

Possible Components of a Scaffolded Reading Experience for English Language Learners

Vygotsky (1978) said that learning is interactive and social and that there is an educational range in which learning can take place. At one end of the range are learning tasks that can be completed independently, and, at the other end of the range, there are learning tasks that cannot be completed—even with assistance. Somewhere in between these ends of the educational range is the location in which learning will be most successful with varying degrees of support. Vygotsky referred to this as the “zone of proximal development.”

Teachers who know the importance of locating the students’ optimal learning location understand the need to plan tasks at the optimal location within the zone of development. These tasks are not so easy that a student can do them independently, nor are they so difficult that they frustrate the student. These tasks are referred to as scaffolded learning experiences. A scaffolded learning experience is one in which the teacher provides a temporary supportive structure that enables a child to successfully complete a task he or she could not complete without the aid of a scaffold or that he or she could not complete in a better way, with less stress, and/or in less time. As the student becomes more successful at the task, the scaffolding, or support, is removed.

According to Fitzgerald and Graves (2004), the following types of activities provide a scaffolded reading experience for students who are learning the English language:

Prereading Activities

- motivating
- relating the reading material to students’ lives
- building or activating background knowledge
- providing text-specific knowledge
- preteaching critical vocabulary
- preteaching concepts
- prequestioning, predicting, and direction setting
- suggesting strategies
- using students’ native language
- involving English-language learner communities, parents, siblings

During Reading Activities

- silent reading
- reading to students
- supported reading
- oral reading by students
- modifying the text

Postreading Activities

- questioning
- discussion
- writing
- drama
- artistic, graphic, and nonverbal activities
- application and outreach activities
- building connections
- reteaching

References

- Fitzgerald, J., & Graves, M. F. (2004). *Scaffolding reading experiences for English-language learners*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.