# The effectiveness of using scaffolding strategy to develop introduction writing in Tamil essays

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to determine how effective the application of the scaffolding strategy basically anchored within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) model or framework is in improving students' introduction writing skills in Tamil essays of Form 3 students. The foremost task faced by students in reading and writing activities here in is formulating an appropriate introduction which draws in readers and outlines and gives order to the entire essay. Nonetheless, this gap is a common challenge that most students face as it takes them longer to achieve understanding of critical components such as the outlining of a main idea, the inclusion of background information, and the presentation of an argument in a clear thesis statement. The scaffolding strategy involved in the study also provided structured guidance to the students throughout the learning process, which slowly but surely gave them the ability to write on their own. The analysis for this study strongly suggests that scaffolding improved the writing skills and writing confidence of the students and these are important for understanding how to teach Tamil language.

**Keyword:** Vygotsky's, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Tamil language

## INTRODUCTION

Writing essays, and a good opening paragraph in particular, is one of the key areas of students' development of critical perspective, creativity, and language skills during their wok in class. As part of Tamil education in Malaysia, the ability to write essays showcases the mastery of language, which is important, in the preservation of culture. Yet, many Form 3 students struggle with the task of writing an interesting introductory paragraph despite its relevance. This is usually caused by lack of clarity in the organization of ideas, poorly developed linguistic skills, and absence of direction in how to write the first sentences that make sense.

The Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)-based scaffolding strategy seeks to resolve this problem by advising learners temporarily and allowing them to do things on their own which they are unable to do without assistance. Students learn to become independent in accomplishing tasks through scaffolding by dividing a more difficult task into simpler steps. This study looks at how scaffolding can be used to address the problems of writing introductions for Tamil essays.

### Background of the study

In maximum cities, the historical development of Tamil education in Malaysia can be traced to the beginning of the 19th century, when the first Tamil schools were established. The early Tamil schools were designed to encourage the language and culture, which later adapts a more organizational approach. It is now an elective subject in secondary schools and is also the language being tested in writing essays as an important component of language assessment. Keris Mas education system of Malaysia focuses on four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is said to be difficult because it is a creative activity, slowly focused on the idea as well as rotary grammar. First of all, the concept of the introduction in essay writing is the most needed component in writing; it is idea that requires a lot of focus. This study is linked up with the efforts in order to improve the language skills of Tamil in a new way such as the use of scaffolded teaching techniques.

### Problem Statement

For many pupils learning Tamil as a second or additional language in Malaysian institutions, writing introductions is frequently a barrier. Many students struggle to write an effective, captivating start, which results in essays that don't hold the reader's attention. A pre-study survey revealed that 68% of Form 3 students scored below average in introduction writing, highlighting the need for effective instructional strategies The lack of precise, organized instructions for writing essays is the main cause of this issue. As a result, students perform poorly on writing essays and show low confidence. By using the scaffolding technique to assist students in honing their beginning writing abilities, this study seeks to solve these problems.

### Research Purpose

The primary aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the scaffolding strategy in enhancing students' skills in writing introductions for Tamil essays. Specifically, the research objectives are:

1. To assess the current level of students' abilities in writing essay introductions.
2. To identify common challenges faced by students in this aspect of writing.
3. To determine the impact of the scaffolding technique and ZPD model on students' performance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Scaffolding Strategy

Scaffolding strategy includes the introduction of temporary support to learners that they learn to rely on less and less as they become more independent. Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) defined scaffolding as a pedagogical method whereby instructors support students in achieving goals which, for the student, cannot be achieved by himself. This paradigm focuses on the subdivision of big tasks into smaller ones and on providing specific directions.

### Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) area of Vygotsky indicates the distance between what the learner can do by himself and what the learner can do with the help of partners. The ZPD model emphasizes collaboration between teachers and students, fostering skill development through guided practice. This dynamic fits well with scaffolding, in that both are about gradual learning and providing support.

### Application in Language Learning

Research points to the utility of scaffolding and ZPD in the language classroom. These approaches assist students in the development of writing ability by supplying consistent direction and encouraging critical thinking. By engaging learners in interactive and interative processes, scaffolding enhances comprehension, creativity, and confidence in writing. Recent studies highlight scaffolding's effectiveness in enhancing language skills. For instance, Haghparast (2015) demonstrated that scaffolded writing instruction improved students' clarity and organization in essay introductions. Similarly, Donato (1994) emphasized collaborative learning's role in scaffolding.

## METHODOLOGY

This study, which involved 25 Form Three students from three secondary schools in Kedah, Malaysia, used a qualitative research design. Based on their attendance in Tamil language classes, the participants were chosen. Pre-tests, interviews, and post-tests were among the data gathering techniques used to assess how the scaffolding strategy affected the writing skills of the students.

With an emphasis on the elements of a compelling essay introduction—a hook, background details, and a thesis statement—the scaffolding intervention was applied in a sequence of organized writing exercises. While the post-test evaluated gains following the scaffolding intervention, the pre-test evaluated students' starting skills.

The research utilized a pre-test/post-test design to measure the impact of the scaffolding strategy on students' introduction writing skills. The pre-test was administered before the intervention to assess students' initial capabilities in writing an introduction, focusing on clarity, organization, and engagement. Following the pre-test, the scaffolding strategy was introduced in a series of writing exercises over a period of four weeks. The scaffolded lessons included clear, step-by-step guidance, model introductions, and opportunities for peer feedback. As the intervention progressed, students gradually took on more responsibility for their writing as scaffolding support was slowly withdrawn. The post-test, administered after the intervention, was used to assess improvements in their writing ability. Data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed qualitatively, with specific focus on the structure and effectiveness of students' introductions, including how well they incorporated the key components—such as the hook, background information, and thesis statement—into their writing. Interviews with students and teachers also provided further insight into the perceived effectiveness of the scaffolding approach and its impact on student confidence and motivation.

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that using the scaffolding method significantly improved students' ability to write introductions. The majority of students found it difficult to formulate a compelling thesis statement or opening sentence in the pre-test. However, the majority of students showed improved organization, clarity, and inventiveness in their introductions following structured criticism and guided teaching.

Students were able to comprehend the function of each introductory component because to the usage of scaffolding. For instance, giving students a sample introduction made it easier for them to understand the significance of a hook and how it establishes the essay's tone. Additionally, students were able to develop confidence in their writing skills through the gradual release of responsibility, which lessened the anxiety that comes with writing essays.

These findings are consistent with earlier studies like Haghparast (2015), which discovered that scaffolding helps writers improve their skills by providing organized direction. This study highlights the scaffolding strategy's potential to handle frequent writing difficulties that students have, hence reinforcing its significance in the context of Tamil language instruction.

The study found a marked improvement in students' abilities to write essay introductions after the scaffolding intervention. The improvements were evident in various aspects of the introduction writing process, including clarity, structure, coherence, and engagement. Below is a more detailed discussion of these findings, along with data tables illustrating the pre- and post-test results.

## Pre-Test Results

The pre-test was administered before the scaffolding intervention to assess students' baseline abilities in writing essay introductions. The test measured key components of an introduction: the hook (attention-grabbing opening), background information, and the thesis statement (main argument).

**Table 1:** Pre-Test Results – Students' Performance on Introduction Writing

| Student ID | Hook (0-5) | Background Information (0-5) | Thesis Statement (0-5) | Total Score (0-15) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 9 |
| 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Average | 2.2 | 3.0 | 1.8 | 7.0 |

The table shows that the students' performance on the pre-test was relatively low, with an average total score of 7.0 out of 15. While most students were able to provide some background information (average score of 3.0), the hook and thesis statement components were the weakest, with average scores of 2.2 and 1.8, respectively.

### Post-Test Results

After the scaffolding intervention, which included structured activities and step-by-step guidance in writing introductions, a post-test was administered. This test assessed the same components (hook, background information, and thesis statement) and provided data on improvements.

**Table 2:** Post-Test Results – Students' Performance After Scaffolding Intervention

| Student ID | Hook (0-5) | Background Information (0-5) | Thesis Statement (0-5) | Total Score (0-15) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 12 |
| 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 13 |
| 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 10 |
| 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 12 |
| 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 15 |
| ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Average | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.0 | 12.4 |

As indicated in Table 2, after the scaffolding intervention, the students showed considerable improvement in all areas. The average total score increased from 7.0 to 12.4 out of 15, marking an improvement of 5.4 points on average. Notably, the thesis statement component saw the greatest improvement, with students' average scores rising from 1.8 to 4.0. This suggests that scaffolding had a particularly strong impact on helping students craft clear and focused thesis statements.

### Improvement Results

To better understand where improvements were made, the following table breaks down the average improvements in each individual component of the introduction (hook, background information, thesis statement).

**Table 3:** Breakdown of Improvement in Each Component of Introduction Writing

| Component | Pre-Test Average Score (0-5) | Post-Test Average Score (0-5) | Improvement (0-5) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hook | 2.2 | 4.1 | +1.9 |
| Background Information | 3.0 | 4.2 | +1.2 |
| Thesis Statement | 1.8 | 4.0 | +2.2 |
| **Total Improvement** | 7.0 | 12.4 | +5.4 |

The greatest improvement occurred in the Thesis Statement component, where students gained the most clarity and confidence in expressing their main argument. The Hook component also saw a notable improvement, with students now able to craft more engaging and attention-grabbing opening sentences. The Background Information component showed moderate improvement, indicating that scaffolding helped students understand how to provide necessary context while still maintaining a clear focus.

According to the evidence in this study, students can improve their ability to write introductions for Tamil essays by using the scaffolding approach. Students' writing skills improved significantly as a result of the teacher's methodical, systematic guidance and the progressive delegation of responsibilities. The significant effect that scaffolding can have on

writing performance is demonstrated by the average improvement of 5.4 points on the overall score.

Students who received scaffolding were able to write better introductions and felt more confident while writing essays in general. According to the study, scaffolding is especially effective at assisting students in establishing a clear and cohesive writing style, leading to advancements in crucial domains like crafting a compelling hook, supplying contextual details, and developing a thesis statement. Data were analyzed using NVivo for qualitative insights and Excel for scoring. Interviews with students and teachers provided additional perspectives on scaffolding's effectiveness.

## CONCLUSION

The research demonstrates that the scaffolding strategy is an effective tool in improving students' skills in writing introductions for Tamil essays. By providing structured support and clear guidelines, scaffolding helps students gain a better understanding of essay structure and develop confidence in their writing abilities. The findings suggest that incorporating scaffolding techniques into Tamil language instruction can lead to significant improvements in students' writing performance.

The study has implications for language educators, suggesting that scaffolding should be integrated into teaching practices to enhance student learning outcomes. Future research could explore the long-term effects of scaffolding on writing skills and its applicability to other aspects of essay writing beyond the introduction.

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