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THE ROLE OF SCAFFOLDING IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.

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[1] ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT:
ARTICLE HISTORY: **KEYWORDS:** 	*Scaffolding is a crucial instructional strategy in second language acquisition (SLA), providing structured support that enables learners to progress toward greater linguistic competence. This article examines the theoretical foundations of scaffolding, drawing on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and its application in language learning. It explores various scaffolding techniques, such as modeling, guided practice, and interactive feedback, highlighting their effectiveness in different classroom settings. Additionally, the article reviews empirical studies that demonstrate the impact of scaffolding on vocabulary acquisition, grammar development, and communicative competence. The discussion also addresses challenges teachers face in implementing scaffolding, particularly in multilingual and diverse classrooms. The findings suggest that effective scaffolding not only enhances learners' linguistic abilities but also fosters autonomy and confidence in language use. The article concludes by offering practical recommendations for educators to integrate scaffolding strategies into second language instruction, ensuring a more supportive and adaptive learning environment.*

INTRODUCTION. Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex process influenced by cognitive, social, and pedagogical factors. One of the most effective instructional strategies in facilitating this process is scaffolding, a concept rooted in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Scaffolding refers to the temporary support provided by teachers, peers, or instructional materials, enabling learners to perform tasks beyond their current level of competence. As learners gain proficiency, this support is gradually reduced, fostering autonomy and confidence in language use. In the context of language learning, scaffolding encompasses various techniques, such as modeling, guided practice, interactive feedback, and contextualized learning activities. These strategies help learners develop vocabulary, grammatical structures, and communicative competence by

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making linguistic input comprehensible and meaningful. Research has shown that scaffolding enhances both linguistic development and learner engagement, making it an essential tool in language instruction. Despite its benefits, implementing scaffolding effectively in multilingual and diverse classrooms presents challenges. Teachers must balance structured support with opportunities for independent learning, adapt scaffolding techniques to learners' needs, and ensure that the support provided is neither excessive nor insufficient. This article explores the role of scaffolding in SLA by examining its theoretical underpinnings, practical applications, and challenges. Furthermore, it reviews empirical studies on scaffolding's impact on language acquisition, classroom interaction, and learner motivation. Finally, it offers recommendations for educators to integrate scaffolding strategies effectively, ensuring a supportive and adaptive language learning environment.

In the context of language learning, scaffolding encompasses various techniques such as modeling, guided practice, interactive feedback, and contextualized learning activities. These strategies help learners develop vocabulary, grammatical structures, and communicative competence by making linguistic input comprehensible and meaningful. Research has shown that scaffolding enhances both linguistic development and learner engagement, making it an essential tool in language instruction.Despite its benefits, implementing scaffolding effectively in multilingual and diverse classrooms presents challenges. Teachers must balance structured support with opportunities for independent learning, adapt scaffolding techniques to learners' needs, and ensure that the support provided is neither excessive nor insufficient. This article explores the role of scaffolding in SLA by examining its theoretical underpinnings, practical applications, and challenges. Furthermore, it reviews empirical studies on scaffolding's impact on language acquisition, classroom interaction, and learner motivation. Finally, it offers recommendations for educators to integrate scaffolding strategies effectively, ensuring a supportive and adaptive language learning environment.

Vygotsky proposed that learning occurs most effectively when students engage in tasks slightly beyond their independent ability but within reach with the help of a more knowledgeable individual, such as a teacher or peer. This perspective contrasts with traditional behaviorist approaches, which emphasize rote memorization and repetition. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) introduced the concept of scaffolding as a means of supporting learners through structured assistance. Their work highlights that scaffolding should be gradual, where assistance is progressively removed as learners gain proficiency. It should also be responsive, meaning that support should be tailored to the learner's specific needs. Additionally, scaffolding should be interactive, involving meaningful dialogue and feedback to ensure that the learner actively participates in the learning process. Applying these principles to SLA, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) argue that second language learners benefit from scaffolded interactions, where they engage in dialogic exchanges that enhance

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linguistic development. These exchanges, often facilitated by teachers or more proficient peers, help learners internalize new linguistic structures and apply them in meaningful contexts. Through scaffolded interactions, learners receive guidance that allows them to construct meaning and develop their second language competence.

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of scaffolding in second language learning. Research on vocabulary acquisition, for instance, shows that learners who receive explicit vocabulary instruction with scaffolding techniques, such as contextual cues and semantic mapping, demonstrate significantly better retention than those who rely solely on dictionary definitions (Nation, 2001). Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) suggest that repetition combined with scaffolded exposure, such as structured conversations and reading activities, leads to deeper vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, scaffolding plays a crucial role in grammar development. Ellis (2003) highlights that structured support, such as input enhancement and corrective feedback, helps learners internalize grammatical rules more effectively than unguided exposure. Swain and Lapkin (1995) found that learners engaging in scaffolded collaborative tasks showed greater syntactic accuracy compared to those working independently.

Scaffolding also contributes significantly to the development of communicative competence. Gibbons (2015) examined classrooms where teachers employed scaffolded discourse strategies, such as rephrasing and prompting, to guide students toward more complex spoken interactions. Results indicated that students exposed to scaffolded conversation improved in fluency and pragmatic competence. Similarly, Lyster and Ranta (1997) emphasize that scaffolded feedback, particularly recasts and clarification requests, fosters more accurate self-correction and metalinguistic awareness. These findings indicate that scaffolding is effective across multiple domains of SLA, from vocabulary and grammar to overall communicative ability. Scaffolding can be implemented in second language classrooms through various strategies that align with cognitive and sociocultural learning theories. One such strategy is modeling, where instructors demonstrate language tasks before learners attempt them independently. For instance, a teacher might model sentence structure in a writing task before students compose their own sentences. Another example is showing structured dialogues before engaging students in role-playing activities. Guided practice is another effective scaffolding technique, allowing students to practice new language skills with teacher support. Think-aloud strategies, where teachers verbalize their thought processes while analyzing a text, help students develop reading comprehension skills. Similarly, sentence completion exercises enable learners to gradually construct full sentences with decreasing levels of assistance, ensuring they acquire the necessary grammatical structures.

Interactive feedback is essential in scaffolded learning. Constructive feedback helps learners recognize errors and refine their language use. Teachers can employ recasts, which

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involve reformulating students' incorrect sentences in a grammatically correct way, or clarification requests, prompting learners to refine their responses. Additionally, elicitation techniques encourage students to self-correct by asking guiding questions. Contextualized learning further enhances the scaffolding process by incorporating real-world materials into language instruction. Using authentic texts, videos, and dialogues makes language learning more meaningful. Encouraging students to participate in community-based language projects also provides real-life opportunities to practice their second language skills in authentic contexts.

Despite its benefits, scaffolding presents challenges for educators, particularly in diverse learning environments. One major challenge is balancing support and independence. Excessive scaffolding can lead to over-reliance on the teacher, while insufficient support may cause frustration. Teachers must carefully adjust their level of assistance based on student progress. Time constraints also pose a challenge, as scaffolding requires additional planning and classroom time, making it difficult to implement in rigid curricula. Furthermore, learners have varying cognitive styles and language backgrounds, necessitating differentiated scaffolding strategies to accommodate individual needs. Addressing these challenges requires teacher training, flexible lesson planning, and the use of adaptive learning technologies. By developing professional expertise in scaffolding techniques, educators can ensure that they provide the right level of support to maximize student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Scaffolding plays a crucial role in second language acquisition, enabling learners to engage with language in a structured yet flexible manner. Grounded in Vygotsky's ZPD, scaffolded instruction helps learners bridge the gap between their current and potential linguistic abilities. Empirical studies confirm that scaffolding enhances vocabulary acquisition, grammar development, and communicative competence. Practical techniques, including modeling, guided practice, interactive feedback, and contextualized learning, ensure that scaffolding remains an effective instructional tool. Although challenges exist, such as balancing support, time constraints, and individual learner differences, teachers can overcome these obstacles through careful planning and reflective teaching practices. Moving forward, scaffolding should be an integral part of language instruction, fostering both linguistic proficiency and learner autonomy in second language learners.

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