

# An In-Depth Examination of the Sociocultural Framework-Informed Practical Model of Scaffolded Feedback in Enhancing Senior High School English Writing Instruction

Shuyu Xu\*

School of Public Foreign Languages, China West Normal University, Nanchong, China

\*Corresponding Author: Shuyu Xu

## ABSTRACT

This study deeply analyzes the application of scaffolded feedback in senior high school English writing instruction under the framework of sociocultural theory. Based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept and Lantof's 13-level Regulatory scale, this paper constructs a scaffolded feedback model to improve students' writing ability through personalized instruction. This paper argues that under the framework of this model, teachers should follow the principles of negotiation, graduation and contingency when providing scaffolded feedback to ensure that students gradually transition from dependence on external adjustment to self-adjustment. In conclusion, the research finds that scaffolded feedback model can effectively promote the development of students' self-correction ability and stimulate their independent learning and critical thinking. And the research can also provide theoretical basis and practical guidance for English writing teaching in high school.

## KEYWORDS

Scaffolded Feedback; Sociocultural Theory; Senior High School English Writing; Personalized Guidance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background to the Research

Writing, as an indispensable expressive skill in the senior high school English education system, is directly related to the shaping of students' overall language ability through its cultivation and improvement. Writing is not only a comprehensive form of application concerning language knowledge, but also a direct reflection of thinking and expression abilities. It occupies a core position in the cultivation of senior high school English language skills. How to effectively improve students' English writing ability has always been a hot topic in the education field. Through timely, specific, and guiding feedback, students can recognize the shortcomings in writing, reflect and correct by themselves, and thus improve their writing skills and expression abilities. With the continuous deepening of research on corrective feedback in writing in the academic community, feedback models under the framework of sociocultural theory, especially scaffolded feedback, have received increasing attention. Scaffolded feedback, as an effective teaching tool, is gradually recognized for its role in promoting the improvement of students' writing ability and becoming a new trend in the research and practice.

## 1.2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

Scholars at home and abroad are increasingly interested in the study of corrective feedback, with a wide range of research focuses covering multiple dimensions such as feedback forms, individual learner differences, teacher feedback strategies, and feedback practices under different theoretical frameworks. In the domestic academic community, although the relevant theories of the Cognitive Interaction School occupy a dominant position in the feedback framework research, the research from the perspective of sociocultural theory is also increasingly receiving attention and support from scholars. On the basis of reviewing existing literature, this study attempts to explore the application value and practical model of scaffolded feedback in senior high school English writing teaching.

By the way, the selection of senior high school students as research subjects in this study is based on their slightly older age and stronger self-learning abilities. Senior high school students have almost matured in cognitive development and possess strong information processing and self-regulated learning abilities, which makes them more likely to successfully achieve self-correction through scaffolded feedback.

Additionally, according to General Senior High School Curriculum Standards [1], the specific goals of the English curriculum are to cultivate and develop students' subject core competencies: language ability, cultural awareness, thinking capacity, and learning ability. And the implementation strategy of scaffolded feedback is also beneficial to cultivate students' critical thinking, innovation and lifelong learning ability, so as to lay a solid foundation for their all-round development, which is closely in line with the requirements of it.

## 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Theoretical Foundations

#### 2.1.1. Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory, as a framework that deeply influence pedagogical theory and practice, provides us with a multidimensional understanding perspective in its broad and narrow sense. The broad sociocultural theory refers to “including critical discourse and social relations theory, situated learning theory, language socialization, and Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory” [2]. However, the narrow one is Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, containing the core contents such as mediation, regulation, private speech, inner speech, activity theory, genetic method, internalization, and zone of proximal development. The basic system of this theory is composed of zone of proximal development and scaffolded. And this study is based on a narrow sociocultural theory, in which “zone of proximal development”, “internalization”, and “scaffolded” are collectively applied, providing a solid theoretical foundation for the practice of scaffolded feedback in senior high school English writing teaching.

#### 1) Zone of Proximal Development

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a core concept in Vygotsky’s theory, which refers to the area between the actual level of development that children can achieve when solving problems independently and the potential level of development that can be achieved with the help of adults or more experienced peers. In scaffolded feedback, the role of a teacher is to identify a student’s ZPD and provide timely and appropriate support to help students cross this area and improve their abilities. This type of support can take various forms, including direct guidance and demonstration, as well as guiding questioning or encouraging feedback. In this research, ZPD not only deepens the understanding of children’s development process, but also provides a solid theoretical foundation for scaffolded feedback.

#### 2) Internalization

The internalization proposed by Vygotsky is an important process in the development of individual psychological functions. It refers to the process in which an individual transforms external social and cultural experiences into internal psychological structures and abilities. In this study, internalization manifests as students gradually transforming external guidance into a part of their writing skills by receiving and integrating feedback from teachers. This process not only improves students' writing ability, but also promotes the development of their self reflection and self-regulation abilities.

### 3) Scaffolding

Scaffolding, as a direct practical strategy for scaffolded feedback, is a concrete manifestation of Vygotsky's theory in instructional practice. Building a scaffold means that a teacher provides students with a temporary, gradually decreasing support structure to help them achieve goals that they could not have achieved independently. In writing teaching, scaffolded feedback can manifest as providing detailed comments, writing outlines, as well as sample analysis, etc., gradually reducing these external support until students are able to independently complete high-quality writing tasks. Through this process, students not only master writing skills, but also learn how to write a perfect work and solve problems independently.

## 2.2. Conceptual Analysis

### 2.2.1. Corrective Feedback

“Corrective Feedback (CF) is the response of a teacher or conversationalist to a learner's error.” [3] For writing teaching, corrective feedback is the error prompts and feedback information provided to improve students' writing ability. Lyster and Ranta [4] classified corrective feedback into six forms: explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition.

Moreover, corrective feedback can be divided into written feedback and oral feedback; peer feedback and teacher feedback; formal feedback and content focused feedback; explicit feedback and implicit feedback. The corrective feedback based on sociocultural theory in this paper is a series of feedbacks, based on students' errors and their own learning level, which are from implicit to explicit, generated from the negotiation between teachers and students. This type of feedback focuses on both content and form, enabling students to independently produce correct language forms and improve writing abilities.

### 2.2.2. Scaffolded Feedback

Aljaafreh & Lantolf [5] proposed that Scaffolded feedback is essentially a practice model of corrective feedback from a sociocultural perspective, emphasizing that when learners are unable to use a certain target language independently, the corrective feedback provided by teachers must adapt to their language development needs, that is, adapt to the zone of proximal development.

Scholars such as Wood, Bruner, and Ross [6] and Finn and Metcalfe [7] emphasize that scaffolded feedback not only provides correct answers, but also guides students to generate answers through prompts and suggestions, thereby achieving self-learning and problem-solving. Jacoby [8] and Yonlinas [9] pointed out that it utilizes the advantages of deep retrieval practice and generation to promote students to generate answers through continuous prompts. Rassaei [10] further elaborated on scaffolded feedback in sociocultural theory, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between interlocutors and gradually providing clearer feedback.

In addition, Hartman [11] subdivided scaffolded feedback into four types: examples, questions, suggestions, and charts, each aiming at supporting students' learning process in different ways. Turney et al. [12] and Roehler and Cantlon [13] further classified teacher scaffolded feedback into various forms, including reinforcement, foundational questions, advanced questions, explanations, and enhanced student classroom participation. Walqui [14] and Van [15] provided a more detailed classification, such as demonstration, practical application, and contextualization. These

classifications not only reflect the diversity of strategies for teachers in the teaching process, but also reflect the importance of scaffolded feedback in promoting students to cross the zone of proximal development and enhancing learning ability.

Based on the above viewpoints, scaffolded feedback can be defined as a teaching strategy. When students encounter doubts during the learning process, teachers use language to build temporary scaffolds to assist students in gradually solving problems independently and enhancing their learning ability.

### **3. THEORETICAL MODEL AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OF SCAFFOLDED FEEDBACK IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH WRITING INSTRUCTION**

#### **3.1. Lantolf's 13-level Regulatory Scale**

Aljaafreh and Lantolf [5] in their groundbreaking study developed a specific 13-level “regulatory scale” (Figure 1, Appendix) to illustrate how to operate a ZPD-based corrective feedback. The scale is a series of feedback processes ranging from implicit to explicit that are used by teachers to identify learners’ learning developmental needs and provide appropriate corrective feedbacks. The three principles on the scale should be observed in practice. They are negotiation, graduation and emergency.

ZPD-based corrective feedback is roughly equivalent to such terms as “graduated feedback” [16] and “scaffolded feedback” [17]. Different terms notwithstanding, there is an agreement on this construct that error correction, with an aim of enabling learners’ gradually less reliance on other-regulation and more on self-regulation, should be tailored to learners’ state of development and delivered in interactional contexts between learners and more capable peers [5, 18, 19].

Therefore, above all, the 13-level regulatory scale proposed by Lantolf based on ZPD is also applicable to scaffolded feedback.

#### **3.2. Scaffolded Feedback Application Model based on 13-level Regulatory Scale**

Based on the zone of proximal development theory, Lantolf’s proposed 13-level regulatory scale provides teachers with a systematic way to guide students. This mode not only focuses on students’ knowledge mastery, but also attaches importance to the development of students’ thinking process and the cultivation of self-regulation ability. By applying this model to the classroom, teachers can more accurately identify students’ learning needs and provide personalized guidance and support. The following takes the writing task from The English Compulsory Textbook Volume 1, Unit 3 Family Matters, published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, as an example to discuss how to integrate Lantolf’s 13-level regulatory scale into classroom teaching.

The writing task is: “Please recall and describe a particular family memory and explain why it is special or memorable. Use the ‘Useful expressions’ provided in the pictures to enrich your essay.” It is close to students’ life, and belongs to narrative writing, which requires students to use different tenses, descriptive vocabularies, and the logic arrangement of text structure. It is obviously easy for students to make errors in the exercise. Therefore, this task is chosen as the teaching application scene of scaffolded feedback. And after students complete the composition according to the requirements of the task, the scaffolded feedback model applied based on the 13-level regulatory scale is as follows (Figure 2, Appendix):

(1) Self-correction (corresponding to Lantolf Level 0) :

After students have completed a short essay describing their family memories, teachers should encourage them to read their own work first and try to find grammatical, spelling, or expression errors.

Students can be reminded to use online grammar checking tools or to exchange essays with classmates for mutual assessment.

(2) Writing Framework (corresponding to Lantolf Level 1) :

When assigning a writing task, the teacher can provide a writing framework, such as from “introduction (introduces family memories)” to “Body (describes the memories in detail, using ‘Useful expressions’)”, and then “make conclusion (explains why the memories are special or memorable)”.

After that, in feedback-oriented classroom discussions, teachers can act as dialogue partners, guiding students to examine their own writing ideas by use of the framework. In this process, students can identify and correct logical or structural errors. Meanwhile, providing a writing framework makes it easy for students to internalize the structure and logic of the target writing.

(3) Error Awareness (corresponding to Lantolf Level 2) :

In the process of self-correction, the teacher rounds the classroom and offers help to the students. When a problem is found from students’ work, the teacher should point out the area that some paragraphs or sentences may have errors, and do not specify the type of error, so as to raise students’ awareness of mistakes.

(4) Error Recognition (corresponding to Lantolf Levels 3 and 4) :

Through group discussion or individual guidance, the teacher guides the students to identify the errors in the works by themselves through questions. For example: “Which tense do you think is more appropriate here?” “Is the word appropriate in this context?”

(5) Error Location (corresponding to Lantolf Level 5) :

If the student is having trouble spotting the mistake on his or her own, the teacher can help the student narrow down the error by pointing out the paragraph or sentence in which it is made.

(6) Error Nature Prompt (corresponding to Lantolf Level 6) :

When students are self-correcting, teachers can also provide tips on the types of errors to help students successfully locate them, such as: “pay attention to the consistency of tense”, “check the form of verbs” and so on. This can not only promote students to understand the nature of mistakes, further faster and easier to locate them made, but also enhance students’ understanding of knowledge behind the errors, and pave the way for writing less similar ones in the future.

(7) Clearly Point out the Error (corresponding to Lantolf Level 7) :

If the student still cannot find the error by himself after many attempts, the teacher should clearly point out the error and give a short explanation.

(8) Prevent Error Correction (corresponding to Lantolf Level 8) :

When students make mistakes in compositions, it is necessary to make sure whether they grasp the correct way to correct them. If they have not mastered the correct way, when they have wrong correction behavior, the teacher should stop it in time.

(9) Provide Correction Clues (corresponding to Lantolf Level 9) :

If the students still fail to identify the mistakes in the work, or do not correct the mistakes completely, the teacher should give the corresponding clues for revision, such as “here should use the past tense to describe the past events.”

(10) Provide the Correct Form (corresponding to Lantolf Level 10) :

After students identify errors, teachers can show them the correct grammatical structure or vocabulary use, so that students have further intuitive understanding.

(11) Explain the Correct Form (corresponding to Lantolf Level 11) :

After that, the teacher should explain to the student why a certain form is correct and its applicability in context. For example: “The past perfect is used because this action occurred before another past action.” This behavior can help students better grasp and consolidate their unfamiliar knowledge points.

(12) Detailed Explanation and Examples (corresponding to Lantolf Level 12) :

If students still have questions, the teacher should explain the relevant knowledge points or the correct form of vocabulary and sentence patterns more detailedly and provide specific examples to help students deepen their comprehension.

(13) Continuous Scaffolded Support (corresponding to Lantolf Level 13) :

Throughout the writing process, teachers should provide ongoing support and feedback to help students complete tasks step by step and independently.

(14) Reflection and Summary (new Levels) :

After the completion of the writing task, students should be guided to reflect on the discoveries and challenges in the writing process, and summarize the experience, the unfamiliar knowledge points and writing skills learned on the paper. In this procedure, teachers can guide students to use a portfolio, write a learning reflection diary and other ways to record, so that students can quickly review and recall in the future, and finally help students to successfully self-correct.

(15) Personalized Feedback (new Level) :

According to the specific learning needs of each student, teachers should provide personalized feedback and suggestions to truly promote the effective development of their writing skills.

(16) Technology Integration (corresponding to the new Levels) :

At present, the world is gradually moving towards the digital era of education. Encouraging students to use pedagogical technology after class, such as online grammar checking tools, to assist the self-correction process can better improve the efficiency and accuracy of writing.

Above all, by setting up scaffolds in the feedback process, teachers can effectively help students learn useful information, get the effective comments from the feedback, so as to improve their English writing ability and cultivate students' independent learning ability and critical thinking, etc.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that although the above model is mainly aimed at the writing teaching environment in the classroom, there are also situations in senior high school English teaching where teachers give writing guidance to students outside the classroom. In this context, teachers can learn from and apply this framework feedback model to conduct in-depth dialogue and communication with students through written feedback. This kind of written interaction not only promotes the internalization of students' writing knowledge, but also helps to improve their self-learning ability.

However, as is well known, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching that meets the needs of all teaching scenarios. Similarly, not all English writings are suitable to adopt this model completely. Teachers should flexibly use and adjust this teaching strategy according to the specific types of composition, works' degree of difficulty, the specific needs of students and the learning background. The good way is to adjust the teaching method according to different factors, which can really help students improve their English writing skills and abilities. What' more, when applying this model, teachers should pay attention to evaluate and reflect on the effect of the teaching practice, and constantly optimize and adjust it to achieve teaching objectives and improve teaching quality.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Under the framework of sociocultural theory, this study makes an in-depth theoretical and practical exploration of scaffolded feedback in senior high school English writing instruction. Based on the comprehension of Vygotsky's theory and the basis of Lantolf's 13-level regulatory scale, this study constructs a practical model, which is a systematic method for teachers to identify the learning needs of senior high school students in English writing. And this paper emphasizes the importance of scaffolded feedback in promoting students' autonomous learning ability and language ability improvement, aiming to guide teachers how to improve students' writing abilities and skills.

Meanwhile, this paper adds a new perspective to the theoretical system of corrective feedback, especially in the application of sociocultural theory. In practice, this study can also provide specific operational strategies for senior senior high school English writing teaching, which is helpful for teachers to design and implement writing teaching activities more effectively.

However, there are some limitations in this study due to time, cognition and other factors. First of all, the applicability of models in different educational environments and cultural backgrounds needs to be further verified. Second, it does not explore the effectiveness of scaffolded feedback in different writing tasks and different learning stages. Third, there is no detailed way on how to combine technology to further optimize scaffolded feedback. It is a wish that these problems can be properly solved in the future.

All in all, looking forward to the future, this study is expected to stimulate more research on the application of scaffolded feedback in the teaching of second language writing, especially on how to improve the implementation effect of scaffolded feedback through technology. Through continuous practice and research, it is believed that scaffolded feedback will provide more solid support for improving students' English writing ability and even the development of their overall language ability.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 2017. General Senior High School Curriculum Standards [M]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- [2] Zuengler, J. & Miller, E. R. (2006) . Cognitive and sociocultural perspectives: two parallel SLA worlds? [J]. TESOL Quarterly, 40(1): 35-58.
- [3] Ellis R, Loewen S & Erlam R. (2006). Implicit and explicit corrective feedback and the acquisition of L2 grammar [J]. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 28(2) : 339-368.
- [4] Lyster, R. & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: negotiation of form in communicative classrooms [J]. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, (20): 37-66.
- [5] Lantolf, J. P. & Aljaafreh, A. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and second language learning in the zone of proximal development [J]. Modern Language Journal, 78(4): 465-483.
- [6] Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring and problem solving [J]. Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, (17): 9-100.
- [7] Finn, B., & Metcalfe, J. (2010). Scaffolded feedback to maximize long-term error correction [J]. Memory & Cognition, (38): 951-961.
- [8] Jacoby, L. L. (1991). A process dissociation framework: separating automatic from intentional uses of memory [J]. Journal of Memory & Language, (30): 513-541.
- [9] Yonelinas, A. P. (2002). The nature of recollection and familiarity: a review of 30 years of research [J]. Journal of Memory & Language, (46): 441-517.
- [10] Rassaei, E. (2014). Scaffolded feedback, recasts, and L2 development: a sociocultural perspective [J]. Modern Language Journal, (1): 417-431.
- [11] Hartman, H. (2002). Human Learning and Instruction [M]. New York: City College of City University of New York.
- [12] Turney, C. et. al. 1983. Sidney Micro Skills Redeveloped. Series 1 Handbook: reinforcement, Basic Questioning, Variability [M]. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

- [13] Roehler, L. R., & Cantlon, D. J. (1997). Scaffolded: a powerful tool in social constructivist classroom [J]. *Scaffolded Student Learning: Instructional Approaches*, (1): 27-37.
- [14] Walqui, A. (2006). Scaffolded instruction for English language learners: a conceptual framework [J]. *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, (9): 159-180.
- [15] Van, P. J., Volman, M., & Beishuizen, J. (2010). Scaffolded in teacher-student interaction: a decade of research [J]. *Educational Psychology Review*, (22): 271-297.
- [16] Erlam, R., Ellis, R., & Batstone, R. (2013). Oral corrective feedback on L2 writing: two approaches compared [J]. *System*, (41), 257-268.
- [17] Rassaei, E. (2014). Scaffolded feedback, recasts, and L2 development: a sociocultural perspective [J]. *Modern Language Journal*, (1): 417-431.
- [18] Bitchener, J. (2012) A reflection on 'the language learning potential' of written CF [J]. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, (21): 348-363.
- [19] Nassaji, H. & Swain, M. (2000) A Vygotskian perspective on corrective feedback in L2: the effect of random versus negotiated help on the learning of English articles [J]. *Language Awareness*, (9): 34-51.

## APPENDIX

**Figure 1.** The Regulatory Scale (Lantolf & Aljaafreh)

0	Tutor asks the learner to read, find the error and correct them independently, prior to the tutorial.
1	Construction of a “collaborative frame” prompted by the tutor as a potential dialogic partner.
2	Prompted or focused reading of the sentence that contains the error by the learner or the tutor.
3	Tutor indicates that something maybe wrong in a segment (e.g., sentence, clause, line): ‘Is there anything wrong in this sentence?’
4	Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at recognizing the error.
5	Tutor narrows down the location of the error (e.g. tutor repeats or points to the specific segment which contains the error).
6	Tutor indicates the nature of the error, but tries not to identify the error (e.g., ‘There is something wrong with the tense marking here.’).
7	Tutor identifies the error (‘You can’t use an auxiliary here’).
8	Tutor rejects learner’s unsuccessful attempts at correcting the error.
9	Tutor provides clues to help the learner arrive at the correct form (e.g., ‘It is not really past but some thing that is still going on’).
10	Tutor provides the correct form.
11	Tutor provides some explanation for use of the correct form.
12	Tutor provides examples of the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action.

**Figure 2. The Scaffolded Feedback Model**

<p><b>Level 1: Self-correction</b> Encourage students to independently identify grammatical, spelling, or expression errors by online tools or peer review.</p> <p><b>Level 2: Writing Framework</b> Offer a structured framework to facilitate logical and structured writing, guiding students to internalize the writing process.</p> <p><b>Level 3: Error Awareness</b> Raise students' error recognition by indicating areas of potential mistakes without specifying the error type.</p> <p><b>Level 4: Error Recognition</b> Foster self-discovery of errors through guided questioning in group or individual settings.</p> <p><b>Level 5: Error Location</b> Assist students in pinpointing errors by indicating the problematic paragraph or sentence.</p> <p><b>Level 6: Error Nature Prompt</b> Provide hints on error types to enhance students' understanding and facilitate quicker identification of mistakes.</p> <p><b>Level 7: Clearly Point out the Error</b> Explicitly identify errors and offer brief explanations when students fail to recognize them independently.</p> <p><b>Level 8: Prevent Error Correction</b> Ensure students understand the correct error correction methods and intervene if incorrect behaviors are observed.</p> <p><b>Level 9: Provide Correction Clues</b> Offer specific clues for error correction when students struggle to identify or correct mistakes fully.</p> <p><b>Level 10: Explain the Correct Form</b> Clarify the rationale and contextual applicability of correct forms to solidify students' grasp of language rules.</p> <p><b>Level 11: Explain the Correct Form</b> Clarify the rationale and contextual applicability of correct forms to solidify students' grasp of language rules.</p> <p><b>Level 12: Detailed Explanation and Examples</b> Offer in-depth explanations and examples to deepen students' comprehension of language points and sentence patterns.</p> <p><b>Level 13: Continuous Scaffolded Support</b> Provide ongoing support and feedback throughout the writing process to promote step-by-step and independent task completion.</p> <p><b>Level 14: Reflection and Summary</b> Guide students to reflect on and summarize their writing experiences, including challenges and skills learned, using portfolios or reflection diaries.</p> <p><b>Level 15: Personalized Feedback</b> Tailor feedback to individual student needs to effectively advance their writing abilities.</p> <p><b>Level 16: Technology Integration</b> Leverage technology to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of the self-correction process.</p>
--