

The Implementation of Scaffolding Techniques Worldwide to Improve English Reading Proficiency In TEFL

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Abstract: This article aims to provide a general understanding of the term scaffolding, emphasizing its significance in education and its role in enhancing reading comprehension. A central objective of this study is to explore the experiences of international educators and scholars in applying scaffolding strategies to develop reading skills within the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). To achieve this, the study reviews two scholarly articles from Jambi University in Indonesia and Islamic Azad University in Iran. In both institutions, professional educators and linguists conducted experiments on the application of scaffolding techniques to improve reading comprehension in TEFL settings. These studies focused on strengthening students' reading abilities through scaffolding and reported their findings based on rigorous scientific research. Both of them tried to enhance their students' reading by using scaffolding strategy and gave the detailed report on their scientific work and paid attention to its effectiveness during the experiment. While learning these scientific works we have strived to examine them thoroughly and introduce them to our learners as well.

Keywords: Scaffolding, reading comprehension skill, TEFL, control group, experimental group, effectiveness of using scaffolding.

Introduction: Termonologization of the concept of scaffolding in education

Scaffolding is a construction and refers to the temporary platform that is set up for builders to stand on while they put up new buildings, walls, bridges and other man-made structures. This construction is also used when builders repair the buildings and to reach the heights and other areas that are difficult to get to.

Etymologically, the word "scaffold" was derived from old French "eschafaut", in modern French "échafaud" probably altered (by influence of *eschase* "a prop", "support") from *chaffaut*, from Vulgar Latin "catafalcum". The word *catafalque* means a decorated platform on which the dead body of a famous person is placed before a funeral. The meaning of this word is also somehow connected with a supporting platform in spite of the fact that, it is not an iridescent word to hear. For as long as humans have been building structures, they have used scaffolding. The use of

scaffolding dates back to prehistoric times – 17000 years ago. Paleolithic caves were painted with the assistance of scaffolding, and the ancient Egyptians used wooden scaffolding to construct their impressive pyramids.

In education and teaching, scaffolding theory was first introduced in 1958 by the American cognitive psychologist Jerome Seymour Bruner. He used the term to describe young children's oral language acquisition. According to Bruner children helped by their parents when first begin learning.

In this Bruner's instructional scaffolding a teacher provides sufficient support to promote learning when concepts and skills are being first introduced to students. These supports may include resource, compelling task, templates and guides on the development of cognitive and social skills. Instructional scaffolding could be used through modeling a task, giving advice or providing coaching. These supports are gradually decreased as students develop independent

learning strategies, skills and knowledge [5]. Teachers help the students master a task or a concept by providing support. The support can take a great deal of forms, such as outlines, recommended documents, storyboards, or key questions.

Pedagogical experience of applying scaffolding in teaching foreign languages

The concept of proximal development (ZPD) was developed by Lev Semenovich Vygotsky during the late 1920 and elaborated progressively until his death in 1934, which came to the central part of his “scaffolding” theory. According to Lev Vygotsky, language is the way that a child communicates with others after they are born and they continue to learn by interacting with those around them [8]. Building on his idea of social interaction as the bases for learning, he broached the value of a mentor or teacher in the life of a student. Scaffolding works to maintain the child’s potential level of development in the zone proximal development (ZPD). An essential element to the ZPD and scaffolding is the acquisition of language. According to Vygotsky, language (and in particular, speech) is fundamental to children’s cognitive growth because language provides purpose and intentions so that behaviors can be better understood. Through the use of speech, children are able to communicate to and learn from others through dialogue, which is an essential tool in the ZPD. A construct that is critical for scaffolding instruction is Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The zone of proximal development is the field between what a learner can do on their own (expert stage) and the most that can be achieved with the support of a knowledgeable peer or instructor (pedagogical stage) [8]. Vygotsky was convinced that a child could be taught any subject efficiently using scaffolding practices by implementing the scaffolds through the zone of proximal development. Students are escorted and monitored through learning activities that function as conducts to get them to the next stage. Thus the learner obtains new understandings by building on their prior knowledge through the support delivered by more capable individuals. Several peer-reviewed studies have shown that when there is a deficiency in guided learning experiences and social interaction, learning and development are obstructed [5]. Moreover, several things influence the ZPD of students, ranging from the collaboration of peers to technology available in the classroom.

Vygotsky said, “what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow”.

There are three essential features of scaffolding that

facilitate learning:

1. The first feature is the interaction between the learner and the expert. The interaction should be collaborative for it to be effective.
2. The second is that learning should take place in the learner’s zone of proximal development. To do that the expert needs to be aware of the learner’s current level of knowledge and then work to a certain extent beyond that level.
3. The third feature of scaffolding is that the scaffold, the support and guidance provided by the expert, is gradually removed as the learner becomes more proficient.

The support and guidance provided to the learner are almost similar to the scaffolds in building construction where the scaffolds provide both “adjustable and temporal” support to the building under construction [8]. The support and guidance provided to learners facilitate internalization of the knowledge needed to complete the task. This support is taken away little by little until the learner is independent [2].

In order to make scaffolding effective teachers should pay attention to the following:

1. The selection of the learning task: The task should ensure that learners use the developing skills that need to be mastered. The task should also be engaging and interesting to keep learners involved. This task should be neither too difficult not too easy for the learner.
2. The anticipation of errors: After choosing the task, the teacher needs to anticipate errors the learners are likely to commit when working on the task. Anticipation of errors enables the scaffolder to properly guide the learners away from ineffective directions.
3. The application of scaffolds during the learning task: Scaffolds could be organized in “simple skill acquisition or they may be dynamic and generative”. Here, the teacher should choose the scaffolds according to the topic of the lesson. If the lesson is complicated, he cannot choose simple tasks and vice versa [6].
4. The consideration of emotional issues: Scaffolding is not limited to a cognitive skill and can also support emotional responses. For example, during a task the scaffolder (expert) might need to manage and control for frustration and loss of interest that could be experienced by the learner. Encouragement is an important scaffolding component as well [1].

While analyzing international experiences of using scaffolding strategy in enhancing students’ reading skill, it was obviously seen that the experts had taken

into account all this information about the effectiveness of scaffolding. From their experiments with students, we can assume that they had learned all the features and ways for making scaffolding strategy effective in developing students' reading skills. As this article is mainly focuses on using scaffolding in improving reading skill in English classes, correspondingly, our main focus was also using scaffolding strategy in improving reading skill in TEFL. As English is the world's second language and reading plays a major role in learning it, then everyone understands its importance of investigating the ways of making this process effective and simple.

The first research work which was analyzed is the experiment done by the Doctor of Applied Linguistics Sri Wachyunni from Jambi University in Jambi city, Indonesia. The title of his article is "The effectiveness of scaffolding strategy in EFL reading comprehension". This experiment was made in 2015 among the 60 students of English Education at Jambi University. The students in the experimental and the control group read the same English texts. In the experimental group, students were helped by scaffolding questions in cooperative learning condition. In the control group, students had no scaffolding questions in conventional learning condition. The students were given a pre-test and post-test in order to measure their comprehension before and after reading classes in both groups. Statistical analyses using an independent sample t-test were conducted to compare mean scores of scaffolding reading class as the experimental group and non-scaffolding class as the control group. The results revealed that scaffolding provides a differential effect on reading comprehension gain for the lower and higher ability students in the experimental group [3]. This suggests that the lower students of scaffolding group benefited more in terms of reading comprehension gain than the higher ability students. In the Introduction part of the article there is a plain and clear explanation of the importance of reading in learning English: Reading skills in English as a foreign language context are important for students at a university level because almost all of academic activities in this environment require reading skills. For students of English program study or English education, the importance of those skills becomes more obvious. Reading skills to comprehend or summarize book chapters, report, journals, and various genres of texts which are written in English need to be grasped by all of the students to complete their tasks. In this sense students' ability in texts comprehension is the key success for academic achievement [9]. The participants of this experiment are 60 undergraduate students of English Education, at the faculty of Teacher Training

and Education, Jambi State University in Indonesia. They are mostly native speakers of various local languages with numerous dialects, such as dialects of Kerinci, Palembang, Riau, Bengkulu, and Jambi Malay, whereas Indonesian language (bahasa Indonesia) commonly is used as their second language in a limited context. English is used as the language of instruction in the classroom. Yet, Indonesian will be used when they fail to understand utterances or sentences in English. The materials and the scaffolding worksheet which were given to the students were prepared properly and checked beforehand by the experts. Test instrument and procedures were done professionally as well. To analyze the data, an independent sample t-test was conducted to examine the differences in reading comprehension gain between experimental and control groups. The gain score in reading was calculated by post-test minus pre-test scores. The independent variables were scaffolding cooperative learning and non-scaffolding learning condition. The dependent variable was reading comprehension gain. After analyzing all the results, discussions of this experiment the author Sri Wachyunni concluded that his article supports many findings in practicing scaffolding as an effective strategy in reading comprehension in an EFL context [9]. The scaffolding used by the teacher in cooperative learning condition provides the substantial effect in enhancing students' skill in reading comprehension as indicated from the gain. Specifically, as far as levels of ability in reading comprehension are concerned, scaffolding is quite helpful for low ability students to achieve better comprehension. This suggests that the low ability take more advantages from reading through scaffolding questions as it was experimented in this study. As a result, they achieve more gain than the high ability students. To end, as scaffolding revealed the effectiveness in enhancing students' skills in reading comprehension it is reasonable to suggest teachers implement this strategy in an EFL reading classroom.

Possibilities of scaffolding strategy in developing English reading skill

The second research work which was analyzed is the article by the part time tutor Mohammad Amin Bassiri at Islamic Azad University, Iran. It was published in the British Journal of Social Sciences in October 2012. The topic of the article is "The impact of scaffolding as a strategy for teaching reading on the motivation of Iranian L2 learners". The article is about a number of second language (L2) studies indicated the positive impacts of scaffolding as a technique for teaching reading. Their study has three purposes: firstly, to examine the impact of scaffolding on reading comprehension in Iranian L2 classroom context and

secondly to investigate the possible effects implementing this technique on the motivation and attitude of learners. The last purpose is to investigate the possible impact of gender as a moderator variable between scaffolding and reading development [3]. The results of the study supported the initial predictions that scaffolding has a positive effect on learners' reading comprehension and motivation scores. The findings also point to a positive relationship between female learners' achievements in comparison with males in term of their reading and motivation.

The participants of this study were 34 intermediate learners of English affiliated to an English language institute in Iran. They were both male and female. They were chosen on the basis of their performance on a pre-test administrated among the intermediate level learners. Then, they were randomly divided into two groups of scaffolding and non-scaffolding. They received one semester of instruction (17 sessions). At the end of each session their reading comprehension were tested by quizzes whose average score were later used for the assessment of each student's overall performance. The materials for the current study include placement test, source book (i.e., Facts and Figures), the test for post-test and Gardner's (1996) attitude motivation battery test. This test was only administered at the end of the semester. Finally, multivariate ANOVA (analysis of variance, Ronald Fisher, 1918), as the statistical procedure, was used for examining the effectiveness of the treatment on reading comprehension and motivation of the learners. This was done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the social sciences) (version 16) software.

The first aim of the current study was to examine the positive impact of scaffolding on reading comprehension in Iranian L2 classroom context and secondly to examine the probable effects of scaffolding on learners' motivation and thirdly to investigate the possible impact of gender as a moderator variable between scaffolding and reading development. So a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to examine the effect of scaffolding on learners' motivation, reading comprehension and the possible impact of gender and interaction between them.

The results of the study supported the initial predictions that scaffolding has a positive effect on learners' reading comprehension scores. These findings are in line with the previous studies, confirming the claim that scaffolding can promote internal individual learner variables like motivation and in this it can lead to learners' full engagement [3]. This fact may be due to their active participation during the research in comparison with males who seemed somehow reluctant about the results of this new way of teaching.

The main implication of the current study for practitioners and language teachers is that it may be an answer for the question of engagement of language learners within classroom. Language learners may have many backgrounds and many problems in their personal life which might prevent them of becoming fully engaged in the teaching and learning process, so language teachers must try to find innovative ways to promote learners' involvement and engagement in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, this article informs several features of using scaffolding strategy in teaching foreign language mainly focusing on reading. As reading is one of the essential beginning part of a teaching and learning process, and receptive skill as well. If we say particularly about the teaching foreign languages process, then it can be observed with certainty that like any other subjects using scaffolding strategy in teaching foreign languages has significant chances for being successful. As during the teaching foreign languages process students need support and help by their teachers at the initial steps. They are able to learn much more effectively with their teachers until they become proficient or independent learners. They complete their tasks and obtain new knowledge from their teachers. As the definition of scaffolding strategy is to provide support in the period of gaining new knowledge, then its importance in teaching foreign languages is seen evidently. If to say about the limitations of scaffolding strategy in teaching foreign languages, then it may become habitual for some students to wait for the teacher's support all time. This may happen because some psychological feature of students or variety of unknown factors which are not always may be noticed by the teacher. Some students may tend to rely on teachers' support for a long term perspective, while some of the students may become independent faster. In such cases, it may cause problems in finding golden mean. As it is seen from the research works which were done by Iranian and Indonesian teachers, it can be assumed that scaffolding strategy is shown its effectiveness during their experiments. So, it can be concluded that scaffolding is one of the useful and effective strategies in teaching foreign languages and in improving reading comprehension in EFL as well. Lastly, as scaffolding is indicated its effectiveness in teaching foreign languages and reading comprehension skill it is reasonable to propose teachers implement this strategy in their teaching process as well.

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