

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF SCAFFOLDING METHOD IN READING CLASS

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ABSTRACT


This study explored the student perceptions of scaffolding method used in teaching reading. The study took place at a vocational senior high school in Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia. The study used descriptive quantitative research method, gathering data from questionnaires. The study took 10 students as the respondents. The results showed that most students felt the scaffolding method made them easily understand the stories in the reading class, and thus they became more motivated to read. The authors expect that this method can be used in many English reading classes in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: *Reading, Scaffolding, Student Perceptions.*

INTRODUCTION

English language teaching plays a role in preparing students for education, work, and life because by mastering English well, students will have more chances to get better either in life, education, or work ("4 Reasons Why Learning English", 2013; Almutairi, 2018). One way to improve English language skills is by reading a lot. Reading is considered as a crucial skill in which the reading skill may enrich students in getting new knowledge, much information, and up to date news around the world (Clarke, Truelove, Hulme, & Snowling, 2014).

Burnes and Page (1985) mention that reading involves an interaction where there is an exchange of ideas between the author and the reader. To understand the reading text or the ideas of the text, therefore, the reader must take any activity of reading. However, a problem emerges in the reading activity within the context of Indonesian schools in which students' understanding of the reading text is low although the students have tried to read the text several times (Syahabuddin, Yusny, & Zahara, 2019). The students often do not truly understand the text, leading them to become lazy and bored to read



further (Meutia, Majid, & Nafisah, 2020). As a result, the students will have lack of reading ability as reading also involves both emotional and physical aspects (Dahlia, 2016).

A study by Jurniawati (2015) found that there were some factors causing the students to have low comprehension of the reading text such lack of motivation in reading, difficult and less interesting reading texts, unattractive teaching methods, and lack of vocabulary. As such, it is necessary that teachers employ a strategic and attractive method and material to enhance the students' reading ability (Meutia, et al., 2020; Mukhalladun, Nidawati, & Muhammad, 2020).

There are many methods in English language teaching which can help reading become more fun and enjoyable, one of which is scaffolding. According to Bruner (1983, as cited in Amerian & Mehri, 2014, p. 757) scaffolding refers to "a process of setting up the situation to make the child's entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing the role to the child as he becomes skilled enough to manage it." Thus, scaffolding requires helping, assisting, and guiding the students before they are able to learn independently (Amerian & Mehri, 2014).

In this present study, the aim was to explore the students' opinions on the use of scaffolding method in the reading class.

LITERATURE REVIEW

READING SKILL

Reading is the skill to derive meanings from the written text and properly render the ideas (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). In the context of education, learning to read has an important goal. For students, being able to read skillfully broadens new horizon and possibilities. Reading can help students learn to think in English, help students write English well, help students practice English language, and help students prepare further studies (Harmer, 2007). Therefore, reading play a role in helping students increase their thinking skills, gain new knowledge, and gain new vocabulary in English. Further, in order to have proper skills in reading, a good method or strategy is necessary to help students understand the reading text.

TYPES OF READING STRATEGIES

There are four strategies that students can use in reading depending on the type and the purpose of texts, they are skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading (McDonald, 2012). Skimming refers to speed reading which aims get the main idea, or the gist of the reading text (Brown, 2001; Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2007). Scanning

is the speed reading used to check for a particular piece of information such as a name, a term description, or a string of details, which can be done without reading through the entire text (Brown, 2001). If both skimming and scanning are types of speed reading which are done quickly, intensive and extensive reading, on the other hand, require longer time.

Intensive reading aims to understand the “literal meaning, implications, rhetorical relationships, and the like” of the reading text (Brown, 2001, p. 312). This type of reading expects the students to have detailed understanding of the text, and so they need to concentrate to what they read (Harmer, 2007). Extensive reading, or reading for pleasure, is a slow reading activity which aims to obtain an overall understanding of much longer texts (e.g. books, essays) (Brown, 2001; Harmer, 2007). This type of reading allows the students to be more appreciative towards the affective and cognitive aspects of reading (Brown, 2001). Extensive reading is also an enjoyable reading activity, and the students will feel reading is a fun process, which can reinforce positive impact on the students’ reading comprehension (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2007).

TEACHING READING BY USING SCAFFOLDING

Scaffolding has been commonly used by many great teachers in reading class although it is mostly to help students recognize words, and it still helps students to comprehend the reading text better (Clark & Graves, 2005). Scaffolding is a term famously associated with Vygotsky and his sociocultural theory in which he proposed the notion of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Van Der Stuyf, 2002). However, scaffolding was firstly used by Wood, Bruner, and Ross in 1976 in education to describe support provided by adults to assist children carry out some activities (Attarzadeh, 2011; Bekiryazici, 2015; Clark & Graves, 2005). In the teaching and learning process, scaffolding therefore needs the teacher’s intervention in guiding the students, in which the teacher as a more capable individual helps the students gradually and when the teacher is unable to direct all students, the more capable peer should help those who still need assistance (Bekiryazici, 2015). In other words, scaffolding is a teaching and learning strategy in which the teacher and students collaborate in problem-solving activity to enable students to learn independently (Richards and Schmidt, 2010).

There are three types of scaffolding that are known: 1) Vertical scaffolding, which includes adults ask more questions to broaden children’s vocabulary, 2) Sequential scaffolding, which can be done in games with children usually during meal time, and 3) Instructional scaffolding, which is an aspect of formal teaching, where learning gradually internalized within routine activities for students and the more capable

students help those in need of assistance during a task given (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

If applied properly, scaffolding can provide several advantages in classroom instruction, including engaging students in the activity, motivating students to learn more, and reducing the stress for students during class (Van Der Stuyf, 2002). Therefore, scaffolding has the potential to motivate students to do reading activities.

SCAFFOLDING TECHNIQUES

Scaffolding intends to make students become independent learners, and to achieve this goal, scaffolding requires teachers to “controlling’ those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner’s capability, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence” (Wood et al., 1976, p. 90). According to Gibbons (2002), teachers’ help in scaffolding is “a special kind of help that assists learners in moving toward new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding” and therefore, scaffolding refers to “temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something so that the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone” (p. 16).

According to Wood et al. (1976, p. 91), there are several steps that teachers should consider when creating a good scaffolding task for the students:

1. Make a task “entertaining and challenging” so that the students’ interest grow
2. Put the task “feature rich” so that the task has varied aspects
3. Make the task “repetitive” so that the students can do it later
4. Make the task simple so that it is within the students’ ability
5. Create the task which is not too demanding of the students’ ability

In terms of reading, Gibbons (2002) states that there are three contexts that the teacher can use for the students:

1. Before reading: the teacher will teach difficult words and teach them the meaning of the words.
2. During reading: the teacher will make the students be aware of the task, ask an appropriate question during the task, teach strategies that can make the task easy to answer, and use a picture or tell them the meaning of the words to enhance comprehension.
3. After reading: the teacher engages students in a conversation, asks students to answer a question in writing, provide specific guidance, engages practice of vocabulary, and make students write a summary of what they have understood.

In addition, there are four strategies for efficient scaffolding as described by Fisher and Frey (2007):

1. Asking questions in order to check students' comprehension
2. Giving stimulation to encourage cognitive and metacognitive mechanisms of students
3. Providing instruction to change the attention of students to partial understandings, particular details, or mistakes
4. Providing some explanations and models if students lack the skills to finish the assignment

Further, Silver (2011, as cited in McLeod, 2019) also lists four instruction steps in scaffolding that can be done for any activity:

1. Evaluate the knowledge and experience of students
2. Connect material with the students' previous understanding or ability
3. Split the task into smaller and more practicable tasks along with teacher's feedback
4. Give verbal signs and cues to help students do the task given

In addition, Walqui (2006) mentions six types of scaffolding in classroom instruction which can be applied in English classrooms, they are: 1) modelling, giving examples on how to do a task; 2) bridging, activating the students' previous knowledge; 3) contextualizing, providing relevant contexts of the task with the students' experiences; 4) schema building, developing an organized knowledge or understanding of the students related to the task; 5) re-presenting text, making the students engage in the task which needs language transformation in a different text genre; and 6) developing metacognition, making the students manage their own thinking when doing the task.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used the quantitative research method. In this study, the study selected 10 first-year students of a vocational senior high school in Banda Aceh, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The sampling technique was considered the total sampling, as it is a type of purposive sampling technique which chooses to examine the entire population (Sugiyono, 2011). The school only had one first-year class, and thus, the researchers took all students as the participants. One of the authors in this study carried out scaffolding technique to teach reading at the vocational high school for a few weeks in May 2019 after obtaining permission from the school, so that the participants had an exposure to scaffolding technique.

In collecting the data, questionnaires were distributed to the participants. A questionnaire consists of a set of questions and other suggestions for the collection of

information of the respondents (Arikunto, 2010). The questionnaire here contained several points to which the students had to respond related to the use of the model of scaffolding in reading class. The respondents needed to state whether they were strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree to the statements in the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

Table 1. Frequency of Students Responses on Scaffolding Method in Reading Class

Description	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Feeling comfortable with scaffolding in reading class	8			2
Having motivation to read with scaffolding	5	4	1	
Scaffolding makes it easier to find main ideas	5	5		
Scaffolding makes it easier to find detail information	5	5		
Scaffolding makes it easier to understand vocabulary	9	1		
Scaffolding makes it easier to understand the whole text and find synonyms	5	4	1	
Scaffolding helps improve reading skill	9	1		
Scaffolding is a good method used in teaching reading	9	1		

Table 1 above shows that as many as 8 out of 10 students felt comfortable in learning reading by using the scaffolding method. Then, all students felt that scaffolding could make them easy to understand the reading vocabulary (9 strongly agreed and 1 agreed). The same responses were also shown by the students who thought that scaffolding could improve their reading skill and being a proper reading method that the teacher used in reading instruction. This finding is in line with the result of a study by Abdul-Majeed and Muhammad (2015) which showed that scaffolding was effective to develop the students' reading skill as they could understand more on the use of different reading strategies.

Further, the results indicated that 5 students highly agreed and 4 agreed that they had motivation when the teacher applied the scaffolding method in the class. This finding is supported by the result of a study by Bassiri (2012) which found that scaffolding was effective to boost the students' motivation in reading. Similarly, Al Eissa and Al-Bargi

(2017) also found that their study participants had positively believed that scaffolding enhanced their reading motivation.

These similar results were also revealed here that the students strongly agreed that the use of scaffolding made them easy to find main ideas, detail information, and the whole passage as well as synonyms.

This finding suggests that the students at the vocational high school in Banda Aceh have been eager to learn reading through the implementation of scaffolding in the class, as revealed from the students' responses in the questionnaires. Almost all of them reacted strongly agree and agree if the teacher taught reading using scaffolding in the classroom.


CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that scaffolding is a favorable reading method according to the students as it has made the students feel motivated and fun in learning reading because this method can help them increase their ability to understand the reading text.

The authors expect that teachers can apply the scaffolding method as it is quite an interesting reading method for the students which can also help improve students' reading skill.

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