ISSN: 1579-9794

Translation *vs*. Scaffolding for the Writing Practice: Techniques Employed by In-Service EFL Teachers in Primary Education

Traducción *vs*. andamiaje en la práctica de la escritura: técnicas utilizadas por docentes de ILE en Educación Primaria

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Fecha de recepción: 13/12/2023
Fecha de aceptación: 17/09/2024

Abstract: Writing entails one of the most difficult skills to teach in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, above all in Primary Education. The main purpose of this paper was to analyse the techniques employed by EFL teachers in the teaching of writing. The study addressed fundamental issues for the development of writing skill, such as approaches to teaching writing, scaffolding and translation, the use of metacognitive strategies, and the type of activities and resources employed by in-service teachers. A quantitative survey was designed and administered online to 47 in-service EFL teachers in Primary Education (20 from bilingual schools and 27 from non-bilingual schools). The results showed that scaffolding was more frequent among the EFL teachers over the translation, even though using the mother tongue was very popular among the respondents' answers. Besides, EFL teachers from both cohorts pointed out that among the most frequent metacognitive strategies were the suggestions of improvements and the use of checklists or rubrics rather than the organisation of peer reviews in class. The activities that best suit the practice of writing were those in which teachers had more control (familiarisation and controlled writing). To conclude, the respondents were unfamiliar with many of the tools devoted to writing, being more popular the use of more general educative

tools such as Canva, Wordwall, or Padlet. Regarding the outcomes, this study depicts the perceptions and the actual implementation of techniques of the EFL teachers in Primary Education, leaving an open door to further analysis in other educative stages to determine if these techniques are confirmed or refuted in other contexts and levels.

Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL), Writing, Scaffolding technique, Translation, In-service EFL teachers

Resumen: La escritura es una de las destrezas lingüísticas más difíciles de enseñar en el aula de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE), sobre todo en Educación Primaria. El principal propósito de este trabajo es analizar las técnicas que utilizan los docentes de ILE a la hora de enseñar la escritura. El estudio aborda aspectos esenciales para el desarrollo de la destreza de escritura, como enfoques para enseñar escritura, técnicas de andamiaje y de traducción, el uso de estrategias metacognitivas, y el tipo de actividades y recursos empleados por docentes en activo. Se diseñó un cuestionario cuantitativo en línea al que contestaron 47 docentes de ILE de Educación Primaria en activo (20 de centros bilingües y 27 de centros no bilingües). Los resultados muestran que el profesorado de ILE emplea más técnicas de andamiaje que de traducción, aunque los informantes declararon también que recurrían a la lengua materna. Además, los docentes de ambas muestras destacaron las sugerencias de mejora y el uso de listas de verificación o rúbricas entre las estrategias metacognitivas más usadas, en lugar de organizar revisión por pares para corregir en clase. Las actividades que más se adecuan a la práctica de la escritura son aquellas en las que el profesorado tiene más control en las mismas (familiarización y escritura controlada). Finalmente, los informantes no conocían muchas de las herramientas destinadas a practicar escritura, siendo muy populares las herramientas educativas generales como Canva, Wordwall o Padlet. A la luz de los resultados obtenidos, este estudio describe las percepciones y la implementación real de técnicas entre el profesorado de ILE de Educación Primaria, dejando una puerta abierta a futuros análisis en otras etapas educativas para determinar si estas estrategias se replican o no en otros contextos y niveles.

Palabras clave: Inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE), Escritura, Estrategias de andamiaje, Traducción, Docentes en activo de ILE

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of writing is one of the most difficult skills to teach and learn in the foreign language (FL) classroom. Besides, students usually see

the process of writing as an assessment task in which the teacher only focuses on the errors (Nurdianingsih and Rahmawati, 2018). Despite this, the improvement of the writing skill allows for effective communication in current society. Moreover, we can acquire sufficient knowledge to consolidate our oral language skills. This idea was supported by Porte (1996), who stated that the process of writing, due to the necessity of encountering the adequate form to express an idea, allows for the observation of how the language works.

The difficulty when learning the writing skill derives from a series of challenges or problems students encounter when carrying out their written productions, as indicated by many studies around the world (Rietdijk *et al*., 2018). Following Selvaraj and Aziz (2019), the most problematic issue is the lack of communicative competence among students, required to complete the writing task. Students first need to solidly acquire some basic vocabulary and grammar, as well as the capacity to structure and organise the ideas in phrases so as to achieve, in the end, a successful written production. Therefore, one of the main challenges teachers face in teaching this skill is to help or provide the necessary tools to generate and organise the ideas.

Another decisive factor for the efficient teaching of the skill is the adequate selection of a strategy to teach writing. Selvaraj and Aziz (2019) underscore that the lack of pedagogical knowledge of teachers, particularly in relation to writing and cultural and linguistic problems, contributes to developing incompetent writers among students. Bouroba (2012) reported linguistic problems caused by the lack of immediate feedback in the oral interaction through facial expressions or assent nods. This author also stated that the process of writing involved graphological resources such as punctuation, logical cohesion, and ideas association.

Brindle *et al*. (2016) pointed out that the main problems in teaching writing are the almost inexistent practical activities of writing as a process and the inadequate preparation of teachers to teach how to write. In their study, they were conscious of the minimal attention the writing process and the text revision received. Despite being proved that teachers involved students in pre-writing activities and provided instructions about the writing, the lessons were more teacher-oriented, leaving aside the interaction among students, the collaborative writing, the self-assessment or the peer assessment, leading to a loss of autonomy due to the lack of reflection in students. Pak-Taong (2008) suggested that writing through activities gives rise to comprehension, which, at the same time, includes a reflection process about the topic, collection of information, organisation of the ideas, culminating in a reflection on learning. Ghabool *et al*. (2012) highlight that the main cause of these problems is the interference produced between the

mother tongue (MT) and the FL they are going to learn, since there is no equivalence of words in both languages.

In this context, we aimed at investigating what EFL in-service teachers employ in their classroom for helping in the writing process of their Primary-Education students, focusing on the implementation of scaffolding techniques or the use of translation.

1. TEACHING WRITING SKILL IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Writing frequently serves as a form to consolidate grammar and vocabulary in a given language. Nevertheless, we cannot forget the communicative potential of this skill. According to Hedge (1988), tasks involving the writing skill aim to train competent writers. Likewise, students will be able to write complete texts conforming connected, contextualised and adequate pieces of communication.

By taking this necessity into account, and following Bouroba (2012), students face a content problem in which what to say and which language will be used in their production are questioned. This difficulty is heightened when students are not familiarised with the type of texts they have to write. The process of writing involves different levels −linguistic and non-linguistic− that turn it into a complex task. Four dimensions could be distinguished in the written text production and, to address them, we must consider four other important questions related to content, the reader, the purpose of the text, and the type of text.

The content dimension highlights the importance of understanding the structure and features of the type of text that will be reproduced. Hedge (1988) differentiates between personal writings (such as notes, recipes, diaries, reminders, etc.) and public or institutional writings (letters, invitations, emails, news, announcements, etc.). When writing a text, we should take into account the target audience. In the context of this dimension, Kroll (1984) specified that, when teaching the writing skill, students must be aware of the audience for their texts, that is, other people apart from the teacher who may read their works. The form of expressing ideas is the most relevant aspect of writing (Jayanti, 2019). The fourth dimension, then, focuses on the purpose of the text. The selection of vocabulary, style and format also depend on the purpose for which we write. This purpose should be significant for students and close to their interests to foster their creativity, while also being representative of the use of the written language in real life.

1.1. Approaches for teaching writing

Numerous approaches and techniques to teach writing as a productive skill have been studied in the literature. The teachers' task in this case is to understand the features and the necessities of their students in order to choose the most appropriate approach. The teaching of writing skill has evolved over time, adapting to students' needs. Dragomir and Niculescu (2020) refer to different approaches such as product-based approach, process-based approach, the controlled-to-free approach, the free writing approach, the communicative approach, and the eclectic approach.

The purpose of the product-based approach is to create a final product (Selvaraj and Aziz, 2019). In this approach, students imitate a sample text provided by their teacher so as to reproduce the same structure. To implement this approach, we devote time to read and analyse the sample text and its structure. One of the main features of this approach is that students engage controlled practices to drill or exercise the elements of the sample text. Then, they imitate the sample by organising the ideas obtained in the previous practice activities.

Despite being efficient, the approach does not focus on the process of writing, since it gives more importance to grammar and syntax of the language. As a result of the application of this approach, students often feel unmotivated when focusing on the form correction rather than content, which can hinder their creativity.

The process-based approach visualises writing as a process with different stages: planning, writing, revision, and edition (Selvaraj and Aziz, 2019). Planning is considered a pre-writing stage designed to stimulate ideas (Reimer, 2001). Some of the techniques for idea stimulation include reading, brainstorming, grouping, debate, or free writing. However, these ideas must be structured and organised, enabling the spontaneity and creativity of the students. During the writing stage, students will produce their first draft, which should be revised and edited to reach the final and definitive version. In this stage, students exchange their writings with other people (the teacher or other classmates), which gives them the opportunity to focus on their audience and receive comments from their counterparts that will facilitate the process of revising and re-editing the text. In the revision stage, students can add, eliminate, reorder or even replace words to make communication more effective. In this sense, students will evaluate their own learning with the purpose of improving and being conscious of the process itself in order to carry out their writings.

Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) supported that it reflects the evolution of writing instruction by emphasising the importance of receiving comments on

drafts and integrating students in peer reviews. Teachers adopt a new role as readers, providing feedback on how to improve students' writing. It is within this approach that the concept of *scaffolding* arises, as this allows students to improve their writing skills and to foster their creativity by applying the necessary aids.

Regarding the controlled-to-free approach, we should look back to the 1950s when the audiolingual method arose in FL teaching. This behaviourist method consists of repeating patterns and drills, focusing on the oral production and pronunciation. According to Dragomir and Niculescu (2020), the close relationship with this method is due to comes from the repetitive structure of the behaviourism. It is a sequential approach to writing that involves copying, manipulating, and modifying texts.

To start, students practise with words and sentences to, consequently, work with paragraphs and other more complex compositions. This approach primarily focuses on grammar, syntax, and the mechanical aspects of writing; therefore, it pays attention to precision. Creativity plays a secondary role since the main purpose is only to imitate, shape, and adapt a text to a given sample.

The free writing approach is based on the principle that any topic can generate numerous texts that must flow freely and with a minimum of error correction. In this approach, students generate plenty of ideas for the construction of numerous texts. Error correction is gradual and feedback is frequently provided on students' ideas.

The grammar-syntax organisation approach adds some elements to the process of writing apart from grammar, that is, syntax and organisation. The development of this approach is structured around writing tasks requiring students to pay attention to organisation and grammatical precision. Apart from using appropriate vocabulary, students have to be conscious of the verb structure, tenses, linking words, and phrases to build a coherent and cohesive paragraph. The elements in this approach must be reviewed prior to the production of the text. Its main feature is the link between the purpose for which we write and the linguistic instruments necessary to transmit the message to the reader.

The communicative approach associates two essential elements in the production of texts: the purpose of the writer and the target audience (Dragomir and Niculescu, 2020). This method provides realistic tasks motivating students to act as writers in real contexts in order to answer questions that will guide their writing process and to choose the most appropriate language to communicate their message: Why am I writing this? (purpose), who will read it? (audience). Thus, the target audience is

expanded beyond just the teacher, who traditionally was the only potential reader and who, on the other hand, read with corrective purposes.

Finally, the eclectic approach is a method customised by every teacher, who employs different techniques from various approaches that are most convenient and efficient for a given group of students.

1.2 Procedures and activities for teaching writing in the EFL classroom

Students should be trained in order to develop different linguistic sub-competencies including the production of coherent writing. According to Alibayevich (2021), the teaching of this process requires a systematic approach to motivate students and to make them conscious of the necessary steps for an efficient writing. This process is gradually structured: first, by writing paragraphs focused on an idea, and then progressing to more complex productions by adding coherent paragraphs and developing arguments to enhance critical abilities. Dragomir and Niculescu (2020) list the following steps for teaching writing:

a) Provide a sample text.
b) Analyse the sample text with students following a specific approach and considering its communicative aspects: meaning, form, purpose, audience, and language.
c) Practise the sample with tasks to consolidate the form and the language.
d) Produce a response to a new task to customise the content and the form of the new written production.

This structure corresponds to a product-based approach. Mateo-Cutillas (2016) presents a series of stages proposed by Pincas *et al*. (1982) to improve students' written communicative ability, which gradually reduces the teacher's control:

a) Familiarisation: students are prepared for real writing by demonstrating the abilities they will use. The main activities in this stage are identification, evaluation, gap filling, crosswords, anagrams, or grammatical exercises.
b) Controlled writing: errors are minimised. The main activities involve combination and substitution, such as matching phrases with images.
c) Guided writing: it includes activities that fall between controlled writing and free writing. The activities offer a model sample, schema or image students can expand upon. Examples of these activities are finalisation, reproduction,

comprehension and transformation, such as creating story maps or writing a final ending to a given story.

d) Free writing (or creative writing): students write freely about what they have been taught, without any kind of help or detailed schema.

Regarding the last stage, i.e. creative writing, Couto-Cantero and Bobadilla-Pérez (2018) highlight its advantages for students, noting that it not only enhances linguistic and literary skills, but also fosters critical thinking. They also argue that creative activities like storytelling offer a dynamic alternative to traditional methods, making language learning more engaging and effective. Moreover, it has been argued that it is essential for educators to foster skills such as creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, as they are vital for 21st-century learners and thus should be integrated into teaching practices (Fraga Castrillón and Couto-Cantero, 2021). Creative writing, by its nature, supports the development of these competencies, as it helps students not only to express themselves creatively, but also to engage in collaborative and communicative learning experiences.

1.3 Scaffolding techniques for teaching writing

The term *scaffolding* was first coined by Wood, Bruner and Ross in the 70s (1976) as a form to understand the variety of techniques to help students with the challenges they face in their learning process (Quintana, 2021). Pea (2004) describes *scaffolding* as a set of teaching strategies designed to help students achieve a deeper understanding and greater independence. According to Kamil (2017), *scaffolding* in the educative context describes a temporary interactive and collaborative system of support that teachers offer to their students. This system is built together and is removed when the student does not need it anymore.

Despite being used in every field of learning, Wood *et al*. (1976) introduced the term to describe the support provided in complex problem-solving activities. In this context, the term of *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) of Vygotsky arises, referring to the distance between the real level of the student's independent development and the potential development achievable with the help of an adult or more competent classmates (Herwanis *et al*., 2021). In other words, it is about what a student can do with and without help. With this theory in mind, the main objective is to help students to become conscious of their own learning.

Scaffolding does not simply mean the teacher's help, but refers to a specific and prompt support that strengthens students' learning in order to complete an activity with a certain level of difficulty. Walqui (2006)

demonstrated in a study that students have greater success in learning a language when teachers and classmates provide specific support when necessary. Peñate Cabrera and Bazo (2002) suggested providing a model on which students can base their texts.

According to Gonulal and Loewen (2018), scaffolding could be applied in diverse modes with different techniques: modelling, contextualisation, schema building, text representation, and metacognition development. Modelling provides students with representative examples of what they are expected to achieve in the task with some concrete guidelines. In this technique, teachers, apart from providing task examples, can model the language and vocabulary that their students need to complete their tasks. Following this technique, Gonulal and Loewen (2018) argue that teachers must focus on their students' previous knowledge by establishing connections between this and the new knowledge to be learned. The use of images, facial expressions, gestures, or flashcards is very frequent.

In the schema building, teachers help their students to connect the new information with the already existing knowledge. To carry out this technique, reading is frequently used as a source of inspiration with mind maps and brainstorming. Likewise, the students' schemas can be activated so as to integrate the new information with the existing knowledge helping students generate new ideas. These techniques contribute to the development of self-autonomy and metacognition. Some examples of activities are think-aloud reflection and self-assessment activities. As FL learning entails added difficulty, teachers are expected to provide support to help students develop their abilities.

Herwanis *et al*. (2021) state that there exists a close relationship between the application of scaffolding strategies and the development of students' autonomy, as the help provided approaches students to a competency state that will eventually allow them to carry out the task by themselves. The study performed by Baradaran and Sarfarazi (2011) revealed the difference between the results of the written productions of students that experienced scaffolding and those who did not. They concluded that there were significant improvements in those productions carried out with scaffolding help. The study by Veerappan *et al*. (2011) determined that, through scaffolding, students could progress from the zone of current development to the zone of proximal development, and also demonstrated the positive effect of scaffolding on students with a lower FL domain. All these studies coincided in the relationship between scaffolding and the development of learners' autonomy.

Writing is a complex cognitive process that involves three other sub-processes: planning, writing, and revision (Caldera, 2003). Each of these sub-processes requires different scaffolding techniques. In the planning stage of the message, students must consider the purpose of their writing to determine the audience, the language that will be used, and the content of the text (Caldera, 2003). Consequently, students will generate ideas and organise them. Students will be able to carry out these processes when the teacher provides appropriate support (Kamil, 2017; Price and Harkins, 2011):

a) Bridges or connections: it seeks to activate students' previous knowledge in order to generate some ideas. Students will establish links between their experiences and the new information. The most frequently employed techniques in this stage are brainstorming, lists or the use of visual information like graphics or images.
b) Contextualisation: it approaches the complex ideas of the topic to the students' experience, and likewise connects the daily language with an appropriate academic language. Teachers help their students to simplify the sentences to avoid the excessive use of subordinate clauses, which makes the process of writing difficult.
c) Visual help like mimes, facial expressions, gestures or images to provide redundancy in messages.
d) Organisation of their ideas following a logic and coherent order: this will facilitate the writing of the text and, subsequently, the organisation of the ideas in paragraphs. The most used techniques are mind maps, schemas, and ideograms.
e) Expand ideas: the main aim is to argue the ideas, connect two ideas and express them with their own words. This is used by the teacher to provide examples of connectors and even to employ the technique of brainstorming.

In the writing stage, students proceed to express their ideas in paper-based manuscripts. Different cognitive abilities are involved: using correct language and syntax or selecting the appropriate vocabulary. Kamil (2017) and Price and Harkins (2011) provide the following:

a) Paragraph structure: the teacher provides help and explanations of the structure of the text. A sample text is employed to help students to observe the structure they must follow.

b) Modelling: the teacher models the learning by providing situations or examples about what students should do. An analysis and discussion of the sample text are carried out. The main objective is to develop the content comprehension and adapt it for personal use.

Lastly, the scaffolding techniques in the revision stage refer to verifying the comprehension of the students' knowledge:

a) Feedback around the quality of the content, depth and ideas precision, organisation or error correction. The teacher provides suggestions for improvement. This technique involves the use of correction codes allowing students to become aware of and correct the mistakes by themselves. Some teachers prefer to correct the errors in the productions, although this can cause some negative feeling about the errors. Another technique is the organisation of peer review, in which students read and assess their classmates' productions with comments and following criteria established by the teacher.
b) Reflection: this will enable students to develop autonomy in their learning, being conscious of the steps and techniques necessary for the production of texts so that they can carry them out by themselves.

2. TRANSLATION TO TEACH WRITING

Learning strategies are the steps performed by students for the improvement of their own learning process, making it more effective and transferable to new situations (Oxford, 1990 cited in Liashuk, 2019). One such strategy is pedagogical translation, which refers to the use of translation as a tool in the classroom aimed at enhancing language skills (Asquerino Egoscozábal and Estrada Chichón, 2024). This approach is used within language teaching contexts to advance students' language proficiency (Hurtado Albir, 2001). Moreover, it goes beyond the mere translation of literary texts without a clear educational purpose and does not aim to train students to become professional translators (Asquerino Egoscozábal and Estrada Chichón, 2024). As Soto Almela (2016) suggested, using pedagogical translation in second language classes is advantageous, particularly for developing skills such as reading comprehension, writing, speaking, flexibility, intuition, and creativity in both interpretation and expression.

Oxford (1990, cited in Liashuk, 2019) developed a taxonomy of learning strategies and situates translation within cognitive strategies of

analysis and reasoning. According to Liashuk (2019), in the process of writing, the translation can be seen as a form of compensation strategy to overcome limitations when writing, that is, collecting information in the MT and its translation to carry out the task of writing. Nevertheless, translation could also be seen as:

1) A metacognitive strategy for evaluating their learning (verification of message comprehension).
2) An affective strategy in order to reduce anxiety and enhance motivation in the process of learning.
3) A social strategy to cooperate with others (asking for or providing translation to facilitate the performance of a task).

Ghobain (2015) indicates that the use of translation in FL teaching has received much controversy throughout the history, as educators have opposed it to prevent the acquisition of the FL from losing strength. The use of translation as an activity in the FL classroom was drastically reduced with the implementation of communicative approaches. Despite this, many teachers continue employing translation as a resource in their lessons.

Numerous studies have defended the use of translation and the MT as a productive activity that can improve the process of teaching and learning. Ghobain (2015) also states that the use of the MT and code-switching can help in promoting a more natural acquisition and, besides, confirm that the MT facilitates the process of learning a FL.

Translation is, therefore, seen as another scaffolding technique and is usually a choice made by the teacher. Liashuk (2019) pointed out some uses attributed to translation in this process:

a) Facilitate FL knowledge: explain new vocabulary and grammatical questions, solve doubts, etc.
b) Increase contrastive characteristics among the languages, solving interference errors.
c) Facilitate the orientation of a task: explain activities, give instructions, etc.

Kulusakli *et al*. (2018) warn that translation is a teaching tool employed by teachers that follow the grammar-translation method, in which the language of instruction is the students' MT. Mollaei *et al*. (2017) justify that translation produces benefits in the FL learning when teaching complex grammar structures.

Contrary to the grammar-translation method, we find the communicative approach. Kulusakli *et al*. (2018) mention that thinking in a

FL improves students' competences and attributes a secondary role to the use of translation. Kerr (2016) highlights that the main drawback of the use of translation is the linguistic interference problems since it promotes the wrong belief that there exists an equivalence between different languages when transferring word for word.

However, although the use of the FL promotes improvement when practising all the linguistic skills, the truth is that the use of the students' MT is not neglected anymore (Kerr, 2016) and it coexists with the FL in the teaching practice. Although scaffolding and pedagogical translation are distinct strategies, translation can also function as a scaffolding technique. As Gultekin (2021) argued, translation has become more accepted as a scaffolding tool, as it provides temporary support that helps learners bridge gaps in understanding the second language, thereby improving their language skills. Although scaffolding includes a range of techniques to support learning, as seen above, pedagogical translation specifically uses the first language to facilitate comprehension and acquisition of the second language. Gultekin (2021) even indicated that "the L1 and L2 connection is a natural fact of language learning; thus, it cannot be totally removed from the language classroom" (p. 4). Therefore, when used appropriately as a form of scaffolding, translation can play an important role in supporting FL learning.

In light of the theoretical premises exposed above, to our knowledge, no studies have been found concerning the study of EFL teachers from Primary Education regarding the use of translation or other scaffolding strategies for the practice of writing skill.

3. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this research was to determine the techniques and strategies employed by the EFL Primary Education teachers for teaching writing. With this purpose in mind, some research questions (RQs) were also posed:

RQ1: Which language/s do the EFL teachers employ in class?

RQ2: What are the in-service EFL teachers' perceptions of the teaching of the writing skill?

RQ3: Do in-service EFL teachers of Primary Education use translation into their students' MT to facilitate the process of writing? What are their perceptions?

RQ4: What scaffolding techniques do in-service EFL teachers employ in Primary Education?

RQ5: How often do EFL teachers apply metacognitive strategies in the final revision of the product?

RQ6: What kind of activities and digital tools do in-service EFL teachers in Primary Education propose for the writing practice in class?

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Participants

A total of 47 in-service EFL teachers from Primary Education participated in the survey administered online (n = 47). Most of them were women (n = 42; 89.4%). The participants' age ranged from 24 to 57 years old (mean age = 36.06; standard deviation, SD = 7.341). All of them were Spanish, and they lived mostly in Andalusia, although participants from other nine regional communities also answered (see Table 1):

Regional community	**n**	**%**
Andalusia	30	63.8
Aragón	2	4.3
Canarias	1	2.1
Castilla y León	1	2.1
Cataluña	3	6.4
Comunidad de Madrid	2	4.3
Comunidad Valenciana	4	8.5
Extremadura	1	2.1
Galicia	1	2.1
Región de Murcia	2	4.3
TOTAL	47	100

Table 1. Regional communites of the respondents.
Source. Elaborated by the authors

Many respondents worked in a public centre (n = 39; 83%), and very few in charter (n = 5; 10.6%) and private schools (n = 3; 6.4%). The most frequent answer regarding the zone in which the centre is located was urban, that is, more than 2,500 inhabitants (n = 43; 91.5%), in contrast to rural or less than 2,500 inhabitants (n = 4; 8.5%). A little less than half of the sample worked in a bilingual school (n = 20; 42.6%). The mean of number of years of teaching experience of the respondents was 9.17 (SD = 6.807), being the minimum less than a year and the maximum 28.

4.2 Instrument

The main instrument was a semi-structured survey. Apart from gathering socio-demographic information about the participants, as

described above, some other categories with more questions were proposed:

Category 1: The teaching of EFL and the process of writing.

Category 2: Use of translation as an aid to writing skill.

Category 3: Scaffolding techniques in the practice of written productions.

Category 4: Metacognitive strategies in the revision of the product.

Category 5: Activities and digital resources for writing practice.

See Appendix A for the complete instrument with the questions of every category.

4.3 Procedure

The methodology employed in the study included quantitative analysis, as the survey included closed questions (Cresswell, 2009).

The survey was analysed and tested by five experts in the field: three academic researchers in the context of foreign language teaching, and two EFL teachers from Primary Education. Once the experts had provided their comments and recommendations, the final survey was administered online through different social networking sites with special attention to contacting EFL-teacher users: Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The survey was open from March to May 2022.

4.4 Data analysis

The quantitative data were managed with the SPSS statistical package for Windows v.23 (IBM SPSS Statistics, Chicago, IL, USA) and Microsoft Office Excel 2016 (Microsoft Corp., Redmond, WA, USA). Descriptive statistics included frequencies, means, and standard deviations.

A t-test was conducted with the independent variable of group. The effect size (d) was also calculated, which quantifies the size of the difference between the two groups (Coe and Merino, 2003). The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$, which means that values scoring less than 0.05 when comparing both cohorts' variables denote a significant difference.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Results concerning the EFL teaching and the process of writing (category 1)

The respondents of this study were asked about their use of the target language (TL, i.e. the EFL) or the mother tongue (MT, i.e. Spanish), in class (question 1.1.). Most of the in-service teachers reported employing their MT in order to explain or clarify some doubts. The rest of the reasons did not show very high percentages, with the number of in-service teachers who used English exclusively in class being very small. The following table (Table 2) shows the frequency and percentages for the entire sample:

Use of English in class	**n**	**%**
English exclusively	3	6.4
English and MT to explain	25	**53.2**
English and MT to solve doubts	23	**48.9**
MT to call attention in disruptive behaviour	10	21.3
MT with no specific goal	2	4.3

Table 2. Use of English or Spanish in the EFL class (complete sample of in-service teachers)
Source. Elaborated by the authors

If we separate the groups, bilingual-school teachers (BI) and non-bilingual-school teachers (NBI), some differences emerged. The three respondents who reported using English exclusively were all in BI group, with no respondents in the NBI group. The highest percentages were observed in NBI for the statements related to combining the use of the TL and the MT for explanations and doubts posed in class. However, the greatest percentage of all the reasons exposed below, BI teachers reported using the MT together with English to solve some doubts in class.

Table 3 shows the results thrown per group:

Use of English in class	**BI**		**NBI**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
English exclusively	3	6.4	0	0
English and MT to explain	8	17	17	**36.2**
English and MT to solve doubts	9	**19.1**	14	**29.8**
MT to call attention in disruptive behaviour	5	10.6	5	10.6
MT with no specific goal	1	2.1	1	2.1

Table 3. Use of English or Spanish in the EFL class (bilingual and non-bilingual schools samples)
Source. Elaborated by the authors

Items from 1.2. to 1.8. were measured with a 4-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree", SD; "disagree", D; "agree", A; and "strongly agree", SA).

Regarding the use of English in the classroom environment, most of the teachers employed English for translational purposes (1.3.) and interactional purposes (1.4.). The percentage of "strongly agree" was greater for interaction (53.2%) than for transmitting messages (27.7%), with the highest percentage for the latter found in the "agree" option. The reason for the lower percentage when transmitting information might be due to the fact that the teachers believed that their students had difficulties in understanding messages in EFL (59.6% agreed and 12.8% strongly agreed). Only 27.7% disagreed with statement 1.2.

As for other aspects concerning the writing skill, in-service teachers disagreed (55.3%) or strongly disagreed (25.5%) with statement 1.5., which means that they considered the skill of writing very important. The practice of writing skill in class is divided into three stages by most of the teachers (1.6.) (SA = 25.5%; A = 63.8%), and many of them coincided in providing more exercises to practise the process (SA = 23.4%; A = 61.7%) rather than the product (SA = 19.1%; A = 48.9%). All the percentages are illustrated in Figure 1:

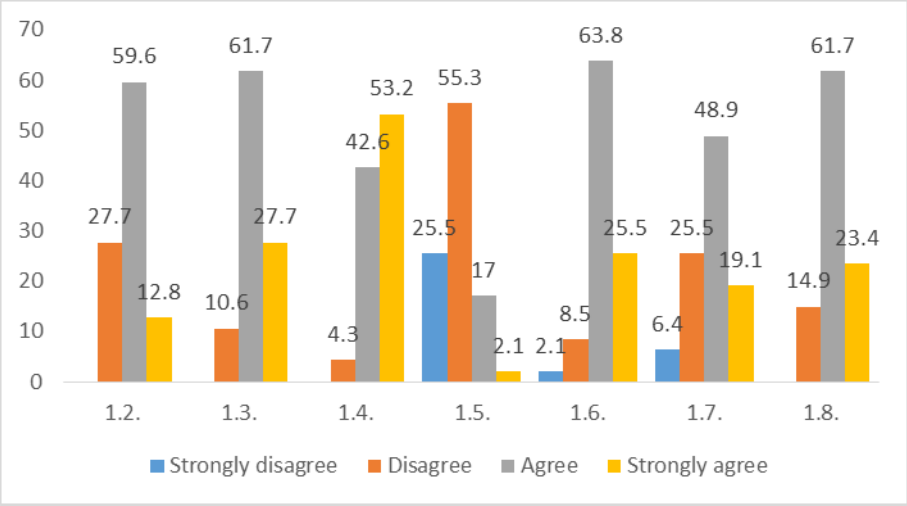

Figure 1. Degree of agreement towards aspects concerning the EFL teaching and the process of writing
Source. Elaborated by the authors

5.2 Results concerning the use of translation to help in the writing process (category 2)

Seven items (from 2.1. to 2.7.) were appraised by in-service EFL teachers regarding their agreement or disagreement with the use of translation to help students in their writing process.

Even though the translation is quite accepted as a strategy to help students in the practice of their writing (2.1. and 2.3.), most of the EFL teachers considered that other strategies were more efficient and positively adopted rather than the translation itself. We refer to strategies such as mimes, gestures, visual aids, examples or demonstrations, as well as slower repetitions (2.4.), obtaining the highest percentage of "strongly agree".

In contrast, EFL teachers did not consider a convenient practice to make students repeat a word aloud and translate it subsequently (2.2.). See Figure 2 to visualise all the percentages for every item:

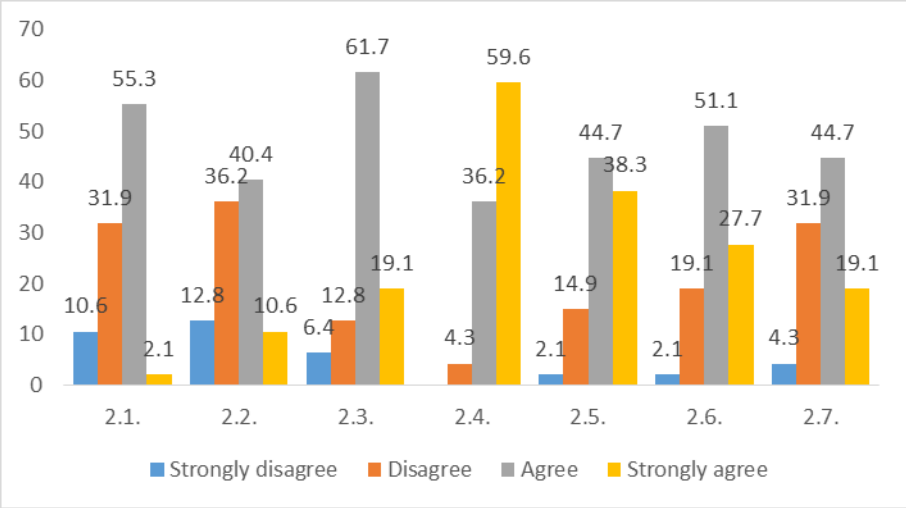

Figure 2. Use of translation or other techniques to help students in the writing process
Source. Elaborated by the authors

5.3 Results from scaffolding strategies applied in the writing practice (category 3)

Apart from translation practices, teachers were inquired about the use of other scaffolding techniques to help their students in their writing process. The frequency of ten techniques (from "never" to "always") was asked under

the umbrella of category 3 (3.1. to 3.10.). The greatest percentage for the "always" option was found in 3.1., which means that more than half of the in-service teachers admitted to applying techniques like brainstorming, providing lists or visual information so that their students could have some ideas. In the "frequently" option, two statements obtained the same percentage: in-service teachers helped their students to use their own words to express their ideas (3.3.) and provided them with different types of texts (3.8.).

Less frequent were other practices related to scaffolding strategies, like, for example, helping students to distinguish the purpose of their texts and the target audience for whom they are writing (3.6.). Suggesting the use of lexicographic resources (either paper-based or online dictionaries) (3.10.) was never practised by 29.8% and sometimes by 14.9% of the respondents. The following figure (Figure 3) illustrates the frequency with which EFL teachers applied other scaffolding strategies:

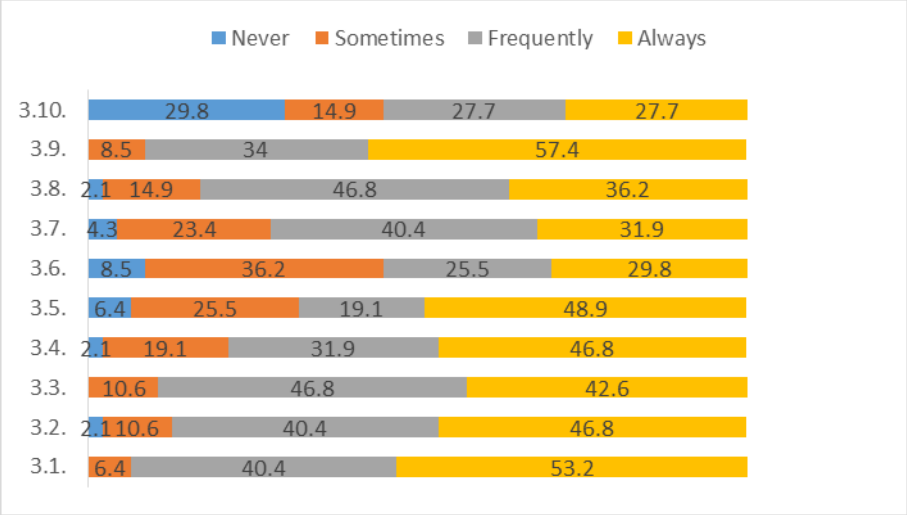

Figure 3. Frequency of use of scaffolding strategies for the writing process
Source. Elaborated by the authors

5.4. Results for metacognitive strategies in the revision of the written product (category 4)

Regarding the correction and revision of the final product (the written text), in-service teachers declared that they employed some metacognitive strategies. Statements from 4.1. to 4.7. were measured with another 4-point Likert scale to observe their frequency of use.

In-service EFL teachers "frequently" or "always" (48.9% each) provided feedback to students by suggesting improvements in the final product (4.7.). Other metacognitive strategies that were "always" or "frequently" implemented by in-service teachers were the use of rubrics or checklists in which correction goals are set (4.6.) and making students reflect upon their own learning with the help of the teacher (4.1.), which is in line with strategy 4.7.

The least frequent strategies were involving students in the revision of the final product, such as providing self-assessment templates (4.2.) and organising peer reviews (4.4.), with more than 50% of respondents who rejected ("never" or "sometimes" frequencies) these types of strategies (see Figure 4).

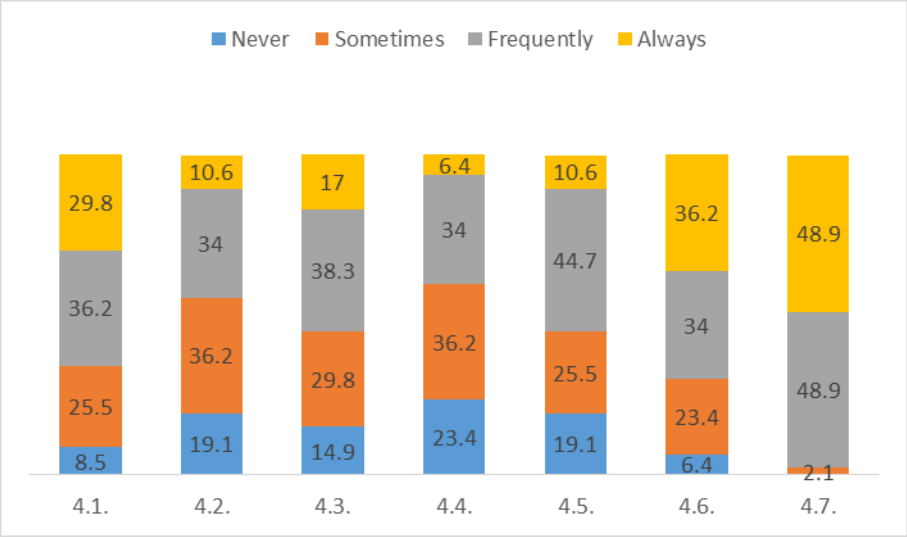

Figure 4. Frequency of use of metacognitive strategies for the revision of the written product
Source. Elaborated by the authors

5.5 Results for activities and digital resources employed for writing (category 5)

The most popular activity among in-service teachers in the EFL classroom for the practice of writing seemed to be 5.1.6., that is, matching unscrambled phrases with images (an example of controlled writing) ("always" = 23.4%; "frequently" = 55.3%). Completing texts with words and connectors is another example of controlled writing activity that gained more

supporters (5.1.7.), but, in this case, respondents declared higher percentage for “frequently” (57.4%).

The activities of familiarisation, apart from simple exercises of grammar (5.1.2.) −which is very frequent (61.7%)−, obtained greater percentages in “never” and “sometimes” options. These are the cases of gap-filling (5.1.1.), crosswords (5.1.3.), unscrambled letters (5.1.5.), and anagrams (5.1.4.), with the latter being the least frequent among the teachers’ practices.

Guided activities, such as writing a final ending to a given story or providing a story map were not very frequently employed as a writing practice in class. However, writing a story from a previously viewed pattern was a very frequent practice activity (“frequently” = 55.3%; “always” = 17%).

Finally, creative writing or free writing was not very frequent (only 21.3% for “frequently” and 8.5% for “always”). This might be due to the fact that this practice implies a higher command of the foreign language, which could be attributed to older students (Secondary or Upper-Secondary Education), rather than younger students from Primary Education. Figure 5 shows all the results concerning the writing activities used by EFL teachers:

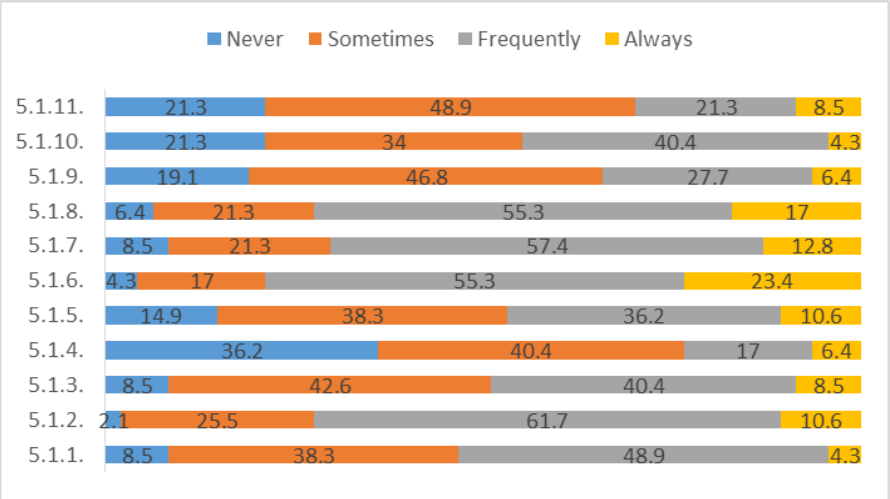

Figure 5. Activities employed by EFL teachers in their writing class
Source. Elaborated by the authors

As for the use of digital resources, it is very surprising that tools devoted to writing stories scored very low in “frequently” option (“always”

was not marked). We refer to tools like Storybird, Storyjumper, Mystorymaker (no longer active), and Pixton.

On the contrary, in-service teachers reported having utilised other more general tools, like Padlet, Canva or Wordwall, which were tools not conceived particularly for fostering written skills (writing and reading). Other surprising data were related to the application of other tools, which, although they are not specifically created for writing, their format allows us to implement familiarisation activities (Coggle, Bubbl.us, and WordArt). These tools did not obtain high frequency in the "frequently" or "always" options. See Figure 6 for detailed percentages regarding the use of resources for the writing lesson:

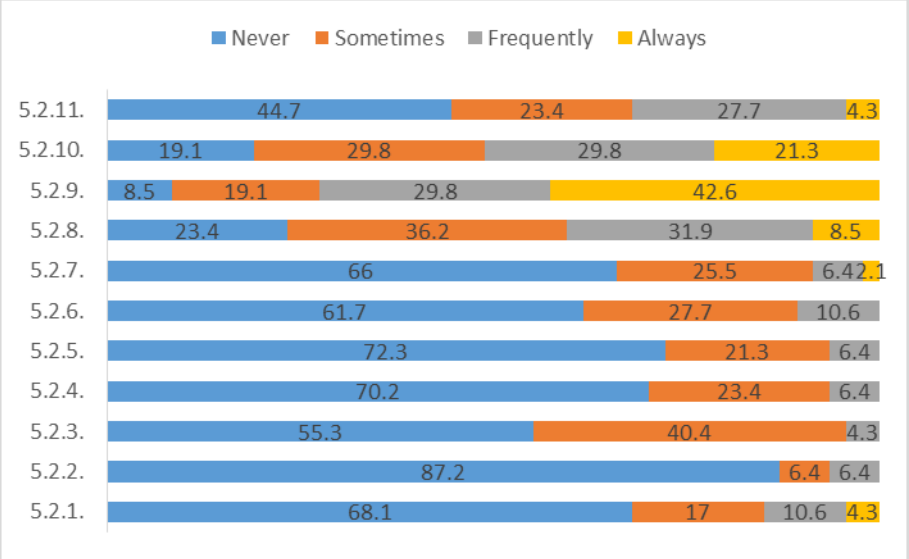

Figure 6. Resources employed by EFL teachers in their writing class
Source. Elaborated by the authors

5.6. Results within cohort comparison

A student's t-test was calculated to compare both cohorts. The test revealed significant differences in some of the categories studied between the two cohorts. Variations (with statistically significant differences in both cohorts) were found in items 1.3., 2.1., 4.3., and 5.2.9 ($p > 0.05$).

The BI respondents from bilingual centres declared that they employed English in class for translational purposes (1.3.) more frequently than the NBI teachers. On the contrary, the NBI teachers obtained a greater

mean in the use of translation to help students in their writing process (2.1.) than their bilingual counterparts. See Table 4 to visualise all the means in both categories, in which items with significant differences (1.3. and 2.1.) have been highlighted with a different colour:

	BI	**NBI**	***t***	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Category 1					
1.2. Students usually have difficulties in understanding messages in EFL.	2.80 (0.696)	2.89 (0.577)	-0.465	36.401	0.645
1.3. I use English in class with translational purposes (introduce a topic, solve doubts, explain text structure, provide feedback, etc.).	3.40 (0.503)	3.00 (0.620)	2.440	44.483	0.019
1.4. I use English in class with interactional purposes.	3.50 (0.607)	3.48 (0.580)	0.105	40.008	0.917
1.5. Writing is one of the least important skill when learning EFL.	1.90 (0.718)	2.00 (0.734)	-0.468	41.578	0.643
1.6. I usually divide the process of writing in three stages: pre-writing, draft edition, and revision.	3.10 (0.718)	3.15 (0.602)	-0.243	36.645	0.809
1.7. Proposing writing activities is aimed at consolidating previous knowledge of the target language (as a product).	2.75 (0.851)	2.85 (0.818)	-0.412	40.176	0.682
1.8. Proposing writing activities is aimed at analysing the necessary actions to reach the final product (as a process: plan the message, organise ideas, revise, etc.)	3.00 (0.649)	3.15 (0.602)	-0.798	39.262	0.430
Category 2					
2.1. I use the translation to help my students in their writing process.	2.15 (0.715)	2.74 (0.594)	-2.923	35.385	0.006
2.2. If a student does not know how to write an idea, I ask him/her to express it aloud, and then I translate it.	2.40 (0.883)	2.56 (0.847)	-0.608	40.131	0.547

2.3. The students frequently use the translation in the EFL class.	2.85 (0.745)	3.00 (0.784)	-0.667	42.212	0.508
2.4. Mimes, visual aids, examples, demonstrations and slower repetition are more efficient alternatives rather than the translation.	3.60 (0.598)	3.52 (0.580)	0.468	40.360	0.642
2.5. Using the MT is efficient and positive to facilitate learning, if it is employed with common sense and in very few occasions in the EFL class.	3.30 (0.657)	3.11 (0.847)	0.861	44.878	0.394
2.6. Students usually employ their MT to confirm the message comprehension by reformulating what the teacher has expressed in English.	3.10 (0.641)	3.00 (0.832)	0.465	44.908	0.644
2.7. I combine the MT and the FL (translanguaging) to facilitate the learning.	2.65 (0.875)	2.89 (0.751)	-0.982	37.280	0.332

Note: t = Student's t-value; df = degrees of freedom; Sig. = significance

Table 4. Comparison between BI and NBI cohorts (categories 1 and 2)
Source. Elaborated by the authors

The data unveiled no significant differences in any of the items contained in category 3. However, it is relevant to mention that all the means of the items in category 3 scored higher in BI teachers when compared to the means obtained in items from NBI respondents (see Table 5).

	BI	**NBI**	***t***	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Category 3					
3.1. I help my students to have ideas (brainstorming, lists, visual information, etc.).	3.50 (0.607)	3.44 (0.641)	0.303	42.260	0.763
3.2. I hep my students to organise their ideas (mind maps).	3.45 (0.605)	3.22 (0.847)	1.075	44.960	0.288
3.3. I help my students to express their ideas with their own words.	3.45 (0.686)	3.22 (0.641)	1.157	39.430	0.254

3.4. I help my students to organise their ideas in the text (paragraphs).	3.40 (0.754)	3.11 (0.892)	1.201	44.139	0.236
3.5. I help my students to simplify very complex sentences (excessive use of subordinates).	3.40 (0.754)	2.89 (1.121)	1.867	44.661	0.068
3.6. I help my students to distinguish the purpose and the target audience of a text.	2.85 (0.745)	2.70 (1.137)	0.532	44.443	0.597
3.7. I help my students in the revision of their texts.	3.20 (0.768)	2.85 (0.907)	1.422	44.132	0.162
3.8. I provide my students with different types of written texts.	3.25 (0.716)	3.11 (0.801)	0.625	43.323	0.535
3.9. I revise and provide feedback to my students about their written productions.	3.60 (0.598)	3.41 (0.694)	1.019	43.887	0.314
3.10. I translate the words or phrases that the students do not know.	2.80 (0.834)	2.67 (0.784)	0.556	39.641	0.581
3.11. I provide some lexicographic resources (paper-based or online dictionaries).	2.80 (1.056)	2.33 (1.271)	1.372	44.339	0.177

Note: t = Student's t-value; df = degrees of freedom; Sig. = significance

Table 5. Comparison between BI and NBI cohorts (category 3)
Source. Elaborated by the authors

The results of the students' t-test showed that the BI teachers provided responses with greater percentages in the use of correction codes to assess and correct the errors (4.3.) found in their students' written productions than the NBI teachers. However, for the rest of the items from category 4 no statistically significant differences were found between the two cohorts. Table 6 illustrates all the means for both cohorts in each item of category 4:

	BI	**NBI**	***t***	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Category 4					
4.1. I help my students to reflect upon their own	3.05 (0.826)	2.74 (1.023)	1.146	44.615	0.258

learning.					
4.2. I provide my students with some self-assessment templates following some assessment criteria for written productions.	2.45 (0.887)	2.30 (0.953)	0.569	42.621	0.572
4.3. I employ correction codes to evaluate and correct errors.	2.95 (0.887)	2.30 (0.912)	2.458	41.716	0.018
4.4. I organise some peer review in class.	2.30 (0.923)	2.19 (0.879)	0.430	39.914	0.669
4.5. I correct mistakes directly in the written production without using error codes.	2.35 (0.933)	2.56 (0.934)	-0.746	41.105	0.460
4.6. I use checklists or rubrics to establish the objectives of the correction.	3.10 (0.968)	2.93 (0.917)	0.623	39.799	0.537
4.7. I suggest improvements to my students (feedback).	3.50 (0.607)	3.44 (0.506)	0.332	36.543	0.741

Note: t = Student's t-value; df = degrees of freedom; Sig. = significance

Table 6. Comparison between BI and NBI cohorts (category 4)
Source. Elaborated by the authors

Finally, the only item in category 5 that was significantly different was the use of Canva, which was more frequent in the BI-teacher responses. For the rest of the items (both in activities and resources), no statistically differences were found when comparing both cohorts.

Even though the outcomes are consistent across both cohorts in category 5, it is observed that in resources (items from 5.2.1. to 5.2.11.) the BI scored higher than the NBI teachers, except for Coggle (5.2.1.). The following table (Table 7) shows all the means for the category:

	BI	**NBI**	***t***	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Category 5 (activities)					
Activities					
5.1.1 Gap-filling (familiarisation).	2.65 (0.671)	2.37 (0.742)	1.351	43.136	0.184
5.1.2. Simple grammar exercises (familiarisation).	2.80 (0.768)	2.81 (0.557)	-0.073	33.045	0.942

5.1.3. Crosswords (familiarisation).	2.60 (0.598)	2.41 (0.888)	0.887	44.670	0.380
5.1.4. Anagrams.	2.15 (0.745)	1.78 (0.974)	1.484	44.932	0.145
5.1.5. Unscrumbled letters (familiarisation).	2.60 (0.598)	2.30 (1.031)	1.269	42.886	0.211
5.1.6. Match unscrumbled phrases with images (controlled writing).	2.90 (0.788)	3.04 (0.759)	-0.599	40.196	0.553
5.1.7. Complete the texts with words or connectors (controlled writing).	2.85 (0.745)	2.67 (0.832)	0.793	43.307	0.432
5.1.8. Write a story from a given pattern (guided writing).	2.85 (0.671)	2.81 (0.879)	0.156	44.939	0.877
5.1.9. Write a final ending to a given story (guided writing).	2.25 (0.786)	2.19 (0.879)	0.266	43.318	0.792
5.1.10. Provide a storymap (guided writing).	2.45 (0.759)	2.15 (0.907)	1.239	44.266	0.222
5.1.11. Creative or free writing.	2.15 (0.933)	2.19 (0.834)	-0.134	38.318	0.894
Resources					
5.2.1 Coggle	1.40 (0.754)	1.59 (0.931)	-0.783	44.587	0.438
5.2.2. Bubbl.us	1.20 (0.523)	1.19 (0.557)	0.093	42.448	0.926
5.2.3. Storybird	1.55 (0.605)	1.44 (0.577)	0.603	39.992	0.550
5.2.4. Storyjumper	1.50 (0.761)	1.26 (0.447)	1.263	28.574	0.217
5.2.5. Mystorymaker	1.45 (0.686)	1.26 (0.526)	1.038	34.360	0.307
5.2.6. Pixton	1.65 (0.745)	1.37 (0.629)	1.358	36.860	0.183
5.2.7. Mentimeter	1.55 (0.826)	1.37 (0.629)	0.814	34.239	0.421
5.2.8. Padlet	2.45 (0.826)	2.11 (0.974)	1.288	44.111	0.204

5.2.9. Canva	3.40 (0.821)	2.81 (1.039)	2.156	44.776	0.037
5.2.10. Wordwall	2.70 (1.081)	2.41 (1.010)	0.943	39.459	0.351
5.2.11. WordArt	2.10 (0.968)	1.78 (0.934)	1.145	40.247	0.259

Note: t = Student's t-value; df = degrees of freedom; Sig. = significance

Table 7. Comparison between BI and NBI cohorts (category 5)
Source. Elaborated by the authors

6. DISCUSSION

The in-service EFL teachers from Primary Education who participated in the study do not exclusively use the English language in their lessons, as observed in the results presented before. They expressed that they employed their MT to explain or solve some doubts with the intention of facilitating communication among students. The use of MT might be due to the linguistic level of students, which, on some occasions, was insufficient and, besides, EFL teachers agreed that they had some difficulties with comprehension. Thus, the use of translation in the EFL lessons could facilitate the acquisition of messages by students, and the process of writing, according to the respondents' answers. Hence, the translation is part of another scaffolding technique employed for the teaching of this skill. Other significant results include the use of MT to call attention in disruptive behaviour. Nevertheless, some of the responses highlighted that teachers usually employed the English language primarily for interactive purposes.

Our study aligns with the investigation carried out by Timor (2012), in which Israeli's EFL teachers showed positive attitudes and even highlighted some benefits towards the use of translation and MT for the EFL teaching. Concretely, 87% of the participants claimed a tendency towards using the MT to improve their learning, although they indicated that they mostly employed the MT to solve and explain the differences between the MT and the FL but also to teach vocabulary. Likewise, the MT is also favoured in situations of classroom management such as giving instructions or addressing discipline problems. These results reflect the necessity of responding promptly to these types of behaviours following a spontaneity criterion. Similar results were reported by Kayaoğlu (2012), who observed numerous pragmatic benefits for both teachers and students regarding the teaching of grammar and vocabulary in initial stages. These benefits included comprehension of instructions, explanation of complex processes or the creation of a classroom environment. Besides, the global perception

of these teachers was that the MT was an auxiliary language for language lessons although its use varies depending on the students' linguistic competences and levels of language, apart from eliminating numerous barriers of anxiety in language learning. Zairova and Reymova (2020) also showed that teachers employ the MT to establish comparisons in both languages.

In contrast to translation, some teachers are in favour of other more efficient alternatives than the translation itself, such as the mimes, visual aids, examples, demonstrations and, even, slower repetitions. These alternatives present an extra task for students because of the necessity to interpret and interrelate the FL with the gestures or mimes and examples provided by teachers. The application of these types of visual strategies introduces beneficial challenges for the development of autonomy, creating activities for students that make them think and reflect more rather than the use of translation, which, on the contrary, simplifies all the process. Nevertheless, students with more difficulties might require the strategy of translation to facilitate comprehension and learning of the FL. In fact, in the research carried out by Mostafaei *et al*. (2019), the authors demonstrated that visual strategies in the language classrooms are efficient. They confirmed that the integration of visual means in the teaching better assists the students with diverse learning styles and preferences, and their progress in learning and autonomy could enable them to assume a more active role in their own process of learning.

Regarding the practice of the writing skill, teachers usually incorporate in the process some scaffolding strategies to simplify and provide help when learning the skill. Among these strategies, Caldera (2003) classified them into three sub-groups which coincide with the division of the writing process in three phases: planning, writing, and revision strategies. Taking into account this classification, the results of our study revealed that in-service teachers gave priority to the process (planning) rather than to the product itself (the written message). Moreover, the most employed strategy was feedback and the least used was the lexicographic resources. This tendency is repeated when separating the cohorts, coinciding in both the most and the least employed strategy, scoring higher, however, in bilingual-school teachers.

The above outcomes, together with the use of translation as another scaffolding strategy, align with the responses of teachers who recognised using translation to facilitate the writing of texts. It is demonstrated that the process of writing in EFL learning consists of a quite teacher-controlled teaching, who, normally, does not search for favouring the students' autonomy, but for producing texts. Therefore, even though teachers pointed

out that they divided the process of writing into three phases, the necessary strategies to make students internalise the steps with the purpose of performing future texts in an autonomous way are not provided. This aspect has been reflected in the results underscored by the teachers, who indicated that they rarely help students to distinguish the audience and the purpose of the text. This aligns with previous research carried out by Padmadewi and Artini (2019) about the scaffolding strategies applied in the teaching process of the writing skill with Primary Education students. The authors concluded that the potential of scaffolding contributes to the improvement of writing abilities of students, as well as the management of these strategies helps students to become aware of their own learning, to which the authors refer as *learning to mean*. Reimer (2001) also advocated for the inclusion of three stages (planning, writing, and revision) in the teaching of writing process. Also, it was noted that all the stages must be modelled and explained to students to, subsequently, work independently, that is, through scaffolding strategies that must be removed gradually. Likewise, Ikawati (2020) stated that the application of scaffolding strategies aims not only to help students complete the task, but also to allow them to experiment with the required strategies to produce a text so that students could carry out tasks without requiring these aid strategies.

Even though the writing skill has not gained the importance it deserves (Nurdianingsih and Rahmawati, 2018), the present study shows that the writing skill is as relevant as the rest of linguistic skills. However, it is true, as indicated in some research, that it is one of the most difficult skills to teach in a foreign language, because of the necessity to divide the process into different phases (pre-writing, drafts, and revision) (Ahmed, 2019; Alisha, Safitri, and Santoso, 2019; Saleh, 2018).

Pincas *et al*. (1982) classified the most efficient activities to improve the communicative ability as those that gradually reduce the teachers' control: familiarisation, controlled writing, guided writing, and free or creative writing. These activities range from Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in terms of Bloom's taxonomy. In the present study, EFL teachers have been found to generally apply LOTS writing activities more frequently, like familiarisation −with the sole exception of anagrams− and controlled activities, denoting a clear control of the teacher over the written productions of their students. When comparing the two cohorts (BI and NBI), the tendency is the same equal as in the entire sample, scoring lower in the frequency of use whenever students are supposed to assume the control of their writings (guided and free writings). The bilingual cohort scored slightly higher, except for free writing, which was a slightly higher in their non-bilingual counterpart. In conclusion, free writing

is rarely implemented in EFL primary-school classes. These results coincide with what was confirmed previously, i.e. Primary Education students do not present a complete linguistic command in EFL, and usually have some difficulties understanding it, even in bilingual schools. Despite the fact that Pincas *et al*. (1982) declared the necessity to introduce all the activities previously mentioned in the teaching of writing skill, the participants in the study showed that they generally do not reach (or very rarely reach) the HOTS activity of writing: free or creative writing. The research of Mateo-Cutillas (2016) in a primary school in Spain demonstrated the limited capacity of writing of students, which even worsens by the lack of the use of EFL as the main communication vehicle for teaching, with the level of students being very weak, especially in the written form.

Together with the lack of activities enabling students to be more creative, the absence of technologies in relation to the practice of the skill has also arisen in the responses. Despite continuous improvements in emergent technologies in the field of education, the results obtained showed that EFL teachers in Primary Education do not utilise digital tools as expected. All the educative tools mentioned in the survey were mostly unknown by the teachers. One educative tool that stood out above was Canva. Hadi *et al*. (2021), in their study, demonstrated the benefits of this digital resource for the practice of the writing skill, such as facilitating the design of some learning environments centred on the revision of drafts for teachers. Likewise, the tool offers a great variety of types of texts and narrative structures and more visual formats such as the case of infographics. What it is remarkable is the scarce use of tools specifically designed for the practice of written skills, like Storybird (Arianti, 2018; Giacomini, 2015), Storyjumper (Yamaç *et al*., 2020) or Pixton (Aşıkcan, 2023), with digital storytelling activities to improve writing (Castillo-Cuestas *et al*., 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

This study delved into the analysis of the strategies and techniques employed by EFL primary-school teachers in the teaching of the writing skill. The results led us to conclude that the use of translation and the students' MT in EFL teaching, in general, and the process of writing, in particular, is very frequent. This reality influences the linguistic level of students, which creates a repetitive and never-ending chain in which students do not understand the information and the teachers resort back to the MT and translation of sequences to facilitate comprehension. This hinders the development of students' self-autonomy in their writing process since, due to the low level of linguistic competence in the FL, the majority of activities are

more teacher-controlled. The outcomes of category 1 provided a response to RQ1 and RQ2 posed at the beginning of the study.

To respond to RQ3 and RQ4, some other categories were proposed, and the results led us to conclude that translation has been one of the preferred strategies of EFL primary-school teachers over the use of lexicographic resources, for example, though the latter can help students to develop their own method to write a message. However, when analysing the items of categories 3 and 4, a global tendency to prefer the strategies of scaffolding, above all, in the bilingual cohort can be appreciated.

Likewise, the most frequently employed metacognitive strategies in the final product of the in-service teachers aim at suggesting improvements to their students rather than organising peer review in class (RQ5). Finally, regarding the activities and digital resources (RQ6), no significant differences were found in the activities employed by in-service teachers, although the tendency is towards the use of activities that require less cognitive effort from students (like familiarisation) in contrast to free writing. However, some significant differences were found in the use of Canva, which scored higher in the bilingual cohort, even though it is a general educational tool, not designed for EFL teaching, in general, and teaching writing, in particular.

In conclusion, it has been evidenced that in-service teachers employ different strategies to help their students in their writing; however, it seems that the use of scaffolding strategies (category 3) was most frequent than use of translation (category 2).

This study leaves an open door to further analysis of other variables, such as years of experience or the age of the teachers, to determine whether these strategies are used or not. The analysis of the age variable will also allow to verify the digital divide between the digital immigrants, those who were born before the technology explosion, and the digital natives (Prensky, 2001) within the cohort conformed of EFL teachers in primary school education and other educational stages such as Secondary or Higher Education.

FUNDING

This paper has been carried out under the framework of the innovation project EN-GAME (PIE22-152, and the resarch projects Technology to Teach (T2T) (ref. D5-2023_14) and GAMETRAPP (ref. TED2021-129789B-I00).

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APENDIX

Category	RQ	Response type	Scale
Category 1. The teaching of EFL and the process of writing			
1.1. Do you use English as the unique language in class?	RQ1	Closed	Multiple-choice question
1.2. Students usually have difficulties in understanding messages in EFL.	RQ2	Closed	Likert (1-4)
1.3. I use English in class with translational purposes (introduce a topic, solve doubts, explain text structure, provide feedback, etc.)	RQ1	Closed	Likert (1-4)
1.4. I use English in class with interactional purposes	RQ1	Closed	Likert (1-4)
1.5. Writing is one of the least important skill when learning EFL.	RQ2	Closed	Likert (1-4)
1.6. I usually divide the process of writing in three stages: pre-writing, draft edition and revision.	RQ2	Closed	Likert (1-4)
1.7. Proposing writing is aimed at consolidating previous knowledge of the target language (as a product).	RQ2	Closed	Likert (1-4)
1.8. Proposing writing activities is aimed at analysing the necessary actions to reach the final product (as a process: plan the message, organise ideas, revise…)	RQ2	Closed	Likert (1-4)
Category 2. Use of translation as an aid to writing skill (indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement)			
2.1. I use translation to help my students in their writing process.	RQ3	Closed	Likert (1-4)
2.2. If a student does not know how to write an idea, I ask him/her to express it aloud, and then I translate it.	RQ3	Closed	Likert (1-4)
2.3. The students frequently use the	RQ3	Closed	Likert (1-4)

translation in the EFL class.			
2.4. Mimes, visual aids, examples, demonstrations and slower repetition are more efficient alternatives rather than the translation	RQ3	Closed	Likert (1-4)
2.5. Using the MT is efficient and positive to facilitate learning when employed with common sense and in very few occasions in the EFL class.	RQ3	Closed	Likert (1-4)
2.6. Students usually employ their MT to confirm the message comprehension by reformulating what the teacher has expressed in English.	RQ3	Closed	Likert (1-4)
2.7. I combine the MT and the FL (translanguaging) to facilitate the learning	RQ3	Closed	Likert (1-4)
Category 3. Scaffolding strategies in the writing practice (indicate the frequency)			
3.1. I help my students to have ideas (brainstorming, lists, visual information, etc.).	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)
3.2. I hep my students to organise their ideas (mind maps).	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)
3.3. I help my students to express their ideas with their own words.	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)
3.4. I help my students to organise their ideas in the text (paragraphs).	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)
3.5. I help my students to simplify very complex sentences (excessive use of subordinates).	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)
3.6. I help my students to distinguish the purpose and the target audience of a text.	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)
3.7. I help my students in the revision of their texts.	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)
3.8. I provide my students with different types of written texts.	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)
3.9. I revise and provide feedback to my students about their written	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)

productions.			
3.10. I provide some lexicographic resources (paper-based or online dictionaries).	RQ4	Closed	Likert (1-4)
Category 4. Metacognitive strategies in the revision of the product (indicate the frequency)			
4.1. I help my students to reflect upon their own learning.	RQ5	Closed	Likert (1-4)
4.2. I provide my students with some self-assessment templates following some assessment criteria for written productions.	RQ5	Closed	Likert (1-4)
4.3. I employ correction codes to evaluate and correct errors.	RQ5	Closed	Likert (1-4)
4.4. I organise some peer review in class.	RQ5	Closed	Likert (1-4)
4.5. I correct mistakes directly in the written production without using error codes.	RQ5	Closed	Likert (1-4)
4.6. I use checklists or rubrics to establish the objectives of the correction.	RQ5	Closed	Likert (1-4)
4.7. I suggest improvements to my students (feedback).	RQ5	Closed	Likert (1-4)
Category 5. Activities and digital resources (indicate the frequency)			
5.1. Activities			
5.1.1 Gap-filling (familiarisation).	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.1.2. Simple grammar exercises (familiarisation).	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.1.3. Crosswords (familiarisation).	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.1.4. Anagrams (familiarisation).	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.1.5. Unscrumbled letters (familiarisation).	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.1.6. Match unscrumbled phrases with images (controlled writing).	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.1.7. Complete the texts with words or connectors (controlled writing).	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.1.8. Write a story from a given pattern (guided writing).	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.1.9. Write a final ending to a given	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)

story (guided writing).			
5.1.10. Provide a storymap (guided writing).	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.1.11. Creative or free writing.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2. Resources			
5.2.1 Coggle.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.2. Bubbl.us.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.3. Storybird.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.4. Storyjumper.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.5. Mystorymaker.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.6. Pixton.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.7. Mentimeter.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.8. Padlet.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.9. Canva.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.10. Wordwall.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)
5.2.11. WordArt.	RQ6	Closed	Likert (1-4)