 19. The choices of each question are from positive to

negative and are represented by scores ranging from 5 to 1.

Figure 19



The first question was designed to reflect the overall impression of the subjects on the scaffolding instruction for writing class. The score average of 3.875 shows a quite positive result of this question, which indicates that the majority of the subjects were positive in terms of the progress they had made through this 3-month instruction on the writing class.

Questions 2 to 6 were designed in terms of the criteria for evaluating the students' writings. According to the data shown in the graph, the score averages of Question 2 and Question 5 are pretty close to the full score, which means that the subjects were very positive in terms of the effectiveness in the two aspects, i.e., theme and topic sentences. The score average of Question 3 is relatively low, indicating a lower evaluation on the unity from the subjects, while the score averages of Question 4 and Question 6 are medium.

Questions 7 to 11 are designed from the angle of teaching strategies for the scaffolding instruction. The purpose is to reflect the subjects' feelings on the activities involved in the scaffolding instruction. According to the data, Questions 7, 8, 10 and 11 reflect a high interest of the subjects in group study, brainstorming, mutual grading and sample discussion. The majority of the subjects believe that the above activities can be helpful to the improvement of their writing. Question 9 shows a lower interest

in allowing discussion during writing.

Question 12 indicates the subjects' overall opinion on the scaffolding instruction, which was very positive. The large majority of the subjects chose that they preferred to continue this kind of instruction.

5.4 Summary on the data analysis

The first research question of this thesis is whether scaffolding instruction contributes to students' better performance in general in terms of argumentation writing? According to the data analysis, the answer for this question is positive. The students in the experimental class have obtained higher scores than the students in the control class in the final test.

The second research question is in what particular aspects scaffolding approach contributes to better performance: theme, unity, topic sentences, transition or idiomatic writing. It has been shown by the analysis on the final test that except unity, the students in the experimental have made obvious progress in all the other four aspects, which means that scaffolding approach is effective in improving students' performance in terms of theme, topic sentences, transition and idiomatic writing of argumentative writing.

The third research question is whether the steps of scaffolding approach are effective and efficient in terms of improving the performance of the students in the experimental group. According to the data collected by the questionnaires, the majority of the students are satisfied with all the steps except the allowance of discussion during the writing process. The steps adopted during the instruction have contributed to the better performance of the students in the experimental class only in three months. This fact is the demonstration of the effectiveness and efficiency of the steps.

Since there is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group before the experiment in terms of English proficiency, the comparison afterwards was valid to show the disparity between the scaffolding instruction and the

traditional approach for argumentative writing. In other words, if changes took place in their final performance on the final test, it could then be inferred that the different treatment brought forth the changes.

According to the data analysis, the scaffolding instruction contributes larger to less competent learners. In addition, the statistic results shows that scaffolding approach made a greater contribution to the aspects including theme, transition, topic sentences and idiomatic writing of the argumentative writing in the experimental group compared with the control group. In terms of the performance of unity, there was no significant difference between the two groups.

According to the analysis on the questionnaires, the majority of students in the experimental group (the first question in the questionnaire) were satisfied with the scaffolding instruction for the three months. Most students in this group thought that this new approach contributes to their better performance in terms of general ability, theme, transition and topic sentences of argumentative writing.

In terms of the approaches adopted during the scaffolding instruction, the majority of the students believed that group study, brainstorming, mutual grading and sample praising were effective in improving their performance. However, some of the students were not quite satisfied with the allowance of discussion during the writing process. It could be regarded as a distraction for the students with better performance. Generally speaking, the majority of the students in the experimental group preferred to have this scaffolding instruction continue in their future writing class.

On the whole, the collected data indicate that the scaffolding instruction is more efficient than the traditional approach in improving students' argumentative writing competence. This new approach was also preferred by the subjects in the experimental group.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion of the study

Scaffolding instruction derived from Vygotsky's theory of ZPD has become a popular pedagogy in the Western countries, but it is not widely applied in classes in China. With the purpose of finding out the effectiveness of this approach applied to the instruction of argumentative writing, a 3-month experiment has been conducted. The steps of the scaffolding instruction are clearly divided into three stages, i.e. pre-writing stage, writing stage and post-writing stage. During each of the stages, scaffolding has been deliberately constructed for the students by the teacher as well as more competent students under the guidance of the teacher. Compared with the control class, the experimental class excels in terms of theme, topic sentences, transition and idiomatic writing in the final test. The steps of scaffolding approach are thus proved to be effective. A survey conducted in the experimental class shows that most of the students are satisfied with the scaffolding instruction and are willing to continue this instruction for their writing class. They also think that most of the steps during the instruction are helpful for the improvement of their writing skills. In answering the research questions of this study, the study presents an effective approach to the instruction of argumentative writing. Therefore, it has certain implication for the teachers as well as students.

6.2 Implication of scaffolding instruction for teachers

Since the scaffolding approach is proved to be effective and efficient in the instruction of argumentative writing, it is worthwhile to apply this new methodology to the writing class on campus. There thus comes a great responsibility for the English teachers who should properly control the instructional process and lead the way for the students to their better performance.

According to the definition given by Vygotsky on the zone of proximal development, there are at least three main characteristics of the instruction that features in this approach. First of all, the teacher should establish a level of difficulty. This level, assumed to be the proximal level, must be a bit challenging for the students but not too difficult. Second, the teacher should provide assisted performance. As an instructor, the teacher provides guided practices to the learners with a clear sense of the goal or outcome of the learners' performance. Third, the teacher should evaluate independent performance. Although guided assistance is emphasized during the instructional process, the most logical outcome of a zone of proximal development is the learner performing independently.

What's more, during the writing process, the students should be given more freedom or controlling right compared with in the traditional writing class. They are free to choose the theme according to their own understanding of the given materials; they are free to discuss with each other whenever necessary. This does not mean, of course, that the teacher abdicate all control; rather, his/her energy is focused on keeping the writing process going smoothly through the steps described in the previous chapter, providing expectations that students will write, and responding to the students' writings with interest, enthusiasm, and encouragement. This redistribution of control, then, involves a delicate act for the teacher sponsoring students' writing.

Generally speaking, in order to apply the scaffolding approach during the instruction effectively, an instructor must provide the learners with a proper environment, within which effective interaction among the learners or between the instructor and the learners can be conducted. The purpose is to ensure, within a predefined curriculum, effective assistance from the instructor to the learners as well as from learners with better performance to those with relatively poor performance. Within such an environment, the construction of scaffolding can be facilitated, and meanwhile, the students can be encouraged to take advantage of the scaffolding to improve their performance.

6.3 Implication of scaffolding instruction for university students

Based on the Vygotskian theory, what children can perform collaboratively or with assistance today they can perform independently and completely tomorrow. As Cazden (1981) put it, the zone makes possible “performance before competence.” In an extensive sense, the theory applies to the cognition process of not only children, but also adults whose cognition about the world still proceeds. Therefore, university students are proceeding towards better performance taking advantage of the scaffolding provided through the instruction.

The approaches of scaffolding instruction help bring writing back to its original form, which is, as a matter of fact, an intensely social one itself. During scheduled writing times, students talk to themselves, to each other, and to the teacher about what they are thinking or writing; they can request help with ideas or grammatical points from the teacher and from each other, offer each other help with spelling and editing, and ask for responses to what they have written (usu. from the teacher). Sometimes more competent writers can even act as advisers for less competent ones. During the practices, in fact, they are allowed to use each other’s ideas freely, so that similar themes and expressions will appear in several writings simultaneously. In this way, they react to each other’s writing with interest, enthusiasm and amusement, which is also a precondition for the students to be fully involved in the activities during class time.

Therefore, the group work during the instruction requires the students to have mutual trust and the spirit of cooperation, especially within each group. Through all the activities conducted during the writing class, discussions are essential to ensure the communication between the group members. This is to guarantee the improvement of less competent writers from the help of more competent ones, whose improvement relies, on the other hand, on their interaction with the teacher as well as other activities independently conducted by the teacher.

Complete involvement of all the students is also an essential factor for the successful application of the approach. For the best effectiveness of the instruction, all

the students had better involve themselves in the group work activities voluntarily. Therefore, it requires that the students should not hesitate to ask for help if there is any problem or question they cannot solve independently during the learning process. It is a common phenomenon that Chinese students feel very shy in asking questions, which is a problem caused during a long-time teacher-centered instructional mode in China. Shyness is an obstacle that must be surmounted for students' better improvement of performance. It is also teachers' responsibility to make the students feel free to express their true ideas. Through the interaction during the scaffolding instruction, shyness of the students can be overcome.

In addition, in order for the university students to improve their performance in terms of argumentative writing, they must be fully aware that it requires more energy beyond the writing class which is seriously limited by the curriculum. According to the Vygotskian theory, a person's cognition derives from his/her social life. In this way, a student's improvement in terms of writing should, at least partially attribute to his/her efforts beyond class. More focus should be laid on accumulation of social knowledge, broadening of horizon, cultivation of consciousness, and improvement in terms of idiomatic use of language, etc.

6.4 Limitations of this study

Although scaffolding approach was proved to be effective in the instruction of argumentative writing, there are certain limitations of this study.

First of all, this study was carried out in a military academy for only three months. The successful application of scaffolding instruction in this particular case does not necessarily mean that it can be effective in all the other situations. This instruction needs to be further studied in a wider area.

Second, a great effort should be made by the teacher. During the instruction, the teacher must make sure that to facilitate the improvement of all the students, within each group, scaffolding is constructed for the less competent student by the more

competent one, and within the class, scaffolding is also constructed for the more competent students by the teacher. It requires a large amount of time and energy from the teacher to closely control all of the steps during the instruction. Since each group in the class has two members, a lot of efforts should be made to prevent the degradation of more competent students. Therefore, the teacher must monitor each activity during the instruction. Besides, the teacher must create chances to be involved in the activities to build scaffolding for the more competent students. Under the current curriculum, it is almost impossible to fully apply this approach to the writing class, let alone specifically for argumentative writing.

In addition, during the instruction, it is relatively difficult for the teacher to control the construction and removal of the scaffolding. Each activity can provide the students with a desirable environment to move on towards their potential development level. But for each independent student, they are different in many aspects including ability, attitude, interest, etc. The inevitable differences pose an obstacle for the teacher to control the pace of instruction, as well as for the success of the application of the new approach.

Though with certain limitations, it is worthwhile to apply scaffolding approach to the instruction of argumentative writing, for the approach has been proved effective in several aspects in this thesis.

Appendix I :

The Final Writing Task

Reading material:

Korean plastic surgery cuts a trend in China Tue, June 07 2005

Chinese undergraduate Jiao Rong recently forked out US\$4,000 to have South Korean plastic surgeons operate on her face.

The 20-year-old from Shanghai chose to pay the money for an 'improved look' when hometown Chinese surgeons would have charged a fraction of the sum.

"As many movie stars in South Korea gained their beauty through plastic surgery, I trust Korean doctors' skill and capability. When the swelling went away, I found I really had the refined face of my dreams," said Rong in an interview with the Straits Times.

Patients like her are drawing an increasing number of Korean plastic surgeons to set up shop in affluent Chinese cities such as Shanghai.

Young Chinese believe that a pretty face will give them the edge to secure a good job in a highly competitive employment market. A survey of university graduates in 2002 found that 54 percent of new job-seekers identified physical appearance as the defining factor in securing a position.

Shanghai Ninth Hospital, for instance, conducted over 26,000 cosmetic surgeries in 2003, a 40-per-cent increase from the year before. And doctors say the waiting lists are full.

At Shanghai's Renai Hospital, three plastic surgeons from South Korea fly to the Chinese city every month to conduct surgery at the hospital.

Their services are always booked months in advance and the hospital fields more than 100 inquiries every day.

Scores of young Chinese girls come armed with pictures wanting to be transformed into the likeness of some stars.

Requirement:

Based on the above report, please write a passage of no less than 150 words on *the importance of personal appearance*.

Appendix II :

Marking Scale

Holistic scoring is applied in evaluating the points. That is, the evaluator gives the reward scores based on the general impression of the evaluated points. The writing is evaluated in the following five aspects and the total score of each aspect is 10, which is further divided into four levels.

Theme

As the controlling idea of a piece of writing, theme is very important in leading the tone of the whole passage. It is usually put in the first section of an argumentative writing.

0-1 ----- No theme or the theme is irrelevant to the requirement.

2-4 -----The theme is not at the beginning section of the writing, or the theme is relevant, but not properly related.

5-7 ----- The theme appears at the appropriate place but not clear enough.

8-10 ----- The theme is direct and proper.

Topic sentences

It is the main idea of each paragraph. A topic sentence is usually put at the beginning of a paragraph. The controlling idea of the topic sentence should be developed in the whole paragraph.

0-1 ----- No topic sentences or the topic sentences are irrelevant to the main idea.

2-4 ----- The topic sentence are not at the beginning of the paragraphs and the part of controlling idea is not proper.

5-7 ----- The topic sentences are at the proper place but the controlling idea is not clear enough.

8-10 ----- The topic sentences are direct and proper.

Transition

Proper use of transitional words can make the writing coherent and smooth. They are

necessary to connect the whole writing as a holistic unity.

0-1 ----- The whole writing is loose without any transitional words.

2-4 -----Some transitional words are used but there are some mistakes in them.

5-7 ----- Most transitional words are properly used but there are still some awkward sentences.

8-10 -----All the transitional words are properly used between and within the writing.

Unity

Throughout the whole passage, either the paragraphs or the sentences should be involved in the theme or central idea, with all the unconnected sentences deleted.

0-1 -----Most of the paragraphs in the writing are irrelevant to the controlling idea.

2-4 -----Some of the paragraphs are revolving around the central idea, but the other ones are digressive. Or, in some paragraphs, the sentences are not relevant to the topic sentences.

5-7 -----Most of the paragraphs are relevant to the theme, and in most paragraphs the sentences are developed around the topic sentences.

8-10-----Almost all the paragraphs and sentences are revolving around the theme and topic sentences respectively.

Idiomatic writing

Idiomatic writing includes evaluation on two aspects. First, all of the expressions are idiomatic instead of Chinese English or some self-created expressions. Second, the grammatically appropriate use of language is evaluated.

0-1 ----- Most of the sentences are unidiomatic and self-created expressions. Or, grammatical mistakes are all over the writing.

2-4 ----- Some sentences are idiomatic but the problem of Chinese English is serious. Or, there are quite a lot grammatical mistakes.

5-7 -----Most sentences are idiomatic but there are still some Chinese English. Or, there are some grammatical mistakes.

8-10 -----There is few or no Chinese way of expressions or grammatical mistakes.

Appendix III:

Samples of Graded Writings in the Final Test

First level:

Personal appearance is important

I believe that personal appearance is important, especially for getting a job and being successful. Everyday people look at how we have dressed up and they will judge us by the way we look. Personal appearance plays an important part in the way you are perceived and treated.

No matter male or female, a good personal appearance can attract other people's attention. It is said that a good impression can be formed within 30 seconds during people's first meeting, so a good appearance is an advantage in an interview for a job as well as in the business world.

However, personal appearance refers to not only face, but also many other aspects, such as hair style, the way of dressing and so on. Even if without a beautiful face, it is not necessary to have plastic surgery to change for the better. A person can do many other things to have himself/herself look better. Appropriate dressing and general style can help you leave a good impression on other people.

Item	Theme	Topic sentences	Transition	Unity	Idiomatic writing	Total score
Score	10	10	10	9	9	48

Second level:

Is personal appearance so important?

It is reported that some young people want to have plastic surgery to have a star face. I don't think it is right to do so, because a good face is not everything.

I think that the most important thing for a person is the ability. In the business world, a person is judged on the basis of what he can do or cannot do. There are many

bosses whose face is not good. It is the same when we want to find a job. A company will hire you if you can do the job well, but it will not hire you if you only have a beautiful face without useful ability.

So personal appearance is not so important. If we want to find a good job in the future, we have to study hard now instead of having plastic surgeries.

Item	Theme	Topic sentences	Transition	Unity	Idiomatic writing	Total score
Score	9	8	7	7	6	37

Third level:

My opinion on personal appearance

Chinese undergraduate Jiao Rong recently forked out US\$4,000 to have South Korean plastic surgeons operate on her face. Young Chinese believe that a pretty face will give them the edge to secure a good job in a highly competitive employment market. In my opinion, personal appearance is also important, but it is not always important.

When we want to find a job, we must do something to look better. It is because personal appearance is important for the people who don't know us before. But when we begin working, personal appearance will become less important. For example, one of my friend is a little ugly, but she tried many times and found a job finally. She has worked really hard and now she has become a manager in her company.

So I think that it is no need to change our face. Working hard is the best thing we can do.

Item	Theme	Topic sentences	Transition	Unity	Idiomatic writing	Total score
Score	7	5	6	4	5	27

Appendix IV:

Scores of the Two Classes in the Final Test

Student N0.	Experimental Class	Control Class	Student N0.	Experimental Class	Control Class
1	48	46	18	33	30
2	48	46	19	32	27
3	47	46	20	31	27
4	46	44	21	31	25
5	46	44	22	31	24
6	45	40	23	28	24
7	43	39	24	27	23
8	40	39	25	26	23
9	40	38	26	26	22
10	39	37	27	25	21
11	39	36	28	25	20
12	37	36	29	24	19
13	37	35	30	22	17
14	36	35	31	20	15
15	35	34	32	17	12
16	35	33	33	17	9
17	34	31	34	16	

Appendix V:

问卷调查

我们在这三个月所进行的写作训练采用的是一种支架式教学方法,针对这种教学方法请大家配合完成这套不记名问卷。在以下各个问题后面,附有五种不同的选择。由于个人观点不同,任何选择都是可能的,不存在答案“正确”或者“错误”的问题。因此,请你根据自己的看法,在A, B, C, D, E中选择出最符合你自己情况的答案。

1. 你认为这三个月的支架式写作训练对你的写作水平有怎样的影响?
A. 帮助非常大 B. 有一点帮助 C. 没有帮助
D. 写作水平有些下降 E. 写作水平大大下降
2. 这种支架式教学方法对于你在写作中写好中心论点有怎样的帮助?
A. 帮助非常大 B. 有一点帮助 C. 没有帮助
D. 水平有些下降 E. 水平大大下降
3. 这种支架式教学方法对于你在写作中把握整体性有怎样的帮助?
A. 帮助非常大 B. 有一点帮助 C. 没有帮助
D. 水平有些下降 E. 水平大大下降
4. 这种支架式教学方法对于你在写作中控制好过渡有怎样的帮助?
A. 帮助非常大 B. 有一点帮助 C. 没有帮助
D. 水平有些下降 E. 水平大大下降
5. 这种支架式教学方法对于你在写作中写好主题句有怎样的帮助?
A. 帮助非常大 B. 有一点帮助 C. 没有帮助
D. 水平有些下降 E. 水平大大下降

6. 这种支架式教学方法对于你在写作中的语法与措词情况有怎样的帮助?
- A. 帮助非常大 B. 有一点帮助 C. 没有帮助
D. 水平有些下降 E. 水平大大下降
7. 你是否赞同在写作课上将班级分成小组进行写作学习?
- A. 非常赞同 B. 有一点赞同 C. 无所谓
D. 有一点不赞同 E. 很不赞同
8. 你认为在写作开始前进行“头脑风暴”是否有利于开拓你的思路?
- A. 非常赞同 B. 有一点赞同 C. 无所谓
D. 有一点不赞同 E. 很不赞同
9. 你认为在写作过程中允许讨论效果如何, 是否会影响你的思路?
- A. 效果很好 B. 效果一般 C. 无所谓
D. 有一点影响 E. 非常影响
10. 你认为在写作完成后通过小组间互相批改有怎样的帮助?
- A. 帮助非常大 B. 有一点帮助 C. 没有帮助
D. 水平有些下降 E. 水平大大下降
11. 你认为老师在写作完成后在班级中评讲例文对你有怎样的帮助?
- A. 帮助非常大 B. 有一点帮助 C. 没有帮助
D. 水平有些下降 E. 水平大大下降
12. 在今后的写作教学中你是否愿意老师继续采用这种教学方法?
- A. 非常愿意 B. 有一点愿意 C. 无所谓
D. 有一点不愿意 E. 非常不愿意

Appendix VI:

A Reading Material for the First Writing Task

Report: Internet-Addicted Boy Kills Mother Over Cyber Cafe Money

Thursday, June 14, 2007

A 16-year-old boy who was addicted to the Internet stabbed his mother to death in China after she refused to give him money to go to a cyber café, China's state media reported Thursday.

The boy, identified only by his last name Wang, asked his mother for the money on Tuesday in their apartment in Guangzhou, according to The Beijing News.

When she refused, he grabbed a knife from the kitchen, stabbing and fatally wounding her. Her name wasn't released.

The boy's father, identified as Wang Jianjun, rushed home and was stabbed three times in the head by his son. He was reportedly seriously injured but in stable condition at a local hospital.

Wang, who initially fled the scene, was found early Wednesday by local police. He told them he had been planning to kill his parents for more than a month because they were stopping him from realizing his dreams of becoming a politician or an economist, the paper reported.

"Killing them was the only way to free myself," he said.

Wang recently had become addicted to the Internet, according to The Beijing News, spending long hours at local establishments that provided Web access.

Appendix VII:

Another Reading Material for the Students

Internet addiction plaguing China's youth

Correspondents Report - Sunday, 3 September, 2006

Reporter: John Taylor

By the latest count it's believed there are about 120 million internet users in China. By the end of the year, it's tipped to reach about 160 million.

The internet is booming, but it's got some people worried.

"Just within the past 10 years China has become the number one country with the most serious internet addiction problem," says Gau Tier Juan. He's the Director of the Shanghai Internet Addiction Research Centre.

"Internet addiction is becoming worse and worse," he says. "The growth rate of internet addiction is very fast."

Not only are there a tremendous number of internet users in China, but they appear to use the internet a lot.

A survey released here last week found that mainland Chinese are the world's most active online messengers, and users have an average of 6.7 instant messenger accounts.

Another survey found that 13 per cent of young people with access to the web are online for more than 38 hours a week.

More than half of all internet users in China are younger than 30, and it's mainly young people becoming addicted to a digital life.

In the middle of last year, China's first internet addiction clinic opened in Beijing.

"We do all kinds of treatment. One big part is using drugs. We also do psychological counseling and let the kids play sports," one doctor said.

A young man, Chushen, was among the Beijing clinic's first patients.

"The internet to me means a kind of spiritual sustenance. I can't leave the internet. I live in a virtual world. It's like my life. To tell you one horrible sentence, it's a kind of life that's made me lose confidence."

Shanghai has now opened China's first shelter for internet addicts.

The Shanghai Sunshine Community Youth Affairs Centre offers one-night stays for young people would otherwise spend all night in an internet cafe.

According to a newsletter, they once found two girls who'd spent five continuous days in an internet cafe.

"There are about 14.2 per cent of students who are psychologically relying on the internet. The figure in general is relatively high. The ratio of serious cases is about one in 1,000.

The ratio is low, but for the individual family with such a child who's developed a serious internet addiction, the result is disastrous," he says.

"The first symptom of that," he says, "is that first he's already dropped out of school. Secondly, his personality has serious problems, personal relationships suffer, work and study almost stop, there's separation from the real world, and most of his time is spent in a virtual world - once the internet connection is cut off, threatening with a knife and trying to commit suicide. It's impossible to maintain the parent-child relationship," he says.

Mr Gau says internet addiction is rooted in bad social and family relationships. A spoiled child, the centre of family attention, who's somehow struggling perhaps at school, turns to the internet to escape.

"Internet addiction is more serious and common in China than in other countries," he says. "The reason is as follows: in Western countries the cultural background is generally more open and children are more independent. The relationship between parents and children or between teachers and students is better, with more mutual respect - more respect towards human rights and individuality. So the feeling of oppression or failure is not very obvious amongst students," he says.

This is John Taylor in Beijing for *Correspondents Report*.

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