

INVESTIGATING TEACHER SCAFFOLDING IN LIVE ONLINE EFL READING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

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Submit, 15-05-2026

Accepted, 30-06-2026

Publish, 01-07-2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the scaffolding strategies applied by a teacher during synchronous online EFL reading activities held outside the traditional classroom setting and explored students' responses to the support provided during the sessions. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed in this research, involving one English teacher and ten members of an English-Speaking Club who regularly joined online reading activities. The data were collected through observations, semi structured interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing procedures. The teacher used various scaffolding strategies during the online reading sessions, such as demonstrating reading strategies, asking guiding questions, explaining unfamiliar vocabulary, giving corrective and elaborative feedback, and encouraging interaction among students. These types of support helped students understand the reading materials more easily and motivated them to participate more actively during the learning activities. In addition, students showed behavioral, cognitive, and emotional involvement throughout the sessions. They joined discussions, answered questions, tried to understand the texts, and gradually became more confident and motivated during the learning process. The teacher's supportive and interactive approach also contributed to creating a more comfortable and positive atmosphere during the online classes. Scaffolding helped students understand the reading materials more easily while also encouraging them to become more active, confident, and involved during the online reading sessions. In addition, flexible and responsive teacher support was important in maintaining students' academic and emotional engagement throughout the learning activities.

Keywords: Online EFL Reading, Reading Comprehension, Scaffolding Strategies, Student Engagement, Synchronous Learning

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most essential skills in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning, as it enables learners to access academic knowledge, scientific information, and global perspectives predominantly presented in English (Susilowati et al., 2025). In this context reading comprehension goes beyond simply recognizing words in a text, it requires learners to engage in deeper thinking processes, such as interpreting meaning, linking new information with what they already know, and building their own understanding (Feri Ferdiyanto, 2024). Moreover, reading can be viewed as an active process in which learners continuously make sense of the text by drawing on their language ability and prior knowledge, especially when they face unfamiliar vocabulary or structures. Therefore, developing effective reading skills is essential for learners' academic success and overall language proficiency.

As digital technology continues to develop rapidly, language learning is no longer limited to traditional classroom settings but has increasingly moved into online environments (Lo, 2023). In synchronous online learning, which takes place through platforms such as zoom, google meet or discord, teachers and students can interact in real time even though they are physically separated (Zekeik et al., 2025). Although this learning mode provides greater flexibility and wider access, it also brings several challenges, especially in teaching reading. The lack of direct interaction, slower feedback, and limited instructional support often make it difficult for students to fully understand texts and stay engaged during online reading activities (Villanueva, 2022). As a result, without clear and immediate guidance, learners may find it hard to interpret and make sense of text on their own, which suggests that appropriate teaching strategies are needed to support their comprehension and maintain their engagement in online reading contexts.

In this situation, the teacher's role becomes increasingly important. One of the main ways teachers can assist students is through scaffolding, which means giving temporary support so learners can complete tasks they are not yet able to handle alone, especially those within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018). By asking guiding questions, showing examples, explaining difficult parts, and offering feedback, teachers slowly help students build the confidence and ability to understand texts on their own (Zhang 2025). Studies have found that scaffolding not only strengthens students' reading comprehension but also boosts their engagement by helping them work through challenging material (Herdiana & Munir, 2023). In online learning environments, however, scaffolding needs to be more adaptable and responsive. Because teachers cannot rely on face to face interaction and students' participation levels vary, the support they provide must be constantly adjusted (DEMİRKOL, 2022).

For this reason, the effectiveness of scaffolding in synchronous online classes depends not only on the strategies used but also on how well teachers manage interaction and keep students actively engaged in real time.

Most studies on scaffolding in EFL reading have focused on traditional, face to face classrooms, and they often prioritizes learning outcomes rather than looking closely at the teaching process itself (Hikmat & Nurrizal, 2017). Only a small number of studies have examined how scaffolding actually happens in real time online settings, especially during live reading activities that take place outside the physical classroom. Although some online learning studies emphasizes the value of interaction between teachers and students (Mafulah et al., 2023), there is still limited empirical evidence showing how scaffolding is gradually provided during digital reading sessions. This suggest that the flexible and adaptive nature of scaffolding in online environments has not been fully explored, particularly regarding how teachers modify their support to respond to students' immediate needs during live interactions.

The primary novelty of this study lies in its focus on the micro-interactional routines of teacher scaffolding within a non-formal, out of class virtual community utilizing the Discord platform. While existing literature documents online learner disengagement and attendance fluctuations due to the unconventional digital environment (Zarei & Salmani, 2024), empirical data mapping moment to moment enactment of spontaneous scaffolding and multi-dimensional student engagement in an autonomous cyber faced learning community remain virtually nonexistent.

This gap suggest that further research is still needed to understand how teachers provide instructional support in EFL reading, particularly in learning activities conducted beyond the traditional classroom. It is also important to look more closely at how such support is provided, as online environments often require teachers to be more flexible in face to face settings (Rifa'ie, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the types of support strategies used by teachers in live online reading sessions and to examine how students respond to this support in terms of their engagement. By focusing on actual teaching practices as they happen, this study seeks to give a clearer understanding of how instructional support functions in online contexts and to offer practical insights for improving EFL reading instruction in digital environments

LITERATUR REVIEW

Scaffolding has become a key approach in teaching reading to EFL learners, especially when helping students make sense of texts and stay actively involved in learning. Drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, scaffolding refers to the temporary assistance teachers give to help students accomplish task

they would not be able to complete on their own (Huiling Zhang & Charanjit Kaur Swaran Singh, 2025). In EFL reading classes, this support can appear in the form of guiding questions, examples, feedback or clarifying vocabulary to help learners follow the text and take part in the lesson (Apoko & Marcellinda, 2023). These types of support help learners develop confidence and gradually handle reading materials more independently. This shows that scaffolding is not just teaching technique, it also plays a role in shaping students' cognitive growth and interaction during reading activities.

A number of studies have highlighted the positive impact of scaffolding on students' reading comprehension and classroom participation. Hikmat explained that scaffolded activities conducted before, during, and after reading were effective in helping students understand the material and participate more actively in classroom discussions. Similarly Karim et al. (2025) found that interactive and cooperative learning designs encouraged greater engagement in EFL reading lessons. These studies emphasize how important teacher support in helping students manage reading challenges and take a more active role in learning.

Despite these findings, much of the existing research still centers on traditional face to face classroom settings. Little attention has been given to how teachers organize and apply instructional strategies during live online EFL reading sessions held outside the physical classroom. In virtual learning environments, teachers need to more flexible and responsive, since opportunities for direct interaction are limited and students may find it harder to stay focused (Nguyen, 2022; Riset et al., 2020). This suggests that instructional design for online setting cannot simply replicate what happens in regular classroom instead, teachers need to adjust their support continuously based on students' immediate reactions and participation during online lessons.

This study explores how teachers design instruction during synchronous online reading activities and examines how students respond to these strategies in virtual contexts. By focusing on real time interaction, the study aims to provide a clearer picture of how instructional design operates in online EFL reading sessions outside the traditional classroom.

METHOD

This study applied a descriptive qualitative design to investigate how teachers provide support during synchronous online EFL reading sessions conducted outside the regular classroom setting. The English-Speaking Club consist of more than 30 members in total. However, due to the flexible nature of the online platform where members can free join and leave the sessions, the actual attendance during the live activities fluctuated, a common phenomenon in synchronous digital environments where student engagement and presence vary

significantly. Therefore, the participants of this study consisted of one English teacher and ten students who were actively present in the online reading room during the designated sessions. These ten students were selected through purposive sampling because they were consistently engaged in the reading activities and were considered capable of providing rich, relevant information during the semi structured interviews.

The data were collected through observations, semi structured interviews, and documentation. The observations focused on the ways the teacher delivered support during live online reading sessions, including modeling, questioning, clarification, feedback, and collaborative interaction. These observation points were crucial since managing student participation and interaction in a virtual learning environment heavily relies on the teacher's adaptive instructional strategies across different task phases. Specifically, in online reading contexts, the teacher's questioning and feedback patterns play a pivotal role in maintaining communication and assessing comprehension. Semi structured interviews with the teacher and several selected students were conducted to gain deeper understanding of their experiences and views regarding the online learning activities. In addition, supporting materials such as lesson documents and recorded online sessions were reviewed to strengthen the findings and provide additional evidence for the analysis. The data were analyzed through several stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis aimed to identify recurring patterns related to teacher support and student engagement during synchronous online reading activities. To ensure the credibility of the findings, triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation.

FINDING

This study focused on identifying the scaffolding strategies used by tutors during online EFL reading sessions and examining how students responded during the activities. The data were obtained from classroom observations and interviews with both teachers and learners.

1. Teacher Scaffolding Strategies in Online Reading Session

a. Modelling Reading Strategies

Based on the interview and observation results, the teacher usually selected English texts for students to read during online sessions. When students mispronounced certain words, the teacher used share screen sharing to show the correct part of the text directly. This helped students understand the pronunciation and meaning of the vocabulary more clearly.

Teacher explained:

“I usually begin with a book that catches my interest. During reading sessions with students, I normally ask them to read one or two paragraphs first. While they are reading, I pay attention to their pronunciation and understanding. If they seem confused or pronounce certain words incorrectly, I help by correcting them directly. To make sure the pronunciation is accurate, I use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and often check Wiktionary as a reference”.

Several participants said that the teacher’s direct examples helped them understand the reading text more easily. In addition to explaining the material orally, the teacher also guided students in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary and the meaning of the text by using supporting resources such as online dictionaries.

One student stated:

“Teacher usually gave clear examples and opened websites like Cambridge Dictionary and Wiktionary to help us understand the reading text.” (Student 1)

Another student added:

“For me, the explanation was quite helpful, although sometimes the teacher still needed to explain some parts of the text more clearly.” (Student 2)

From these responses, it can be understood that the tutor’s modelling strategy supported students in following the reading activities more actively and helped them understand the text better during synchronous online learning sessions.

b. Guiding Comprehension Through Questioning

During the reading session, the teacher frequently asked questions related to the text and encouraged students to share their responses. This question helped students stay focused and made it easier for them to understand the content of the reading material.

“So, what do you think? Do you need it translated, or do you already get the meaning? If you understand it, then we don’t have to translate the passage we’re reading.”

This strategy encouraged students to become more involved during the reading activities and helped them feel more comfortable sharing their understanding of the text.

Student explained:

“Usually it’s something like, ‘What do you think the story means?’.” (Student 3)

Another student stated:

“Yes, the teacher often asks questions to help us understand the text better.” (Student 4)

These findings suggest that questioning activities helped students comprehend the reading material more effectively while also encouraging their active participation during the online reading sessions.

c. Vocabulary Clarification

The findings show that a number of participants still had difficulty understanding some vocabulary found in English texts. To support them the reading activities, the teacher commonly explained the unfamiliar words directly, sometimes using a dictionary, and also gave additional examples related to the context of the reading passage.

“If I already understand the meaning of the sentence, I explain it directly to students using simpler words so they can understand more easily. But when I’m still unsure about certain parts, I sometimes check Wiktionary first before I explaining it.” (Teacher)

During the observation, the teacher occasionally paused the reading activity after the students finished reading one or two paragraphs to explain unfamiliar vocabulary found in the text. This explanation appeared to help the students follow the discussion more easily and understand the reading passage better.

Student stated:

“Yes, the teacher usually explains difficult parts using simpler language and familiar daily expressions so the student can more understand the material more easily.” (Student 5)

As a result, students experienced less confusion while reading and were able to understanding the text more easily.

d. Corrective and Elaborative Feedback

Teacher also provides feedback when students give incorrect answer or misunderstand the text. Rather than directly saying that the answer is wrong, the teacher usually guides the students step by step until they are able to find the correct answer themselves. This approach helps students feel more confident and comfortable during the learning process.

As explained by teacher:

“If students forget part of the text or do not fully understand it, I usually repeat the explanation and ask which part confuses them. Then, I explain it again more slowly and in a simpler way.”

Student stated:

“The teacher helped us understand how to read the text properly and explained the meaning by translating some parts of us” (student 6)

The feedback provided by the teacher appeared to help participants feel more relaxed during the reading session.

e. Collaborative Interaction

The teacher also encourages students to participate actively during online reading activities by giving them opportunities to express their ideas, engage in discussions, and respond to other participants.

Student stated:

"Sometimes the teacher gives us an opportunity to share our opinions or explain our understanding of the reading text." (Student 7)

Another student added:

"After finishing the reading activity, we usually get the chance to ask question about part we still don't understand or topics we want to discuss together." (Student 8)

The findings show that collaborative interaction encouraged students to participate more actively during online reading activities.

2. Student's Engagement During Online Reading Session

a. Behavioral Engagement

Most participants appeared to be actively engaged during the reading session. Their participation was reflected in several activities, such as reading the text aloud, asking questions about unfamiliar pronunciation, and expressing brief opinions related to the passage. Although a small number of participants were less responsive at certain moments, the majority remained involved throughout the activity.

Teacher stated:

"During the reading sessions, new participants often joined the activity. Some of them asked questions such as, 'Sis, how can I join?' Although the situation sometimes felt slightly formal at the beginning, it reflected the participants' curiosity and willingness to be involved in the session."

The findings indicated that students took part actively in the online reading session, even though each students showed different levels of participation and involvement during the activity.

b. Emotional and Cognitive Engagement

The results showed that students were involved both cognitively and emotionally during the online reading activities. They tried to understand the text, answered questions related to the reading, and connected the material with their own experiences.

Teacher explained:

"Students who regularly participated in the sessions showed gradual improvement over time. For instance, when they encountered words that had previously been corrected, their pronunciation became clearer and more accurate. The tutor usually responded by giving

praise or applause when students were able to pronounce the words correctly."

Student stated:

"It feels rewarding when I encounter the same vocabulary again and realize that my pronunciation has improved compared to before. At first, I was unsure about how to pronounce the words correctly, but over time it became easier and more natural." (Student 9)

Another student added:

"When the teacher gives encouragement or appreciation, I feel more confident and motivated to participate during the reading session." (Student 10)

The results of the study indicate that the support provided by the teacher helped students understand the reading texts more easily while also encouraging them to become more confident and motivated during the online learning activities.

DISCUSSION

The findings showed that the teacher used scaffolding strategies during the synchronous online reading sessions, such as modelling, questioning, vocabulary explanation, feedback and collaborative interaction. These strategies helped students understand the reading texts better and encouraged them to participate more actively during the lesson. The study also found that the teacher support influenced students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement throughout the online learning activities. Overall, the findings support sociocultural theory, which explains that learners need guidance and temporary support from teachers when completing learning tasks.

The findings of this study indicate that teachers mainly supported students during online reading sessions through modelling strategies. During the activities, the teacher demonstrated correct pronunciation, used screen sharing to guide students through the text, and utilized online resources such as Cambridge Dictionary and Wiktionary to clarify vocabulary and pronunciation. These findings support Ismail et al. (2022) argument that students learn more effectively when teachers provide demonstrations, explanations, and guided support throughout the reading process. The use of modelling strategies also directly observe how teacher handled unfamiliar vocabulary and difficult sections of the text. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that modeling strategies can improve student's reading comprehension as well as their confidence during reading activities.

Another strategy commonly used by the teacher during the online reading session was questioning. The teacher often asked students about the meaning of the text and invited them to share their opinions during the discussion. These

questions helped students stay focused on the reading and encouraged them to participate more actively in the lesson. This finding is in line with (Diva Luthfiah Mukhlisyah & Maskhurin Fajarin, 2024), who stated that questioning activities can improve students' participation and comprehension during reading activities. Through these interactions, students were encouraged not only to answer the questions but also to think more deeply about the content of the text. In online learning situations, where communication is sometimes more limited than face to face classes, questioning strategies helped maintain interaction and student involvement during the session.

The study showed that explaining vocabulary was one of the important supports used during the online reading activities. Many students still found unfamiliar words difficult to understand, so the teacher helped by using simpler explanations, translations, and contextual examples. This finding support Munibi (2023), who state that vocabulary clarification can help learners deal with reading difficulties and improve their understanding of the text. By explaining difficult words repeatedly and gradually, the teacher helped students feel less confused during the reading classes, where students may not always feel confident asking questions on their own.

An additional aspect observed during the reading sessions was the way the teacher provided feedback to students. Instead of directly telling students that their answers were incorrect, the teacher guided them gradually so they could recognize and correct their own misunderstandings by themselves. This approach created a more comfortable and less stressful atmosphere during the online reading activities. This support given by the teacher also helped students feel less anxious and more confident when participating in the reading session. This result is line with Rahmawati (2020) study, which found that scaffolded reading encourages students to become more active and supports their comprehension by providing gradual guidance throughout the reading process. Furthermore, sociocultural perspective on scaffolding also emphasize that responsive teacher guidance plays an important role in helping learners gradually develop confidence and independence during the learning process.

Collaborative interaction was also evident during the live online reading sessions. The teacher encouraged students to ask questions, share their opinions and participate in discussions about reading materials. Student appeared more comfortable expressing their ideas when the learning atmosphere was supportive and interactive. This finding support Karim et al. (2025), who explained that the interactional scaffolding and cooperative learning activities can increase students' engagement in EFL reading classes. In online learning contexts, collaborative interaction seems important because it helps students stay connected and remain actively involved during the lesson.

Students also showed active participation during the online reading sessions. They were involved in several activities such as reading aloud, asking questions, and responding during discussions. Even though some students participated more actively than others, most of them stayed engaged throughout the lesson. This suggests that the scaffolding provided by the teacher helped students remain involved during the online learning activities. Similar findings were also reported by Dewi & Saefullah (2022), who found that students demonstrated behavioral engagement through responding to questions, sharing ideas, and participating actively in online discussions.

Students were also cognitively and emotionally engaged during the online reading activities. They attempted to understand the text, respond to the teacher's questions, and connect the reading materials with their own experiences. At the same time, many participants appeared more confident and motivated when the teacher provided encouragement, appreciation, and supportive feedback throughout the session. A similar pattern was also reported by Mutia (2024), who found that positive feedback helped students feel more confident, motivated, and willing to participate actively in English learning activities. The gradual improvement in students' pronunciation, along with their positive responses toward the teacher's support, further indicates that emotional encouragement contributed to creating a more comfortable and effective online learning environment.

This study shows that scaffolding helped students become more engaged and better understand the reading materials during synchronous online EFL reading sessions beyond the classroom. The teacher's flexible guidance and interactive support encouraged students to participate more actively throughout the lesson. Moreover, the support provided during the session was not only useful for improving comprehension, but also helped students feel more confident and involved during the online learning activities.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the scaffolding strategies used by the teacher during synchronous online EFL reading sessions conducted beyond the traditional classroom and looked at how students responded to the support provided during the activities. The teacher applied several strategies, such as modeling reading strategies, asking guiding questions, explaining unfamiliar vocabulary, giving feedback, and encouraging interaction among students. These forms of support helped students participate more actively and understand the reading text more easily during the online learning sessions. The study also found that teacher support influenced how students participated during the online learning activities. Students were involved in discussions, reading tasks, and classroom interaction

throughout the session. Besides that, they also showed cognitive and emotional involvement when trying to understand the text, answering questions, and becoming more confident during the activities. The teacher's supportive guidance helped students feel more comfortable and encouraged them to participate more actively during the lesson. Scaffolding played an important role not only in helping students understand reading materials more effectively, but also in encouraging them to participate more actively and feel more confident during synchronous online EFL reading activities conducted beyond the classroom. In online learning situations, the teacher also needs to provide support that is flexible, responsive, and interactive to maintain both students' academic understanding and emotional engagement throughout the learning process.

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