

# The Application of Scaffolding Strategies in teaching reading comprehension

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*Received: 28/02/2024; Accepted: 01/3/2024; Published: 07/3/2024*

**Abstract:** *Scaffolding is a term coined by Wood et al. (1976). Since its introduction, scaffolding has been a popular term in English language teaching. It is used to refer strategies that facilitate the co-constructed learning process, supporting the children's skill and knowledge enhancement to help them achieve a higher competence (Rogoff, 1991). The 2 main aims of this paper are to (1) find out the students' evaluation on the scaffolding strategies applied in reading comprehension lessons; (2) suggest some tools and practical recommendations so that the teachers could conduct scaffolding strategies effectively to support students in reading comprehension classes.*

**Keywords:** *Scaffolding Strategies, reading comprehension, reading skills*

## 1. Introduction

Scaffolding is a pedagogical concept which clarifies the assistance or intervention of experts with an aim to finely tune to the child's ongoing learning progress (Wood et al., 1976). This notion was coined by Wood et al. (1976) and widely applied in the field of education, referring to "all teacher support" (Verenikina, 2004, p. 5).

In the language class, teachers should effectively scaffold students in order to facilitate the co-constructed learning process. Although there are many studies carried out on applying Scaffolding strategies in teaching speaking, listening, writing skills. However, little has been talked about effective teachers' scaffolding strategies in reading classes; therefore, this is still worth receiving further considerations.

The 2 main aims of this paper are to (1) find out the students' evaluation on the scaffolding strategies applied in reading comprehension lessons; (2) suggest some tools and practical recommendations so that the teachers could conduct scaffolding strategies effectively to support students in reading comprehension classes.

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the study was designed to address the following research question:

What are the students' opinions about Scaffolding strategies applied in reading class?

What are the suggested scaffolding strategies to improve the effectiveness of reading comprehension learning and teaching?

## 2. Content

### 2.1. Literature review

### Sociocultural Theory

According to the sociocultural theory, the development of human mind is the transformation of innate capacities by integrating them with socio-culturally constructed mediational tools (Vygotsky, 1981b) and internalizing the external psychological tools in mediated activities (Vygotsky, 1978). The development first occurs "between people as an inter-psychological category, and then within the child as an intra-psychological category" (Vygotsky, 1981b, p. 163). It means that the higher psychological function of humans is the result of a process, transforming from the external interpersonal social process to the internal intrapersonal process, called, internalization (Vygotsky, 1978). There are shifts of from object-regulation, other-regulation to self-regulation in the leaning process of the learners. (Vygotsky, 1981a).

The zone of actual development and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) are concepts proposed by Vygotsky (1978). He also suggested that every child has both those zones. While the zone of actual development refers what individuals can accomplish alone, or "a child's mental functions that have been established as a result of certain already completed developmental cycles", the ZPD is defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers". On Vygotsky's standpoint, learning is influenced by social interactions in meaningful contexts, that the reason why a child or a novice learns with an adult or a more

capable peer, and learning occurs within the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD).

### ***Scaffolding definition and classification***

#### *Scaffolding definition*

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"Interactional scaffolding" is the concept referring to the notion of Scaffolding via collaborative and interactional language (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005, p. 20). Quite a few researchers considered contingency one of the most important features of scaffolding (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005; Smit et al., 2013; Wood et al., 1978), which means ongoing adjustment of expert help offered based on the success or failure of a task.

#### Scaffolding Classification

Approaches to classify scaffolding vary during the development of this term, in general, there are three main types, including vertical, sequential, and instructional. The author of this article summarizes the classification and their primary features based on the literature review of Quang (2022)

The second framework of scaffolding that the author based on is the one proposed by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2012). The seven interactional scaffolding strategies were classified into three general types, that is, implicit scaffolding, implicit and explicit scaffolding, and explicit scaffolding - based on their degrees of explicitness: that is, the quantity of information provided by the teachers to assist learners during interactions (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2012; Ohta, 2001).

## **2.2. The study**

### Settings

The research was conducted in 2 classes in a private Language center. They were selected because they were conducted by using an online platform and it was started in June, 2023. They are students have experienced studying an one-year reading comprehension course.

### Participants

This study was conducted in two Reading Comprehension classes at EFA English center. 40 learners from these classes participated in the study. They were grade 10<sup>th</sup> and grade 11<sup>th</sup> students. After finishing the fifteen-week advanced reading

comprehension course, the students completed the questionnaire about their opinions the scaffolding strategies application in advanced reading comprehension class.

### Instrument(s)

This study employed a mixed-method to collect the data. Based on the literature review, the author self-designed the questionnaire for the research. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items in which there were 10 items in the form of 5-point Likert (1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neutral; 4: agree; and 5: strongly agree), and one item for the opened-ended question. The questionnaire survey was delivered and collected to examine the students' attitude towards reading comprehension lessons with the application of scaffolding strategies.

### Findings and pedagogical implications

#### Findings

It could be seen from the table that most of the students reported positive feedback about the application of scaffolding strategies in reading comprehension classes.

In terms of students' participation, 68,7% of the total strongly agree that learning with the scaffolds by teachers and peers is funny and interesting, which motivate them to deal with the difficult reading comprehension tasks. 46% of them claim that they enjoy working in teams, because teamwork activities in scaffolding strategies encourages them to actively participate in the lessons. 80 % feel that they are comfortable asking for help from friends than the teacher, especially the weak students with low language proficiency. All of them reported that they often make questions to other members in group to get better understanding about the reading passage. A large number, (57%) strongly agree that participating in the lesson helps them improve their relationship with teachers and classmates. A large proportion stated that reading lessons with the application of scaffolding strategies help them share information, make decisions, and solve problems; as a result, they could learn a lot from their peers.

As regard to the effectiveness of reading comprehension lessons applied scaffolding strategies, more than 80% of the students found scaffoldings from peers helps them build up better topic vocabulary and structures. Over 70% is interested in the reading lessons because with the scaffolding strategies, the difficult tasks are divided into smaller and easier pieces; therefore, they could complete the challenging tasks by dealing with the micro chunks step by step.

Approximately 60% of the students realized that scaffolding from peers helps them better deal with the most difficult reading comprehension tasks that they could not complete by themselves. This could be seen as the most important effect of the scaffolding application since it contributes students to reaching their full potential, that they could not do it themselves without the expert supports.

#### Pedagogical implications

In this part, the author tries to give some suggestions in order that other teachers could find them practical and helpful in dealing with those obstacles, providing micro-strategies that lead learners step by step reach their development.

The author tries to discuss both differential and universal scaffolding in different contexts. The following suggestions are based on both the framework mentioned in the literature review and the personal experience.

#### **Poor Linguistic background**

If students have problems with their linguistic competence, teachers also need an in depth understanding of the learners' linguistic backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses so that they can comprehensively support students. Teachers can provide the students at beginner level materials and instructions both in Vietnamese and English, which reduces the linguistic loads so that students can comprehend the lesson more easily. Moreover, teachers should provide students certain sets of vocabulary and structures which are simple to use and easy to remember to apply in new reading lessons.

#### **Low concentration**

In the situation of students' low concentration, teachers can pair the more experienced students with their less-experienced counterparts and assign specific roles to each student in order that they could make an effort and contribute to the common goal of the team. Teachers should vary activities and set appropriate time limitation for each activity which is suitable for short attention span of teenagers.

#### **Low interaction**

Many teachers find students' low interaction the problem that could prevent the effectiveness of the learning and teaching process. Teachers should divide the large number of students in a class into smaller groups in smaller groups where four or five students can work together and switch among those groups to provide adequate scaffolding for each group. In addition, teachers should foster good rapport between

group members and establish supportive dynamics among them to guarantee that they are willing to collaborate without constant attention from the teachers.

### **3. Conclusion**

The study critically reviews knowledge of scaffolding types, functions, and strategies in contemporary research as well as the students' attitude towards the application of scaffolding strategies applied in reading comprehension lessons. The author has also presented recommendations for teachers to scaffold students in certain situations in reading class. Both differential and universal scaffolding in different contexts are suggested so that teachers could maximize the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies. The study suggests both one-on-one scaffolding and small-group scaffolding, both teacher scaffolding and peer scaffolding. It is the teachers who should base on the comprehensive understanding of their learners to take the most suitable scaffolding strategies for them and combine different scaffolding strategies in order to help the students reach their full potential.

There are some limitations of the study that should be addressed in future research. First, the data involved in this study was collected from a small group of students at EFA center, so it is not completely generalizable. Secondly, due to the limitation of time, the data collected seems not rich enough since the data collection tool is only questionnaire. Therefore, the instruments applied in future studies should cover more research tools, such as interviews or observations to ensure the validity of the research.

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