

**THE USE OF SCAFFOLDING  
INSTRUCTIONS AS TEACHING  
STRATEGY TO INCREASE STUDENTS'  
READING ABILITY**

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**Abstract**

The objective of this study is to find out the effect of scaffolding as a teaching strategy in teaching reading. Teacher can implement this strategy to help students to develop their initiatives and motivation to understand the meaning of a text easily. The writer also helps them not to be frustrated in learning new words from many kinds of texts. Scaffolding, as the strategy used in teaching reading, helps student to become an independent and self-regulating learner and problem solver. There are also some steps to be considered in using this strategy in teaching. Scaffolding can be implemented in teaching many kinds of genre or types of texts. The most important point is using scaffolding strategy correctly and effectively in order to gain the result of reading texts. The result shows that

scaffolding is effective to help students to increase their reading ability.

**Keywords:** reading, teaching, scaffolding, strategy, motivation, texts

## **A. Introduction**

Most of English teachers know that reading, as one of the language skills which has to be mastered by students, needs fully attention to develop in teaching process due to the fact that students often find difficulties in understanding a text or some texts dealing with many kinds of genre that they have to master such as narrative, recount, descriptive, explanation, discussion, exposition and others. For students, it is not easy to differentiate among the genre as well as to understand the content of the texts. Furthermore, at the third grade of junior high school and senior high school, students have to follow national exam in which one of the subjects is English covering some reading texts with certain genre as stated in the *SKL* (Competence Standard of Examination). Teachers then try to apply some reading strategies to overcome the problems. No teaching strategy is guaranteed to work every time, in every subject, with every student well. Therefore, as English teachers, we are expected to be more innovative and creative in finding new teaching strategies in the teaching learning process in the classroom in order to help students achieve their mastery in reading skill and other skills.

Reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text, to have a comprehension. The text consisting of letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs generates meanings. The reader uses knowledge, skills, and strategies to determine what those meanings are.

Those include linguistic competence that is the ability to recognize the elements of the writing system, the knowledge of vocabulary and the knowledge of how words are structured into sentences, discourse competence that is the knowledge of discourse markers and how they connect parts of the text to one another, sociolinguistic competence includes the knowledge about different types of texts and their usual structure and content and strategic competence which is the ability to use top-down strategies as well as knowledge of the language (a bottom-up strategy).

The purpose for reading and the type of text determine the specific knowledge, skills, and strategies that readers need to apply to achieve comprehension. Reading comprehension is obtained when the reader knows which skills and strategies are appropriate for the type of text, and understands how to apply them to accomplish the reading purpose. For instance, when students read a narrative text, then, they have to know what the purpose of reading this kind of text is. It will be different when they read a newspaper. Since one of the purposes of reading a narrative text is to entertain the readers, students need a good strategy to be implemented in reading this kind of text in order they can understand the content of the text by enjoying themselves in the reading activity.

In many cases, students are often difficult to understand the content of a text because of the lack of vocabulary and grammar. They seem to read the text and then find every single word they do not understand by looking up at the dictionary. To read one text, it will take much time for students to get the general meaning of the text since they have not known which strategy to use to read certain text yet. Students more often tend to get the meaning of every word rather than

the meaning of the phrases for they do not master the grammar used in the text.

Students are relying on their linguistic knowledge, as they understand the text by knowing the meaning of every single word they read in the text. Students seem to think reading means starting at the beginning and going word by word, stopping to look up every unknown vocabulary item until they reach the end. By using this way, students often get the misunderstanding of the meaning of the text as the meaning that they find in the dictionary quite different from the contextual meaning from the text itself. This often happens to students since the teacher does not give them appropriate reading strategies in order to help them understand the reading text easily ignoring their ways to get the meaning of word by word. Therefore, it is necessary for teacher to give students various strategies in reading to help them get the comprehension of the text easily.

Teacher can develop various reading strategies and match appropriate strategies to each reading situation. Teacher focuses on the process of reading rather than on its product. Teacher can do several ways in order to help students use appropriate strategies in reading activity. Those are: Teacher develops students' awareness of the reading process and reading strategies by asking students to think and talk about how they read in their native language; Teacher allows students to practice the full repertoire of reading strategies by using authentic reading tasks. They encourage students to read to learn by giving students some choice of reading material; when working with reading tasks in the classroom, teacher shows students the strategies that will work best for the reading purpose and the type of text. Teacher explains how and why students should use the strategies; Teacher has students practice

reading strategies in the class and asks them to practice outside of the class in their reading assignments. The writer encourages students to be conscious of what they're doing while they complete reading assignments; Teacher encourages students to evaluate their comprehension and self-report their use of strategies. The writer builds comprehension checks into in-class and out-of-class reading assignments, and periodically review how and when to use particular strategies; Teacher encourages the development of reading skills and the use of reading strategies by using the target language to convey instructions and course-related information in written form: office hours, homework assignments, test content; Teacher does not assume that students will transfer strategy use from one task to another. The writer explicitly mentions how a particular strategy can be used in a different type of reading task or with another skill.

There are many kinds of strategies that can be implemented in teaching reading. One of them is using scaffolding which helps student to become an independent and self-regulating learner and problem solver (Hartman, 2002). Clay and Cazden (1992) point out two scaffolding strategies in teaching reading: working with new knowledge and accepting partially correct responses. In the first strategy, when a teacher suspects the child does not have the ideas or words needed for a particular text, he/she may explain some part of the story or contrast a feature presented with something he/she knows the child understands from another reading. In the second strategy, the teacher uses what is correct in the student's response but probes or cues the student, so as to suggest good possibilities for active consideration.

## **B. Discussion**

This article discusses the use of scaffolding as one of the strategies for teaching reading to help students get the comprehension of the texts they read and help them understand many kinds of texts easily. The article also elaborates how scaffolding strategy is used in teaching reading and the application of scaffolding strategy in different kinds of texts.

### **1. The Definition of Scaffolding**

The term ‘scaffolding’ comes from the works of Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976). The term ‘scaffolding’ has been developed as a metaphor to describe the type of assistance offered by a teacher or peer to support learning. In the process of scaffolding, the teacher helps the student master a task or concept that the student cannot understand easily. The teacher offers assistance with only those skills that are beyond the student’s capability. The most important is allowing the students to complete the task as much as possible, unassisted. Student errors are expected, but, with teacher feedback and prompting, the student is able to achieve the task or goal. When the student takes responsibility for or masters the task, the teacher begins the process of “fading”, or the gradual removal of the scaffolding, which allows the student to work independently. “Scaffolding is actually a bridge used to build upon what students already know to arrive at something they do not know. If scaffolding is properly administered, it will act as an enabler, not as a disabler” (Benson, 1997).

Vygotsky defines scaffolding as the “role of teachers and others in supporting the learner’s development and providing support structures to get to that next stage or level” (Raymond, 2000:

176). Moreover, scaffolding in educational context is a process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning. If it is done correctly then, it encourages a student to develop his or her own initiatives, motivation and resourcefulness (Linda Lawson, 2002).

## 2. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The foundation for scaffolding instruction is based on Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky believes that any child could be taught any subject effectively using scaffolding techniques by applying the scaffolds at the ZPD. "Teachers activate this zone when they teach students concepts that are just above their current skills and knowledge level, which motivates them to excel beyond their current skills level" (Jaramillo, 1996: 138). Students are guided and supported through learning activities that serve as interactive bridges to get them to the next level. Thus the learner develops or constructs new understandings by elaborating on their prior knowledge through the support provided by more capable others (Raymond, 2000). Studies have actually shown that in the absence of guided learning experiences and social interaction, learning and development are hindered (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000).

Vygotsky suggests that there are two parts of a learner's developmental level: the "actual developmental level" and the "potential developmental level". The zone of proximal development is "the distance between the actual developmental levels 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” (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). The zone of proximal development (ZPD) can also be described as the area between what a learner can do by himself and that which can be attained with the help of a ‘more knowledgeable other’ adult or peer. The ‘more knowledgeable other’, shares knowledge with the student to bridge the gap between what is known and what is not known. Once the student has expanded his knowledge, the actual developmental level has been expanded and the ZPD has shifted. The ZPD is always changing as the student expands and gains knowledge, so scaffolding instruction must constantly be individualized to address the changing ZPD of each student.

It is Vygotsky’s belief that “good learning” occurs in the child’s zone of proximal development. Important to teaching in the ZPD is the determination of what the student can manage on his own and to allow the student to do as much as possible without any assistance. “Fading” is the process of gradually removing the scaffolding that was put into place for the child until it is completely gone. Eventually, the child internalizes the information and becomes a self-regulated, independent learner.

### 3. The Benefits and Challenges of Scaffolding

One of benefits of scaffolding instruction is that it engages the learner. The learner does not passively listen to information but the learner builds on prior knowledge and forms new knowledge. In working with students who have low self-esteem and learning disabilities, it provides an opportunity to give positive feedback to the students by saying things like “...look what



you have just figured out!” This gives them more of a can do versus a “this is too hard” attitude. Another advantage of scaffolding is if it is done properly, scaffolding instruction motivates the student so that they want to learn. Scaffolding can also minimize the level of frustration of the learner. This is very important with many special needs students, who can become frustrated very easily then shut down and refuse to participate in further learning during that particular setting. Scaffold instruction is individualized so it can benefit each learner.

However, there is also disadvantage for the teacher since developing the supports and scaffold lessons to meet the needs of each individual would be extremely time-consuming. Implementation of individualized scaffolds in a classroom with a large number of students would be challenging. Another disadvantage is that unless properly trained, a teacher may not properly implement scaffold instruction and therefore not see the full effect. Scaffolding also requires that the teacher give up some of the control and allow the students to make errors. This may be difficult for teachers to do. Although there are some drawbacks to the use of scaffolding as a teaching strategy the positive impact can have on students’ learning and development is far more important.

#### 4. The Use of Scaffolding as a Strategy in Teaching Reading

In using scaffolding as a strategy in teaching reading, teacher can consider several steps. First is modeling. Lange (2002) cites Hogan and Pressley (1997) as defining modeling as, "teaching behavior that shows how one should feel, think or act within a given situation." There

are three types of modeling. Think-aloud modeling gives auditory substance to the thought processes associated with a task. For example, in reading a new text, teacher may verbalize her thought processes for breaking an unfamiliar word or difficult word for student down into its parts so that it can be read. Talk-aloud modeling involves verbalizing the thought process or problem solving strategy while demonstrating the task. An example would be a teacher verbally describing her thought processes as she demonstrates the correct way to guess the meaning of words contextually based on the phrase or sentences used in the text. It helps students to get the comprehension of the text without knowing the meaning of every single word they read. Next, there is performance modeling. Performance modeling requires no verbal instruction.

Besides modeling, teacher needs to offer explanations. These explanations should openly address the learner's comprehension about what is being learned, why and when it is used, and how it is used (Lange, 2002). At the beginning, explanations are detailed and comprehensive and repeated often. For example, when teaching students how to identify adjectives in a sentence, the teacher will need to lead the students through learning the detailed definition of an adjective in the beginning. Teacher may have to repeat or rephrase this explanation many times during guided practice. As the students gain experience, the teacher might just prompt the students with words like “what kind”, “which one” and “how many.”

Lange (2002) next addresses inviting student participation, especially in the early stages

of scaffolding. This technique will heighten student engagement and ownership in the learning process. It will also give an opportunity for teacher to emphasize or correct understandings of the task. This leads us to verifying and clarifying student understandings. As students become familiar with new material, it is a key for the teacher to evaluate student understanding and provide positive and corrective feedback.

There are some steps in teaching reading using scaffolding strategy. In step 1, begin with a short section of a text (1-2 pages); the text should be challenging for most of students and give several opportunities to illustrate the various strategies. In step 2, depending on students' skills and grade level, choose 3-5 strategies on which you want to focus from the list. (Activate Prior Knowledge, Make Predictions, Ask Questions, etc.) Tell students the *what*, *why* and *when* of these strategies: *what* the strategies will be used, *why* each of these strategies help on this particular text, and have them keep track of *when* they use strategies as they read the text. In step 3, make sure you give your students the purpose or goal for this reading or have them come up with it if that's appropriate for the particular reading. In step 4, read the text to students and model the chosen strategies as teacher reads by stopping (sometimes even in the middle of sentences) to articulate aloud what is going on inside teacher's head as she reads. In step 5, have students annotated the text by underlining/ circling the cues that triggered the use of a particular strategy and discuss them after the read-aloud is complete. In step 6, have students brainstormed a list of other texts and circumstances where they might be able to use each of the

strategies. Have the students connect these strategies to real life applications. In step 7, consistently reinforce the use of these strategies as teacher continues reading this text and as she introduces new texts to students.

In teaching a certain genre, for example teaching narrative text, teacher can ask students to read aloud first, then ask students some questions dealing with the content of the story such as who, when, where, what happened, etc, and ask them to elaborate their answer based on their understanding. By asking students, teacher gives them opportunity to express their knowledge and develop their ability in expressing ideas. In this way, students are challenged to get the meaning of the text but not by looking all the words up in the dictionary. Teacher gives not much time to read the text and directly ask students some questions. Students also can build up their understanding by asking other students about their understanding of the story they have read.

According to McCloskey, after a discussion of a shared or recalled experience, have students dictate a narrative as you write it on a chart, projected computer screen, or transparency. With the students, edit the text, using opportunities to teach language structures and conventions of print. Then duplicate copies of the text for students to use as reading texts and as the basis for a series of follow-up activities, including practice with phonics, language structures, comprehension, independent reading, and creative expression.

Another way of using scaffolding in teaching reading is after developing schema and background; introduce a text by reading it aloud to students. You may choose to read through the text

the first time for flow. Then stop to ask and answer questions when needed during the second and subsequent repetitions. Ask students which words they do not understand and provide pictures, translations, or definitions as needed. Read Aloud is a good way to make students familiar with the text to prepare them for other kinds of reading. It also provides a model for pronunciation, phrasing and expression.

### **C. Conclusion**

English teacher often finds problems by the fact that students do not automatically transfer the strategies they use when reading in their native language to reading in a language they are learning. Instead, they seem to think reading means starting at the beginning and going word by word, stopping to look up every unknown vocabulary item, until they reach the end. When they do this, students are relying on their linguistic knowledge, a bottom-up strategy. One of the most important functions of teacher, then, is to help students move past this idea and use strategies as they do in their native language to comprehend a text easily.

A creative English teacher shows students how they can adjust their reading behaviour to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and reading purposes. He/she helps students develop a set of reading strategies and match appropriate strategies to each reading situation. One of the strategies that can be used in teaching reading is scaffolding which is a process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning. If teacher applies this method correctly then, it encourages a student to develop his or her own initiatives and motivation. In teaching reading, teacher helps students develop their

understanding of a text by arising some questions reflecting the content of the text and asks students to guess the meaning of the sentences without knowing the meaning of every single word.

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