

IMPLEMENTING THE SCAFFOLDING STRATEGY TO TEACH ENGLISH SPEAKING TO FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS AT DONG NAI TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: *English as a foreign language (EFL) learners face various speaking challenges. Prior research has demonstrated that inadequate instructional methods and students' lack of motivation are the primary factors contributing to their low speaking competency. The use of scaffolding has received acclaim for its capacity to effectively engage a wide range of learners. When it comes to the scaffolding approach, students continuously build upon their existing knowledge and establish connections between new material, concepts, and language acquisition. Moreover, this form of guidance reduces the occurrence of errors, hence reducing feelings of hesitation, particularly among low-level EFL learners. Hence, the current study employed a scaffolding method to instruct a Speaking Course for First-Year English majors at Dong Nai Technology University. The objective of the study is to explore the students' perceptions towards this scaffolding-based module conducted in their classroom. The study employed interviews, and observation sheets as instruments for data collection from a sample of 60 students. The data analysis showed that the students perceive scaffolding instruction as highly advantageous due to the positive learning atmosphere it creates. Additionally, supportive scaffolding provides students with the chance to overcome the fear of speaking up in class. Furthermore, the approach has a positive impact on students' motivation, leading them to become more self-directed and independent over time. The ramifications of these findings are examined in order to improve the application of scaffolding in various English skills.*

Keywords: *English speaking, English skills, scaffolding, speaking challenges, speaking competency.*

I. Introduction

Developing proficiency in oral communication is a particularly demanding aspect for the majority of individuals learning a new language. Many students often find it challenging to comprehend the speech patterns presented

in textbooks. They must overcome the challenge of extracting meaning from the information. Moreover, the lack of engagement and conversation among learners detrimentally affects their language acquisition and undermines their self-assurance. This can be attributed to the

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preference of the Vietnamese educational system for utilising grammatically written assessments as a means of assessing students' English competence. Undoubtedly, this has led to students' incapacity to effectively communicate in the English language. The assessment of students' English proficiency has been progressively transitioning towards communicative competence upon their entry into university. Nevertheless, despite possessing a plethora of grammar rules and vocabulary, a significant proportion of high school graduates are unable to engage in even a basic conversation in English. An observation has revealed that a significant proportion of first-year English majors at Dong Nai Technology University exhibit a lack of confidence when it comes to speaking English.

The issue with speaking is that students must have both bravery and preparation in order to communicate effectively orally. In addition, EFL teachers continued to utilise traditional teaching methods that prioritise rote learning and the passive involvement of students (Shabani, 2013). Current teaching approaches prioritise the teaching of grammatical principles, rote learning, memorization, and translation of texts to enhance skill development. Consequently, students frequently struggle to comprehend and articulate their thoughts during communication. Within the framework of Dong Nai Technology University, the communication abilities of first-year English majors are still regarded as subpar, despite having received English instruction for over a decade starting from elementary school. It is apparent from the performance of learners in the classroom that the majority of them struggle to express their opinions to other students or instructors. When delivering a presentation to the class, several students are able to produce

only a small amount of speech or choose to remain completely mute. The major responsibility of teachers should be to help students acquire the skills of sharing ideas and effective communication, rather than focusing solely on rote memorization (Bundick, 2014).

The implementation of scaffolding in education has increased in popularity in recent decades. A theoretical idea in education, particularly in language instruction, is referred to as scaffolding. Scaffolding is the Vygotskian phrase for this direction or supervision. The assistance might be a professional, like an instructor, or a learner who is either somewhat more proficient than or on par with the intended learner. These facilitators act as intermediaries between the learners and the knowledge they aspire to understand, ultimately assisting the learner in achieving goals that would be improbable to reach independently. This knowledge dissemination may occur in several ways, including cooperative learning, experiential learning, visual aids, graphics, and instructor modelling, which offer contextual understanding via simplified language (Hartani & Sulindra, 2017).

This study attempted to enhance students' speaking skills by implementing the scaffolding approach, taking into account all the identified concerns. The primary objective was to provide suggestions for enhancing students' language proficiency, specifically in their English oral communication skills. The efficacy of the scaffolding technique in teaching language skills has been established; nevertheless, the current body of literature lacks a concrete action plan for implementing this strategy as a pedagogical solution to enhance the motivation and speaking competency of EFL students. The study addressed this deficiency by proposing the

implementation of a scaffolding strategy in teaching speaking skills to freshmen majoring in English. This study aimed to investigate the following inquiries:

1. How is Scaffolding utilised in a speaking class to provide structured support and guidance to learners?
2. How do students see the process of learning to speak with the assistance of scaffolding?

II. Literature review

2.1. Scaffolding

The term scaffolding was initially employed in the realm of education throughout the 1970s. Lev Vygotsky, a psychologist, is often associated with the concept of scaffolding, and it was his research that served as the inspiration for the development of this strategy. The concept of scaffolding was first introduced in the field of education throughout the late 1970s and 1980s to describe the interactions between teachers and students. In educational settings, the term “scaffolding” refers to the intervention that teachers provide to assist and enhance their students’ current skills and knowledge (Liu et al., 2021).

Scaffolding is a crucial component of effective teaching that can be utilised in the process of language learning. While teachers may feel enthusiastic about the idea, it is crucial to bear in mind that scaffolding encompasses more than just teacher help. Scaffolding is a targeted and timely form of support that helps students develop the necessary motivation to engage more actively in their learning. Several studies have demonstrated that second language learners are more likely to succeed when they receive specific assistance from their teachers and classmates when it is suitable (Khalil et al., 2021).

2.2. The Implementation of Scaffolding in Teaching Speaking

When it comes to teaching speaking, it requires time and significant effort to practise, so the use of effective teaching strategies is crucial for achieving good learning outcomes. Strategies can be tailored to suit the requirements of the teaching process. Generally, scaffolding is primarily aimed at fostering students’ self-assurance in acquiring new knowledge, as the teacher provides support until they are capable of independently accomplishing the tasks. Scaffolding supports the ambiance of the teaching and learning process. The teacher has significant possibilities to provide feedback to students. It is a form of reciprocal engagement between the teacher and student where the student is given the opportunity to verify information at any time. Therefore, it is possible to enhance students’ skills. Basco et al. (2019) found that the implementation of instructional scaffolding can enhance students’ speaking skills. Their recommendation was to continue teaching all language skills using scaffolding. It is recommended to persist and encourage the utilisation of question cards for speaking evaluations and activities. Furthermore, it is imperative to allocate a greater amount of time for vocabulary education in ESL schools.

III. Research methods

This study utilized a qualitative methodology using a case study framework. The participants comprised a cohort of 60 students. The data were collected through the methods of observation and interviews. The researcher, in the role of the teacher, closely monitored all the proceedings occurring during speaking sessions. In addition, the researchers utilized open-ended interviews whose transcriptions were thereafter

finalized by considering the prevailing conclusions derived from the data.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. The results of observations

The teacher applies the scaffolding strategy from the beginning to the end

of the speaking lessons. Here is a typical lesson plan of the strategy for each learning step conducted by the English teacher.

Table 1 demonstrates the utilization of multiple scaffolding strategies in a single communication task. Certain strategies are implemented multiple times.

Table 1. A typical lesson plan of the scaffolding strategy

Time	60 minutes			
Lesson	IELTS Speaking Part 2 – Describe your favorite free time activity			
Objectives	At the end of the lesson, students will be able to talk about their free time activities in 2 minutes.			
Time	Stage	Scaffolding activities	Procedure	Aims
10m	Warm-up	Pre-teach vocabulary; Use Visual aids (pictures of free-time activities)	Students match the different activities to the pictures. Practice the pronunciation of new words.	Provide adequate input. Encourage students' participation.
15m	Task 1	Explicit modeling	Analyze a model answer. Explain new expressions. Model pronunciation.	Offer support for low-level students
15m	Task 2	Ask guiding Questions to tap into students' prior knowledge	Students share their own experiences (in pairs) Students prepare for the main task (taking notes, practice speaking).	Offer hints and suggestions. Become independent learners.
20m	Main task	Supportive feedback	Students present a short talk individually (2 minutes/each).	Become independent learners.

This section outlines the techniques employed by the teacher to support and guide the learners in their speaking lesson. These strategies are classified as micro scaffolding.

4.1.1. Pre-teaching vocabulary

This is an approach that educators frequently underutilize. Many lecturers, including the researcher, are at fault for leaving students to navigate challenging vocabulary on their own. We send them unprepared and frequently express surprise when they lose interest or become drowsy.

Pre-teaching vocabulary does not involve selecting multiple terms from the chapter and instructing students to search for definitions and write them down. Instead, present the words to students through visual aids such as photographs or videos.

The first strategy was employed with greater frequency to encourage active involvement and interest from the students. Each student is presented with novel knowledge, skills, concepts, and facts. This finding is consistent with prior research conducted by Nurlisa et al. (2020) who discovered that the use of scaffolding tactics might enhance students' active involvement and enthusiasm in oral communication.

4.1.2. Modeling

The researcher, as the teacher, typically provided speaking samples for her students. In addition, she delivered the speaking samples with accurate pronunciation and provided explanations on the usage of the idioms mentioned in the sample. Subsequently, the students were instructed to replicate the models.

Teachers might utilise explanations as a scaffolding strategy in their classroom. Providing a thorough description of resources also aids students in their efforts to achieve learning goals (Fatonah, 2019). Based on the description, it can be deduced that the teacher utilises talk-aloud modelling. While this modelling approach may be less commonly used compared to methods that aim to stimulate students' participation and engagement, it offers significant support for students who are at a lower level of proficiency. This discovery corroborates the research conducted by Hartani and Sulindra in 2017. They demonstrated how modelling might aid students in comprehending a new topic or knowledge base, even in a remote learning environment.

4.1.3. Tap into prior knowledge

The teacher encouraged her students to contribute their personal experiences and thoughts regarding the subject matter, and guided them to establish connections and associations with their own lives. Occasionally, the teacher provides hints and ideas to guide the students toward making connections, but once the students reach those connections, they will fully understand the topic on their own. Implementing this type of method is essential as it will assist students in transitioning into their new realm of knowledge. This also marks the commencement of instructing students to acquire knowledge autonomously. Sari and Rozimela (2021) emphasized that assessing learners' comprehension is a method to guide students toward developing autonomy in their learning.

4.1.4. Giving feedback

During the students' presentations in front of the class, the teacher attentively listened, analysed, and provided supportive feedback. The assessment criteria consist of fluency,

pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Receiving comments from the teacher assists the students in correcting their errors. They enhance their pronunciation and expedite their fluency. The pupils are driven to enhance their learning and speaking abilities based on the remarks and appreciation provided by the teacher. The teacher's feedback has the potential to either enhance or diminish their students' confidence. The teacher provides support to the timid and anxious students in expressing themselves. Research suggests that providing feedback in a structured environment has been shown to enhance students' self-esteem and reduce their anxiety when speaking English (Zarei & Rezadoust, 2020).

4.2. The results of interviews

The qualitative results of the interview aligned with the observational findings, derived from a total of 10 participants. When asked whether they perceived an improvement in their English speaking following the intervention, 7 out of 10 respondents affirmed that their speaking abilities had markedly improved regarding vocabulary and pronunciation, while one participant indicated minimal change in their speaking skills. Furthermore, a substantial number of participants reported a significant enhancement in their self-confidence, leading to reduced hesitations and pauses during speech, thereby improving their fluency. A selection of their responses is provided below.

“Yes, my speaking has improved a lot in terms of using more appropriate language structure and vocabulary in different contexts, compared to the beginning of the course” says S1.

S2: “Yes, every week my speaking ability improves especially in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation.”

S4: “Yes, my speaking is much better, more fluent since I’s more confident, I speak better.”

S3 and 5: “Yes, I have more ideas and can respond more quickly, which helped me become more fluently.”

It was observed that the teacher’s encouragement fostered their students’ independence in applying knowledge during speaking practice and enabled the students to acknowledge their errors based on the teacher’s feedback. The subsequent are their reflections:

S9: “I wasn’t sure about several topics, and I wouldn’t feel at ease approaching the teacher about them. She understood, though, and she came to me with explanations to enable me to remember specifics in more depth and manage challenging work.”

“For me, I find it useful since it helps me recall prior knowledge that I had learned in secondary and high school.” S7 says.

S6 & 8: “Our teacher always gave insightful comments that could help us improve our speaking performance.”

S10: “Using my teacher’s approach, I am loving picking new languages and terminology. It increases my vocabulary, which helps me to speak more effectively.”

Besides, the students who were interviewed stated their endorsement of the utilisation of the scaffolding method in their speaking lesson. Initially, individuals observe that employing this approach provides them with heightened enjoyment and exhilaration when endeavouring to communicate in the English language. This scenario undoubtedly fosters a conducive learning environment. The findings indicate that scaffolding might foster a favourable learning atmosphere.

4.3. The discussion

The students reached a consensus that the implementation of the scaffolding

technique effectively guided them in cultivating their oral communication abilities. The emphasised aspects of English language proficiency are vocabulary and fluency. This discovery aligns with the investigation conducted by Kulsoom et al. (2021), which demonstrates that scaffolding has an influence on students’ proficiency in English. Furthermore, scaffolding is well recognised as a highly efficient strategy in English-speaking classrooms for enhancing students’ self-assurance. The students become more confident that everyone possesses the ability to speak English. By providing scaffolding in the speaking class, students receive ample support to investigate unfamiliar topics. The veracity of this statement aligns with a study conducted by Boonmoh in 2019. The study provides empirical evidence that the use of the scaffolding method significantly enhances the confidence of students in English-speaking.

Setting aside class time for vocabulary study is advisable, as a limited vocabulary is a significant barrier to effective communication for students. Students would subsequently apply their newly acquired vocabulary to formulate sentences. Research indicates that providing students with more relatable practical issues can enhance their creativity in presentations. It is recommended to conduct follow-up research on instructional scaffolding that includes additional classes.

V. Conclusion

The current study has demonstrated that micro-scaffolding tactics effectively support English-speaking classes for first-year English majors. These strategies stimulate students’ participation, provide explanations, model behaviors, confirm students’ understanding, and give feedback. The students exhibit favorable reactions to the implementation of

scaffolding tactics in their speaking lesson. The scaffolding technique is a viable solution for English teachers who aim to enhance their students' growth in speaking skills, despite facing many challenges throughout the teaching and learning process. Given the recent advancements in teaching methods throughout the pandemic, it is strongly advised to explore new instructional activities that use learning platforms. In light of the present circumstances, providing support and structure to English-speaking classrooms for young learners should present fresh opportunities for engaging and pleasurable learning experiences, whether in a hybrid or fully remote learning environment.

This research yields instructional implications for students, educators, and syllabus designers. Instructional scaffolding is highly recommended in EFL classrooms, with a focus on writing, reading, and listening alongside speaking. The present findings support the conclusions of Padmadewi and Artini (2018), whose survey indicated that the quality of scaffolding positively influences learners' writing performance. These findings are corroborated by Poorahmadi (2009), who concluded that scaffolding improves the reading competency of EFL language learners. More capable students or teachers may initially provide skills mediation to less capable students. When the least capable students struggle with learning problems, teachers or more capable peers can offer explicit mediation to assist these students in skill mastery.

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TRIỂN KHAI CHIẾN LƯỢC GIÀN GIÁO DẠY TIẾNG ANH CHO SINH VIÊN NĂM NHẤT NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC CÔNG NGHỆ ĐỒNG NAI

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Tóm tắt: Người học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ thường gặp khó khăn khi sử dụng tiếng Anh để giao tiếp. Các nghiên cứu trước đây đã chứng minh nguyên nhân đến từ việc giáo viên chưa sử dụng đúng phương pháp giảng dạy và người học thiếu động lực. Việc sử dụng phương pháp giàn giáo đã nhận được đánh giá tích cực vì thu hút hiệu quả nhiều đối tượng người học. Khi nói đến phương pháp giàn giáo, người học liên tục xây dựng trên kiến thức hiện có của mình và thiết lập mối liên hệ giữa tài liệu, khái niệm mới và khả năng tiếp thu ngôn ngữ. Hơn nữa, hình thức hướng dẫn này làm giảm khả năng mắc lỗi, do đó làm giảm cảm giác do dự, đặc biệt là ở những người học tiếng Anh trình độ thấp. Do đó, nghiên cứu hiện tại đã sử dụng phương pháp giàn giáo để hướng dẫn cho sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh năm nhất tại Đại học Công nghệ Đồng Nai trong những lớp tiếng Anh giao tiếp. Nghiên cứu muốn tìm hiểu quan điểm của sinh viên đối với phương pháp này khi được tiến hành trong lớp học của họ. Nghiên cứu sử dụng các cuộc phỏng vấn và phiếu quan sát làm công cụ để thu thập dữ liệu từ 60 sinh viên. Phân tích dữ liệu cho thấy sinh viên cho rằng việc dạy và học theo phương pháp giàn giáo rất có lợi do bầu không khí học tập vì sự tích cực mà nó tạo ra. Ngoài ra, sinh viên vượt qua nỗi sợ phát biểu trong lớp. Quan trọng hơn là, phương pháp này có tác động tích cực đến động lực học của sinh viên, khiến các em trở nên tự chủ và độc lập hơn theo thời gian. Các hệ quả của những phát hiện này được xem xét để cải thiện việc áp dụng khung hỗ trợ trong các kỹ năng tiếng Anh khác nhau.

Từ khóa: Kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh, chiến lược giàn giáo, khó khăn, năng lực, động lực.

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