

Original Article: Towards Scaffolding Techniques in Iran EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

Learning English has become one of the urgencies of the current century, and thus acquiring its diverse language skills relies on the development of learners' abilities in an educational context. In this domain, teachers play a vital role through scaffolding techniques to aid in enhancing pupil's educational levels in obtaining learning objectives. The proposed study is considered descriptive-analytical based on its methodology and applied for its purpose. Indeed, the research's primary purpose is to investigate the impact of scaffolding ELT lessons on students in Iran and to provide useful suggestions for improving EFL learners in the underlying context. The sample size is 60 people (male = 30 and female = 30) in the age range of 15-25 years of both genders, which is carried out based on a random sampling method as the approximate statistical population.

Furthermore, 30 English teachers of both genders (male = 15 and female = 15) in the age range of 25-40 years old were interviewed to conclude the true condition in the ELT domain, particularly in Iran. It should also be noted that written consent is received from all participants. Data collection was conducted through some methods like observation. The study's results revealed that scaffolding techniques influence Iran's EFL context.

Introduction

English is one of the most up-to-date and dominant languages for communication worldwide, so its acquisition as the second or foreign language is of the utmost importance for overcoming challenges and the extent-ranging alterations of the recent generation. Therefore, learning English has become one of the urgencies of the current century and due to this, acquiring its diverse language skills relies on the development of learners' abilities in the educational context. In this regard, communication skills should be ideally facilitated

for the learner [1]. In the meantime, the role of the educator as a facilitator of linguistic communication should not be overlooked.

Thus, penetrating the education sector, as not be constrained to schools, the modern technologies in the acquisition of language skills have provided some opportunities to examine both classic concepts of training in a teaching environment and educational institutions and to promote the individuals for lifelong learning and assist simultaneously and adequately regardless of space and time restrictions [2].

Indeed, in a learning environment, teachers should provide the essential scaffold for their pupils. Yet, scaffolding does not mean presenting a task or gaining learning experience in a classroom, but it reveals that the trainer employs a more effective teaching method.

According to Vygotsky's theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and its relation to the task's centrality, such a phenomenon refers to the modern and potential facet of the educational progression. Besides keeping the educational activity consistent, the instructor more broadly supports how the learner acts and examines how the learner functions optimally using the novel learning methods as well [3]. By providing better learning strategies, the teacher can superpose the individual pupils [2], intersect each task into several more comprehensive educational phases, and more precisely, assist in promoting the appropriate learning level for the student. Despite extensive research efforts conducted in the field of scaffolding ELT [2, 4], few experimental investigations have focused on the study of scaffolding techniques and practices for learning English in the educational environment of Iran.

This research, in general, is an attempt to find possible responses to the underlying questions mentioned below:

1. Is scaffold application effective for the pupils in a foreign language environment in Iran?
2. Is there a meaningful relationship between EFL teaching strategies and scaffolding ELT lessons?
3. Do scaffolding guidelines in the classroom promote students' language and communication skills? If so, how?

Therefore, by applying the scaffold ELT, the researcher tries to investigate its prominent and influential role in the English language learning context, particularly in Iran. Doubtless, the proposed research is among the initial experimental studies in the field of studying scaffolds in ELT courses and comprised the underlying components related to the subject in such a reliable domain.

So far, little research has been carried out on scaffolding ELT lessons to Iranian learners, conducting this research can be effective and

essential in the EFL context, as well as explaining and improving the given appropriate teaching strategies in the mentioned environment in Iran.

In general, many studies shed light on the significance of scaffold ELT in the training domain. For the case, Lee *et al.* (2021) performed a study entitled: "Facilitator's scaffolding strategies in a design-based learning context" [5]. In this examination, while providing design-based learning as one of the real-life problem-solving techniques through the repetitive engineering design procedure, the authors emphasized the application of scaffolding as a necessity for the precise learner's support for training in such an environment. They considered the complexity of training assignments as a major challenge in the learning course. The results of this scrutiny illustrated that the educator, or in a better sense the facilitator, can help scaffold the individual pupil's learning by concentrating on the relevant requirements. They likely categorized scaffold's practices into six diverse types and revealed that its pre-designed by the instructor and could be put to practical usage by assimilating scaffold science. On the other hand, in 2018, Taber conducted a study entitled: "Scaffolding learning: Principles for effective teaching and the design of classroom resources." In this scrutiny, he found that scaffold is one of the most optimal techniques in language teaching and can be achieved through a subtle and straightforward induction of reciprocal interaction between the learner and the facilitator (*i.e.*, the teacher). According to Taber, the teacher applies scaffolding to scaffold to design learning activities and reinforce learning materials-that are better institutionalized in the pervasive ZPD domain. He further used two distinct types of scaffold tools related to the diverse aspects of learning frames and meaningful designs.

In addition, Boonmoh *et al.* (2019) performed research, namely: "Using scaffold instructions to improve students' skills". They assisted the individual learner in delivering lessons and speaking more confidently through efficiently applying scaffold instructions to strengthen speaking skills. Furthermore, the results of this study revealed that by using scaffold methods, the instructor help improve students' skills and their speech and promote their self-confidence level in the EFL learning environment [2].

Besides, Kesuma Sri *et al.* (2020) perfumed a study entitled: “The implementation of scaffolding strategies at speaking English course in Kampung Inggris Pare East Java.” In this study, the role of the teacher in assisting learners to achieve the educational objectives was mentioned as a requirement that to enhance the capacity and academic ability at higher aspects, the use of the scaffold technique is determined as an urgent and fundamental requirement. While penetrating English conversation courses by instructors, the researchers introduced the English language learning environment as the best and optimal space, providing the essential capability for non-native speakers to speak in the social environment [7].

Furthermore, Van de Pol *et al.* (2013) conducted an examination entailing the possibility of using the Scaffold technique in the classroom; these researchers demonstrated the trainer’s effectiveness. In this regard, investigating the effects of feedback quality and support and the period for group activities, the possibility of achieving more teacher support was studied, too. Likewise, the results of this scrutiny implied that continuous vindication leads to its realization [6].

Moreover, in another study which was carried out by Gonlul *et al.* (2018) under the title of “Scaffolding technique”, the term “scaffold” was reviewed in its usage throughout educational situations in various periods. They demonstrated scaffolding as the form-centered theme and mainly reflected the instructor’s non-consistent form as useful for vindicating training [8].

Materials and Method

The proposed study is considered descriptive-analytical based on its methodology and applied for its underlying purpose. Indeed, the primary purpose of the underlying research is to examine the impact of scaffolding ELT lessons on learners in Iran and to provide some valuable suggestions for improving the issue mentioned above in the EFL context in Iran. The statistical population of this scrutiny includes the Iranian EFL students during the academic year 2021-2022 as 60 people. The sample size is 60 people (male = 30 and female = 30) in the age range of 15-25 years of both genders, which is carried out based on a random sampling method taking into account the approximate number of the statistical population in

the proposed research. Furthermore, 30 English teachers of both genders (male = 15 and female = 15) in the age range of 25-40 years old participated in this study to observe and interview to conclude the actual condition in the ELT domain, particularly in Iran. It should also be noted that written consent is obtained from all the participants before participating in this research. The data collection is conducted through some methods like observation.

To select the teachers participating the study, the inclusion and the exclusion criteria utilized that are mentioned as follows:

The inclusion criteria in the proposed research include:

- Having teaching experience for 5 years.
- Of Iran’s originality.
- Being in the age range of 25 to 40 years old.

On the other side, the exclusion criteria of the proposed research as mentioned below:

- The EFL instructors without any job experience.
- Recently hired in the education system for EFL teaching.
- With no Iranian nationality.
- Being in the age range of more than 40 years.

It is worth noting that the participants in both groups had taken a conversation class. The number of pupils (*i.e.*, 60 ones) is subdivided equivalently into an experimental (N=70) and the control group (N=70) during 4 weeks of training. Since this subdivision is done to examine the effectiveness of scaffold ELT lessons space, the form of the class decoration in the experimental group (including the classroom facilities as chairs, the interactive method, etc. should be in a common form). In the group mentioned above, all the scaffolding strategies (consisting of six ones selected by the teachers) are applied. Notably, the scaffold techniques should be selected based on the tasks in every lesson. While in control, learners are given routine strategies and placed in a normal arrangement of classroom equipment. Then, the results obtained from each subgroup are reported by the teachers.

As mentioned in the above section, data triangulation (*i.e.*, in this case of study, as both experimental and interview) is utilized for obtaining the research validity. In total, 30 experienced teachers were selected after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. To do this study, semi-structured interviews are done in the presence of teachers. That is, a series of pre-designed questions about scaffold techniques are considered, and further, since the duration of this research design is estimated at 4 weeks, at the end of each week, an interview session is held with the presence of the selected EFL Iranian instructors on how to work and use scaffold's best practices for ELT Lessons in both experimental and control groups. Each interview session lasts 30-45 min and is in person with teachers. The researcher acts as the interviewer and asks the underlying questions (which include 30 pre-determined items related to the six scaffolding methods utilized in the classroom).

Since the credibility of the test is higher, and due period of training in subdivision of the total 60 students equivalently into experimental and control groups, each teacher is required to attend the interview and should provide the answer to the researcher's questions. At the end of each interview session, the data obtained from each educator is recorded and transcribed.

It should be noted that content analysis is used to analyze the data in this research. The teachers' responses or transcripts are read and analyzed precisely in this regard. Then, labeling or data coding should be conducted deductively on these themes using text analytic software such as Thematic for timesaving and assisting the guarantee for the coded concerning areas. The same framework or checklist of previous similar works is utilized as a basis for this scrutiny. Then, any new case should be added to the former framework if found concerning the scaffolding strategies used in the educational context. This is done to make a better data-driven decision about scaffolding the ELT lesson in the Iran EFL domain. Also, to avoid the halo effect bias, the researcher can take notes about the differences in an interviewee's answers and observe the halo effect bias during the study. Moreover, to establish

reliability, comprehensive data, constant testing, and data comparison are carried out to organize the data formally and establish its authenticity.

Results and Discussion

Generally speaking, the investigation results indicated that scaffolding techniques are applicable in the educational domain. It maximizes the pupils' speaking ability and leads to self-esteem in the relevant skill. Thus, the educator maintains scaffold techniques for the learners in a possible short term and subsequently enables them to do their allocated assignments to open up the new scientific gates. It is further assumed that it provides modern education protection for obtaining training achievements. These results are mainly similar to those acknowledged by Ellis *et al.* (1998).

Checking the interview transcripts recorded in each session in the presence of the educators indicates the utmost positive training promotion and better scores in the real EFL environment. The results also showed that using Scaffold methods can be constructive in the training context to achieve the optimal performance of foreign language learners. In fact, in comparison with classical teaching methods, the content can be made more understandable and fluent for the pupil, and the number of linguistic infrastructure elements in speech can be improved for them in a good way. Consequently, this leads to a reduction in the rate of pronunciation errors, and while presenting, the anxiety caused by these errors is gradually reduced in the learner.

Regarding self-esteem in the learner, it should be noted that the results obtained based on the interviews demonstrate a broad understanding of learners after applying Scaffold methods. Therefore, it is appropriate that the instructor in his classroom is the best way to create a safe and stress-free environment for his student so that sensitive self-esteem can be formed in the learner and the participant can make the best progress in doing their homework.

However, since learning English is a multi-skilled and multifaceted category, it seems essential to cover and comprehend all the skills in this language. And on the other hand, because in English all the skills are related in pairs, it is

possible using scaffold techniques also helps improve other skills (in addition to speaking).

Given the issues mentioned above, it can be visible that utilizing scaffolding is one of the cases that are influential and practical in various aspects of the training context. In a modern education environment where the teacher has more relation with the pupil, the ground for using such a practice is provided, and the instructor can select and implement the correct scaffold technique based on the knowledge of each pupil. For instance, if learners are given group exercises, the educator should be capable of aiding them by providing useful clues and monitoring the training atmosphere. Any complexities or shortcomings should be eliminated as much as possible. Furthermore, the importance of the stimulus or motivation for the student should not be overlooked. In the recent era of learning foreign languages, motivation or demotivation is observed, which leads to frustration and distrust of the learner or self-overcoming inner weakness. By creating the necessary motivation, even a very slight one, the educational environment becomes a desirable and attractive platform in which the learner feels joy and power. They need the opportunity to demonstrate it in practice, whether in doing their homework or following up on their learning procedure. To achieve this matter, more research is needed to be carried out in this vein. Learning has different negative and positive effects. Suppose it is possible to utilize the best teaching methods based on the correct diagnosis of the pervasive type in the educational environment. In that case, the negative effects can be transformed into a positive impact. Better models can be used too. It may be best to implement such strategies even when the appropriate lesson plan is proposed to achieve educational goals as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Conclusion

To sum up, scaffold techniques are seemingly a learner-based and context-based practice concerning the education procedure. Using scaffold techniques is prominent due to contingent and non-contingent impacts. Thus, the other research in the future should examine the mentioned issue related to the extent of control as well as the possible strategies for any contingent

models. Likewise, the monitoring level may deal with contingent protection's efficiency. So, those learners in complex and stressful situations cannot achieve their educational goals due to declining realization. Hence further studies should scrutinize the efficiency of contingent protection.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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