

PAPER

INTEGRATING SCAFFOLDING STRATEGIES INTO READING LESSONS FOR IMPROVED LANGUAGE OUTCOMES

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Abstract

This study investigates the integration of scaffolding strategies in English reading lessons to improve students' reading comprehension and overall language outcomes. Scaffolding, grounded in Second Language Acquisition and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, provides temporary support to learners that is gradually removed as competence develops. A quasi-experimental design was employed with 40 intermediate EFL learners divided into an experimental group, taught using scaffolded reading strategies, and a control group, taught through traditional methods. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests, classroom observations, and questionnaires. Findings reveal that scaffolding significantly enhances reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learner engagement. The study concludes that scaffolding is a highly effective pedagogical approach for fostering reading skills and recommends its systematic integration into EFL classrooms.

Key words: Scaffolding strategies, reading comprehension, EFL learners, vocabulary development, learner engagement, second language acquisition, language outcomes, instructional support, reading lessons.

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill for language acquisition and academic success in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. However, many learners face difficulties in comprehending texts due to limited vocabulary, lack of background

knowledge, and inadequate reading strategies. Traditional instruction often focuses on grammar or translation exercises rather than fostering active engagement with texts, which limits students' ability to develop independent reading skills. Scaffolding, derived from Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, is an instructional strategy that provides

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temporary support to learners to help them perform tasks they cannot complete independently. The teacher's guidance is gradually reduced as the learner gains confidence and competence. This approach is closely aligned with Second Language Acquisition, which emphasizes the role of interaction and guided practice in developing language proficiency.

Scaffolding in reading instruction may involve pre-teaching vocabulary, using guiding questions, modeling comprehension strategies, and providing structured frameworks such as graphic organizers. By integrating these strategies, teachers can help learners approach challenging texts with confidence and gradually develop autonomous reading skills.

This study explores the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in improving reading comprehension and overall language outcomes among EFL learners. The research question guiding this study is:

How does the integration of scaffolding strategies into reading lessons affect learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and engagement?

Methods

A quasi-experimental research design was used to examine the effects of scaffolding on reading skills. The study was conducted over eight weeks in a secondary school setting. Participants included 40 intermediate-level EFL students, aged 15 to 17, divided equally into an experimental group and a control group. Both groups had comparable reading proficiency at the beginning of the study, confirmed by pre-test results.

Data were collected using multiple instruments. Pre- and post-tests measured reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Classroom observations were conducted to examine student engagement and interaction. A questionnaire was administered to gather students' perceptions of the learning experience and their attitudes toward scaffolded instruction.

In the experimental group, teachers implemented various scaffolding strategies during reading lessons. These included pre-teaching challenging vocabulary, providing guiding

questions, modeling summarization techniques, using graphic organizers, and encouraging peer discussion. The control group received traditional reading instruction, focusing primarily on teacher explanation, comprehension questions, and text translation.

Data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics to compare pre- and post-test results.

Results

The study findings indicate that scaffolding strategies significantly improved learners' reading comprehension and overall language outcomes.

Pre-test results showed no significant difference between the experimental and control groups, confirming similar initial proficiency levels. Post-test results revealed substantial gains in the experimental group compared to the control group. Students taught through scaffolded instruction demonstrated greater ability to understand main ideas, infer meaning from context, and summarize texts accurately. Vocabulary acquisition also improved, as learners were able to recall and use new words encountered in the texts.

Classroom observations highlighted increased learner engagement in the experimental group. Students actively participated in discussions, collaborated during peer activities, and demonstrated higher levels of critical thinking and text analysis. The control group, in contrast, displayed more passive participation and relied heavily on teacher guidance. Questionnaire responses showed that most students in the experimental group perceived scaffolded instruction as supportive and motivating. They reported increased confidence when approaching difficult texts, reduced anxiety, and a stronger sense of autonomy in their reading. Overall, the results suggest that scaffolding provides both cognitive and motivational support, enabling learners to tackle challenging texts more effectively and gradually develop independent reading skills.

Discussion

The findings of this study support the efficacy of scaffolding strategies in enhancing reading

comprehension and language development among EFL learners. By providing temporary support and gradually reducing it, teachers help students internalize reading strategies, build vocabulary, and improve comprehension. This aligns with the principles of Second Language Acquisition, which emphasize the importance of guided interaction and meaningful practice in language learning. The study also demonstrates that scaffolding positively influences learner motivation and engagement. Students in the experimental group were more confident, participated actively, and expressed a greater interest in reading activities. This highlights the dual benefit of scaffolding: cognitive support and affective encouragement.

Challenges in implementing scaffolding include the additional planning time required for teachers and the need to tailor strategies to students' proficiency levels. Despite these challenges, the benefits in reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and learner engagement make scaffolding a highly valuable approach in EFL classrooms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, scaffolding strategies represent an effective, evidence-based approach to developing reading skills and promoting meaningful language outcomes in EFL classrooms. This study demonstrates that integrating scaffolding strategies into reading lessons significantly improves EFL learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and engagement. Scaffolded instruction helps learners approach challenging texts with confidence, develop independent reading skills, and gradually internalize effective comprehension strategies. Educators are encouraged to systematically incorporate scaffolding techniques, such as pre-teaching vocabulary, guided questioning, modeling, graphic organizers, and peer collaboration, into reading lessons. While implementation requires careful planning and adaptability, the benefits for student learning outcomes are substantial.

Future research could investigate the long-term impact of scaffolding on reading fluency, as well as its integration with technology-enhanced learning tools. Studies could also explore scaffolding

strategies for learners of varying proficiency levels and in different educational contexts.

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