The Influence of Learners Scaffolding on L2 Reading with Reference to Government College Students

Ms. V. Suganya
PhD. Research Scholar (Full-Time)
Department of English,
Thanthai Periyar Government Arts an & Science College (Autonomous)
Affiliated to Bharathidasan University. Tiruchirapalli- 620 023,
Tamil Nadu.
suganyanathan92@gmail.com

Dr.S. Shanmugasundaram
Associate Professor, P.G & Research Department of English,
Thanthai Periyar Government Arts & Science College (Autonomous)
Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli- 620 023,
Tamil Nadu.
srishanmuga75@gmail.com
==

Abstract

Learners scaffolding concept has been used in an effective way ever since Vygotsky introduced the term in relation to his socio-cultural theory, and the concept of learner's proximal development (ZPD- Zone of Proximal Development). It is characterized by how a learner learns with the support of teacher mediation till he/she needs a support. Over a period of time, the learner can do without the support of the teacher. There are no explicit rules in relation to the scaffolding concept. Teachers go about designing scaffolding framework depending on the proficiency level of the ESL learners. The present paper attempts to show the influence of scaffolding framework on L2 reading. It is based on an experiment conducted at the tertiary level. A specially designed reading (second language) task with a scaffolding framework has been used for a group of ESL learners. The following criteria namely overall comprehension, understanding specific context, analytical ability, vocabulary, interpreting the text, and reading speed have been used to evaluate their performance. As could be seen from the results, the experimental group of students have clearly outperformed control group of students. Further the study supports the idea of learners scaffolding within a specific task-based environment.

==
Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 25:9 September 2025**
Ms. V. Suganya & Dr.S. Shanmugasundaram
The Influence of Learners Scaffolding on L2 Reading with Reference to Government College Students   262

Key Words- ZPD, Zone of Proximal development, Scaffolding Framework, Over all Comprehension, Analytical ability, socio-cultural theory

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, scaffolding has become more and more common in second language learning. The term "scaffolding" actually refers to the theoretical concept in the field of education / applied linguistics, specifically in the context of learning a second language. However, this term has come to refer to any supporting instruction in a broader sense. The term "scaffolding" is a well-known concept frequently used in language and education to refer to the direction, cooperation, and assistance that help learners to learn new things in a simple way. The notion of scaffolding derives from a particular perspective on development and learning based on the work of Lev Vygotsky (1934/1986, 1978), and makes most sense within that context.

It is often associated with the concept of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which is another phrase frequently used in educational discourse but is rarely used in reality with any degree of accuracy.

Scaffolding is an important skill for educators to utilize within a classroom setting. Mercer (2013) points out that the best strategies for scaffolding are through appropriation of information, construction of information, and transformation of an individual's reasoning or understanding.

He also adds that, these newer strategies also tend to focus on the collaborative aspects of scaffolding, rather than the individual retention and delivery of knowledge (Mercer 2013). Further, Black and Allen (2018) highlight that the best type of information to work with when scaffolding are real-life problems, as students need to be able to relate to the information. When students collaborate with information from real-world experiences or events, they are able to engage and apply that knowledge to different scenarios and the knowledge and skills can therefore become more transferable (Black and Allen 2018).

With the help of scaffolding a less experienced person can think more deeply and to eventually be able to think at the required level or do a certain task by themselves. However, the ultimate aim of the concept implies the fact that the learner (having learnt through scaffolding framework) has to work/learn independently without any support.

==
Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 25:9 September 2025**
Ms. V. Suganya & Dr.S. Shanmugasundaram
The Influence of Learners Scaffolding on L2 Reading with Reference to Government College Students 263

2. Significance of the study

The effectiveness of learner scaffolding among government college students is discussed primarily in the study. A study making use of the said concept (scaffolding framework) has not been done among the government college students of Thanjavur. ESL learners studying in government colleges have not been familiar with this type of experiment previously. Therefore, this study concentrates on government college students who come from rural background and it attempts to help and improve their reading comprehension in L2 through scaffolding framework.

3. Students Profile

This study involved a group of twelve students. These 12 ESL students majoring in mathematics were selected from Rajah Serfoji Government College in Thanjavur. They were from the rural areas located nearby Thanjavur. The level of exposure with respect to English is concerned, it is below average. The said conclusion is made based on a foundation level test conducted initially to know their proficiency level for them.

4. Research Question

What is the influence of Scaffolding on L2 learners with respect to students studying at the government college of Thanjavur?

5. Methodology

First of all, Rajah Serfoji Government College second-year Mathematics students were met and they were briefed about the study and those who expressed their willingness were selected for the study. In order to gather basic information about each participant, they were given student profile cards. (Roll numbers, age, college name, branch, etc.) After completing the same, they were informed about the contact hours that they had to attend. They were also given a baseline test. It featured both reading comprehension and a cloze passage. Their performance was then assessed. After this they were divided into two groups based on their proficiency level. In the next contact hour, the experimental group of students were given passages with a scaffolding framework (word limit 250 words) and they were asked to fill in the worksheets containing reading comprehension questions.   Once they completed, their worksheets were

==
Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 25:9 September 2025**
Ms. V. Suganya & Dr.S. Shanmugasundaram
The Influence of Learners Scaffolding on L2 Reading with Reference to Government College Students   264

collected for evaluation. They were given six sessions of training with the help of scaffolding framework.

Here again, the control group of students were given training on reading comprehension in a normal way (without the help of scaffolding framework) and the materials for scaffolding were not provided to the students in the control group. They were given worksheets with passages and comprehension questions, just like a typical reading comprehension test. They were also provided with useful phrases and idioms as well as a glossary list. They had plenty of time to complete the worksheets. After completion their worksheets were collected for evaluation.

For both groups, the testing period, conditions, and evaluation standards were same.

6. Criteria for evaluation

A criterion for evaluation was designed to test the reading comprehension of the target group of students. These criteria include: Understanding Specific context, Analytical ability, Vocabulary, Interpreting the text, Reading Speed, and Overall Comprehension. Each criterion was allotted with marks respectively.

Descriptive statistics were used to assess the findings of the study

Results.

Table 1: EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

ROLL NO	A* (10 marks)	B* (10 marks)	C* (10 marks)	D* (10 marks)	E* (10 marks)	F* (10 marks)	Total (60 marks)
23MT1721	8	7	7	8	7	8	45
23MT1722	7	7	6	7	7	7	41
23ME1832	9	9	8	9	9	8	52
23ME1842	8	9	8	9	9	9	52
23MT1704	9	8	7	6	7	8	45

===
Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 25:9 September 2025**
Ms. V. Suganya & Dr.S. Shanmugasundaram
The Influence of Learners Scaffolding on L2 Reading with Reference to Government College
Students   265

ROLL NO	A* (10 marks)	B* (10 marks)	C* (10 marks)	D* (10 marks)	E* (10 marks)	F* (10 marks)	Total (60 marks)
23MT1707	9	9	7	9	9	7	50

(A-Understanding specific context, B-Analytical ability, C-Vocabulary, D-Interpreting the text, E- Reading speed, F-Overall Comprehension, *-Maximum marks-10).

Table 2: Control Group

ROLL NO	A* (10 marks)	B* (10 marks)	C* (10 marks)	D* (10 marks)	E* (10 marks)	F* (10 marks)	Total (60 marks)
23MT1724	4	2	6	5	2	4	23
23ME1821	2	5	3	6	4	2	22
23ME1822	2	6	4	2	2	2	18
23MT1718	3	2	5	4	3	3	20
23MT1721	2	4	3	3	3	2	17
23MT1722	3	2	4	4	3	5	21

(A-Understanding specific context, B-Analytical ability, C-Vocabulary, D-Interpreting the text, E- Reading speed, F-Overall Comprehension, *-Maximum marks-10).

7. Discussion

The experimental and control groups of students differ significantly from one another. Students in the experimental group performed better overall than those in the control group. It's interesting to note that students who previously used the scaffolding framework to answer the problems have done well. Their responses were consistently precise and sharp. It goes without saying that scaffolding has greatly aided their understanding of the relevant passage. Their comprehension was demonstrated by their good reading speed, while the control group's scores fell below of expectations. It is evident from this that their responses to the comprehension questions emphasized their reading comprehension deficiencies. It is crucial to remember that both groups were homogeneous in terms of their reading comprehension skills (i.e., their baseline test scores were more or less identical).

===
Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **Vol. 25:9 September 2025**
Ms. V. Suganya & Dr.S. Shanmugasundaram
The Influence of Learners Scaffolding on L2 Reading with Reference to Government College
Students   266

The experimental groups of students effectively related the reading comprehension passage to the questions with the use of scaffolding materials. They completed the task using two separate worksheets. There was progress on the second worksheet. When compared to the first worksheet, their responses were accurate in the second worksheet. Scaffolding framework assistance has been reduced gradually for the experimental group of learners. However, their scores were good. These results show a clearcut influence of scaffolding as mentioned in the theory.

8. Limitations

It was restricted to only a few samples and a task. More data and similar type of data environments need to be studied to generalize the concept more effectively. A homogeneous group was also used. In addition, it was restricted to a government college in the Thanjavur district.

9. Conclusion

Therefore, the study's findings demonstrate that scaffolding materials do significantly improve reading comprehension among Government College students. Additionally, the research suggests that the same task, but with different modifications or combinations, could be used to enhance other skills, such as speaking (e.g., speaking task based on scaffolding material, writing assignment based on a scaffolding material).

References

Black, S., & Allen, J. D. (2018). Insights from educational psychology, part 5: Learning is a social act. The Reference Librarian, 59(2), 76–91.

Mercer, N. (2013). The social brain, language, and goal- directed collective thinking: A social conception of cognition and its implications for understanding how we think, teach, and learn. Educational Psychologist, 48(3), 148–168.

Mercer, N. (2013). The social brain, language, and goal-directed collective thinking: A social conception of cognition and its implications for understanding how we think, teach, and learn. Educational Psychologist, 48(3), 148–168.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1934/1986). Thought and Language. London: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

==
Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 25:9 September 2025**
Ms. V. Suganya & Dr.S. Shanmugasundaram
The Influence of Learners Scaffolding on L2 Reading with Reference to Government College Students   267