

SCAFFOLDING CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

What is scaffolding?

Scaffolding is the steps teachers take to support learners so that they can understand new content and develop new skills. Later, learners can use the new learning in different contexts without the support of scaffolding.

Vygotsky wrote that what learners can do today with support, they can do alone tomorrow.

Scaffolding can be provided for listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks in all curricular subjects and it can be used to help learners form ideas and learn language.

How can we scaffold learning?

There are many different ways teachers can scaffold learning so that learners feel successful when doing tasks. The kind of support teacher provides is very important for the outcome of the tasks. One way to scaffold learning is to carefully consider the language we use; other examples of scaffolding are:

- Creating interest
- Breaking down tasks in small steps
- Providing before, during and after task support
- Using visuals and realia
- Demonstrating tasks
- Using word banks, glossaries, writing frames
- Providing constructive feedback

Example:

Subject: History

Topic: Industrial Revolution

To introduce this topic, the teacher tells a brief storyline and students pretend to be detectives and will try to solve the questions asked by the teacher.

1. Story: In 1820 in the North of England there are two 13 year old teenagers named John and Thomas who escape from home.

Two questions:

- a. Why did they go?
- b. Where could have they gone?

2. The students propose various hypotheses:



* This is an exercise that allows students to focus on a certain block of knowledge and to be able to make assumptions about the possibilities for a child of that time.

3. The teacher divides students into groups of 4-6 and gives them runaways cards.

4. Each group divides the cards equally

5. They take it in turns to read out their cards to the group and decide which is a red herring card or a relevant fact card. When they all agree they write in their chart (some cards may go in more than one column).

Facts not connected to the story	Facts relevant to their running away	Facts about the general conditions	Social facts about working	Facts about factory machinery

6. Students present their findings in groups

7. Students write a dialogue between Thomasen Jhon two days after they've run away in which they discuss why they went

8. Students write a letter to Mr Bradley from the local council complaining about the conditions and threatening to close down his factory
9. Students produce a poster display showing the interconnectedness of reasons for the working conditions
10. Students write a blues type song describing conditions view of Thomas and John starting “Woke up this morning...”
11. Students use the internet to find further information on similar incidents and then present result to the class
12. Students write the report from the detective who found them.

Teachers need to build on what learners already know about the subject and build on what language they already know. Then teachers need to support learners to achieve the next step in understanding subject content before they can work on their own. More scaffolding is needed when learners have to understand subjects which are new and unfamiliar. Scaffolding is also needed to create classrooms where there is interaction and collaboration. For example, teachers can use visual organisers as speaking frames so that learners can work together to prepare explanations, comparisons or descriptions before presenting their ideas to the class.

DRAMA

Interpretations of who started World War One: Germany, Serbia, Austria-Hungary, Russia or Britain?

1. Divide class into two groups – speaking and listeners. Listeners are the jury. One student can be the judge.
2. Speaking pupils work in pairs and have one role card between them. They prepare in advance. They decide which arguments they will present first, second, third...
3. Listening pupils have all the role cards to look at in advance and to check as the speakers present their case.
4. All listening pupils have a copy of the chart to complete as speakers present their cases to fill in with the arguments
5. Each speaker can speak for two minutes only. Speakers voice record their speeches.
6. At the end the jury meets to decide on the “guilty party”.
7. While the jury decide the speakers listen to their recordings for both language improvement and also to decide who they think is the guilty part.
8. Written outcome: students collect the arguments and write an essay justifying their opinions.

ROLE PLAY

Role play is any speaking activity when a student put himself/herself into somebody else’s shoes. The joy of role play is that students can “become” anyone they like for a short time (the President, the Queen).

It is widely agreed that learning takes place when activities are engaging and memorable: role play is motivating and allows quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way but it’s important for all the class which is broadened to include the outside world – thus offering a much wider range of language opportunities.

Example: Biographies of Adolf Hitler and Wiston Churchill

PICTURE DICTATION

For explaining a difficult argument teacher can start with a draw.

Teacher explains to the students that they are going to do a picture dictation: he/she is going to describe a picture to them and all they have to listen and draw what he/she describes.

When teacher is describing the picture it is best to describe one object at a time slowly and to repeat each description two or three times.

Teacher has to make sure give students enough time to finish drawing one object before moves onto the next object and it is a good idea to walk around and to look at the students’ drawings as they are drawing them so that the teacher can see how well they are understanding his/her descriptions and she/he can adjust them accordingly and give them any support they need.

Example: Cold war between America and Russia regarding the question of Cuba

This activity can be followed by a simulation: one part of the class represents Russia and one part represents America.

Subsequently teacher distributes stripes related to the Russian and American blocks and asks students to divide in America and Russia.

Consolidating learning and differentiation

Consolidating learning is not simply revisiting content and language the day after but it means learners should activate what they have learned previously so they can improve their Learning skills.

In a class there are learners who are more able and students who are less able than others and for this reason teachers need to differentiate teaching and learning as these learners have different needs. Differentiation is particularly important in CLIL because learners' language skills may be at a different stage of development from their subject skills.

How can a teacher consolidate learning?

- **Monitoring:** teachers need to observe pupils to see when they have difficulties with new learning. The difficulty of a task could be because learners have a lack of subject knowledge, a lack of language knowledge or they don't understand the concepts.
- **Reviewing:** students need to review their work so they can consolidate and deepen their understanding of content knowledge. At the start of each lesson, it is a good idea to refer to work done in previous lessons and at the end of the lesson, it is a good idea to summarise what the pupils have thought.
- **Homework:** learners can use homework to practice, review and apply what they learned in the classroom.

How can a teacher differentiate learning?

- **Input:** teachers can adapt the curriculum content, his/her language for presenting subject knowledge, his/her methodology, his/her tasks.
- **Output:** teachers can increase or reduce the amount of work learners produce and vary the cognitive demands of the tasks.
- **The expected outcomes:** teachers can set achievable short-term goals and evaluate the effectiveness of the support he/she provides.