

HOW TO SCAFFOLD YOUNG LEARNERS' ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASS?

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ABSTRACT

The research objective is to portray how scaffolding strategy is applied in an English-speaking class of young learners. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed in the present research. Interviews, observation, and document analysis were used to collect the data. The participants involved in this research consisted of an English teacher and 20 junior high school students. The results indicate that the English teacher applies micro-scaffolding strategies, which are realized in the following six activities: 1) stimulating students' participation and engagement; 2) providing explanations; 3) modelling; 4) repetition drills; 5) confirming students' understanding; and 6) giving feedback. Those activities, combined with role-play technique, have been proven to increase students' positive responses, especially concerning learning excitement, speaking skills element enhancement, and students' confidence. The findings signify that scaffolding is a good strategy for young learners' language skills. The present research strongly recommends exploring new scaffolding activities with the infusion of learning platforms both in full remote and hybrid learning as an endeavour to grant much more tremendous help and support for young learners' productive skills.

Keywords: English speaking skills, Scaffolding, Teaching Strategy, Young Learners

INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in the world require people to have good communication skills, including speaking English. Therefore, it is not surprising that speaking has become an essential skill to acquire. As underlined by SEAMEO

in their 2035 agenda, clear communication is one of the main things to face the challenge of the educational future (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, 2018). The significance of having good communication skills also applies to kids or young learners. Generally, learning English during childhood is claimed to positively impact later language development (Chen et al., 2022). Moreover, the intensity of young learners using modern communication equipment in this pandemic has increased rapidly. Acquiring English skills becomes critical as English is used for most websites and applications (Nishanthi, 2018).

In order to be able to communicate with people worldwide, young learners in Indonesia have been introduced to speaking English as their foreign language, which means they only encounter speaking English at schools. As it is different from the process of acquiring a first language, speaking English becomes a real challenge, not only for the young learners themselves but also for the English teachers. In reality, teaching English speaking to young learners is indeed not easy. Some problems emerge, such as inadequate vocabulary and pronunciation (Nikmah & Anwar, 2021). Additionally, young learners tend to be shy and afraid of trying to speak, and they also lack confidence (Shen & Chiu, 2019).

The scaffolding strategy is an alternative solution that English teachers can consider to overcome such problems. This strategy is suitable for building students' experience and insight when acquiring new skills. The strategy is also well known for boosting young learners' motivation and interest in learning a language (Anggadewi, 2017).

A number of previous studies have proved how this strategy helps students foster their language skills. Generally, scaffolding is reported to improve young learners' speaking skills (Munawar, 2019). Kulsoom et al. (2021) also reported significant improvement in how scaffolding strategy impacts students' fluency in speaking English. This scaffolding strategy gives students opportunities to actively engage themselves during classroom sessions (Anita, 2019). The research of Sari & Rozimela (2021) has acknowledged that scaffolding in speaking classes provides students with independence in learning.

The research of Munawar (2019) focused on the teaching activities of how this scaffolding is applied in an English-speaking classroom for secondary school students. Similarly, the research of Kulsoom et al. (2021) has proven the effectiveness of the scaffolding strategy statistically in promoting secondary school students' speaking skills. The study conducted by Anita (2019) and Sari & Rozimela (2021) on a number of English course teachers portrayed the teachers' point of view of scaffolding strategies they apply in their speaking classes. However, finding out what strategies are used for scaffolding English-speaking, especially in a young learners' class, and its integration with role-play teaching technique, and investigating the students' opinions on how they perceive this strategy is worth

researching. Therefore, the current study attempts to depict 1) what scaffolding activities are usually conducted during classroom sessions; and 2) how the students perceive scaffolding strategy implementation in their classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English-speaking for young learners

In this day and age, as English is used internationally, mastering English-speaking skills can be used to attain high competence in academic achievement and career (Sudarmo, 2021). This implies that teachers must immediately introduce English speaking to students, including young learners.

Learning English at an early age gives students benefits. It is claimed to enhance students' language achievement (Chen et al., 2022). Furthermore, in general, learning English as a foreign language at an early age greatly influences young learners. It gives children time to learn about diversity, enhance their multilingualism, nurture creativity and imagination, and build confidence and understanding (Sari, 2019).

For young learners, especially those who learn English as a foreign language like in Indonesia, speaking English might be something new. As a result, learning to speak English should be done in small steps.

To introduce speaking activities to beginners, Newton & Nation (2020) suggest the MINUS (meaning, interest, new language, understanding, stress-free) principle. First, speaking activities in a beginners' class should provide meaningful and relevant content. Second, teachers should maintain their students' interests through various activities, which are suggested not to last too long. Third, teachers should prevent themselves from giving too much new language to students, for example, by giving them too much information on grammar or vocabulary. Fourth, teachers are suggested to give graspable input for students' understanding; teachers may give exposure to their students' receptive skills and students' preparation to start speaking. The last principle is creating a stress-free learning atmosphere, a comforting and helpful learning environment. These principles might be applied to all classes of beginners, including young learners, and that will help them learn better.

Referring to those mentioned principles, teaching English-speaking to young learners can be conducted through many simple but interesting activities. Teachers may use repeat and listen (imitating what teachers say), repeat and do (imitating what teachers do), or guide students in discussion (Wulandari et al., 2020). Drilling is also an activity to apply in a young learners' class (Razi et al., 2021). Moreover, role-playing is also frequently suggested (Robert & Pane, 2020). Teachers can explore many more engaging activities by paying attention to the teaching principles.

Scaffolding

The scaffolding strategy is highlighted to signal Vygotsky's work on Zone of Proximal Development, specifically developing teacher-student interaction (Smagorinsky, 2018). ZPD, based on Vygotsky's theory, refers to a condition in

which students need some help or guidance from more competent people to assist them in fulfilling difficult tasks (Anggadewi, 2017). The scaffolding strategy is then used to assist students, including young learners, learn in and pass this zone.

Scaffolding provides learners and teachers with pedagogical benefits. Scaffolding improves comprehension (Elandeef & Hamdan, 2021). Scaffolding is considered simple for it does not require much preparation (Tajeddin & Kamali, 2020). Scaffolding also allows students better to understand a difficult concept (Harraqi, 2017). However, scaffolding does not suit pupils with good competence and comprehension (Li & Zhang, 2020). Scaffolding is used to verify students' understanding, offer academic standards, clarify the broader view of the teaching/learning process, and call students' attention to prior and upcoming topics, lessons, and evaluations (Heron & Webster, 2019)

At its implementation, scaffolding may be realized on a variety of levels. At the micro-level, scaffolding may be executed through contextualization and re-presenting text, while micro-scaffolding can be delivered through modeling and bridging (Sari & Munir, 2018). Their research also implied that teachers might use macro and micro scaffolding strategies in their classrooms.

Scaffolding is realized in several activities. First, scaffolding may be implemented by recalling previous knowledge and using real-world examples in learning (Harraqi, 2017). Then, giving oral questions to students can also be implemented to create a supportive learning environment (Kamil, 2017). Besides that, modeling is also mentioned to get students involved in their learning (Sari & Munir, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

This present research describes the implementation of a scaffolding strategy to teach speaking in a young learners' class. The present research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The informants involved in this research were one English teacher and one class of 20 seventh graders from a private junior high school in Tangerang City, Banten Province, Indonesia. The research was conducted before the pandemic era in which all students attended face-to-face classrooms at the school. The data were gathered through observation, interviews, and document analysis.

Observations are crucial instruments in qualitative case studies as they provide researchers with first-hand information from a research site. In the present research, observation was conducted during the teaching and learning processes. The researchers observed all the activities taking place in the class during speaking sessions. The researchers observed three speaking sessions.

The researchers used open-ended interviews to obtain the data from the English teacher and the students. The students interviewed consisted of 3 students as the representatives of the class. The researchers complete the data by analyzing relevant documents such as lesson plans and students' speaking scores.

The data were then analyzed using data reduction, description, and verification. The researchers sorted the completeness of all the data gathered via observation, interviews, and document analysis during data reduction. The data was

then categorized according to the research's foci. The researchers analyzed the findings and compared the outcome to the existing theory and past relevant studies as part of the data verification process. Finally, triangulation was used to establish the data's authenticity.

FINDINGS

Observations Data

The teacher applies the scaffolding strategy from the beginning to the end of the speaking lesson. The observation, interview, and data analysis (lesson plan) indicate the following result: Here is an overview of the strategy in each learning step conducted by the English teacher.

Table 1. Scaffolding Strategy Applies during in Young Learners' Speaking Class

No	Strategy	Learning Phase
1	Stimulating students' participation and engagement	Pre-activity Whilst activity Post activity
2	Providing explanation	Whilst activity
3	Modeling	Whilst activity
4	Repetition drills	Whilst activity
5	Confirming learners' understanding	Whilst activity Post activity
6	Giving feedback	Whilst activity Post activity

Table 1 indicates that several strategies are only applied in one learning phase, such as providing an explanation, modelling and repetition, and repetition drills. Some other strategies are implemented more than once. Stimulating participation is applied in pre-activity and while activity, confirming students' understanding and giving feedback is observed to be done during and post-activity.

The above learning activities are also listed in the lesson plan prepared by the teacher. The following is an excerpt from a lesson plan sample used by the teacher.

Table 2. Lesson Plan Used by the Teacher

Learning Phase	Description	Scaffolding Strategy
Opening/ introduction	Apperception : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioning the things related to global warming • Mentioning the places which are threatened by global warming and how to use the alternative energy 	Stimulating students' participation and engagement
	Motivation : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining the importance of learning material following competencies to be dominated by students 	
Main activity	Delivering materials, including telling the students how to save the earth	Providing an explanation Confirming students' understanding
	Involving students to look for information related to the topic	Stimulating participation and engagement
	Giving students dialog examples and reading the dialogs for them	Modeling
	Facilitating students to ask and answer questions in discussions (between the teacher and the students, and also among students)	Stimulating participation and engagement
	Asking students to repeat the dialog	Providing an explanation Repetition drills
	Facilitates learners to work in groups before performing the dialog	Stimulating participation and engagement
	Asking the students to imitate and play the roles found in the dialog (role play technique)	Repetition drills Stimulating participation and engagement
	Provides positive feedback and reinforcement in the form of oral gestures and rewards to the successful learners.	
	Facilitates learners to reflect on to gain a learning experience that has been done.	Giving feedback
	The teacher asks the students whether or not they find difficulties.	
Closing	Making a summary lesson together with the students	Stimulating students' participation and engagement
	Giving homework to students	engagement
	Evaluating the whole learning process	Giving feedback
	Delivering the next meeting agenda	

Verifying the data from observation in Table 1, Table 2 shows in detail learning activities that involve implementing a scaffolding strategy. It is precisely stated that the strategy is implemented in various learning phases. It is also observed

that the strategy of stimulating students' participation and engagement dominates the learning phase. While giving explanations and modelling are only practiced once.

In connection with the student's responses to the use of scaffolding strategy, the representative of students gives positive responses to the strategy applied by the teacher in their speaking class. The scaffolding strategy is combined with a role-playing technique. The following is the sum of the interview results.

First, the students said that the scaffolding strategy creates fun and exciting learning. Of all the interviewed students, all admitted that they have more fun and feel excited to learn and practice speaking English with the strategy applied by the teacher. They mentioned,

St 1: "...speaking English is more fun."

St 2: "We were proud, excited."

St 3: "I felt proud and excited."

Student 1 stated that the strategy used by his teacher makes learning to speak English more enjoyable. Students 2 and 3 stated that they enjoyed this speaking class.

Second, the students acknowledge that using a scaffolding strategy combined with role-playing allows them to improve their speaking competence. They stated,

St 1: "We learned new words."

St 2: "We learned other words."

St 3: "We can speak fluently."

Students 1 and 2 said they could learn new vocabulary apart from what they have mastered. Student 3 admits that she can speak English fluently.

Further, the students indicated that the combination of role-playing and scaffolding strategy helps them build their confidence. They clarified

St 1: "Everyone can speak English."

St 2: "... become another person, so we learn English out of our comfort zone."

St 3: "Especially when you do it with friends. It is a great confidence booster."

Student 1 said that everyone is able to speak English in the class by using the strategy, which means that he is sure everyone in the class can practice speaking English well. Student 2 tends to say that he builds his confidence in speaking English in the class as he is forced by the teacher to come out of his comfort zone. Student 3 stated directly that practicing speaking English with a combination of scaffolding and role-playing techniques can boost his confidence.

DISCUSSION

This part discusses the finding's interpretations and justification for the current research. The discussion is divided into two parts based on the research questions.

Scaffolding strategy in young learners' English-speaking class

This section describes the strategies applied by the teacher to scaffold the young learners' speaking class, which consists of six activities. They are: 1) stimulating students' participation and engagement; 2) providing explanations; 3) modeling; 4) repetition drills; 5) confirming students' understanding; and 6) giving feedback. These strategies are categorized into micro scaffolding.

The first strategy to scaffold English speaking class implemented by the teacher is stimulating students' participation and engagement. This strategy is used more frequently than other strategies during the class, starting from the apperception stage in the opening to the summary making in the closing.

The strategy is practiced in apperception, searching for information, discussing, working in groups, role-playing, and summary making. The stimulation is in the form of questions, answers, comments, giving times and chances, and instructions.

The implementation of this scaffolding strategy implies that by giving more stimulation, it is expected that all students will get involved during the learning process. Every student is exposed to new knowledge, skills, concepts, and information. This stimulation may motivate students who keep silent to try speaking up. Those who have been active can also do more, for example, by helping their friends.

This result is in harmony with previous research. A study conducted by (Nurlisa et al. (2020) found that scaffolding strategies may foster students' active participation and engagement in speaking. Kamil (2017) reveals in his study that giving chances for students to participate in learning is one of the strategies to implement in productive language classes. It is also reported that scaffolding increases students' engagement and motivation (Damanhour, 2021).

The second is providing explanations. The researchers found out that the English teacher explains in the session of material delivery for each meeting. The English teacher delivers his explanation very clearly and as communicatively as possible. He sometimes repeats his explanation in order to have his students gain understanding. The researchers also observed that the teacher sometimes repeats his explanation during a question-and-answer session. By doing so, it is expected that the students get the points of his explanation.

The finding corresponds to the number of relevant research studies. Providing or offering an explanation is listed as one of the scaffolding strategies teachers can apply in their classroom (Aliyah, 2019; Kamil, 2017). Describing materials in detail also benefits students in developing their ZPD as an attempt to attain learning objectives (Fatonah, 2019).

The third strategy that the teacher usually applies is modeling. The researchers note that the teacher usually prepares dialog examples for his students. Not only that, he will perform the dialogs before the students perform them in front of the class. He reads the dialogs, gives examples of the words' correct

pronunciation, and explains how to use the expressions found in the dialogs. After he thinks his students have comprehended the dialogues well, he will ask the students to repeat what he models for them. After that, the students are asked to perform the dialogs in front of the class. The performance put on by the students is in the form of a role-play. From the description, it can be inferred that the teacher applies talk-aloud modeling.

Although this modeling is less conducted than stimulating students' participation and engagement, it provides great assistance for the students. They can imitate what their teacher performs.

The finding supports the study reported by Hartani & Sulindra (2017). They exemplified how modeling can assist students as they see the first picture of a new concept or knowledge base, even in a distance learning setting. Ersani et al. (2021) notice that modeling can still be done by infusing it into the learning design.

The fourth strategy used by the teacher is repetition drills. As mentioned earlier, it was observed that the teacher always reads the dialogues first. He does not only provide examples of how to pronounce the phrases and sentences but also the intonation, stress, and rhythm, so the students are given a complete exposure to the dialog situation. After that, he asks the students to repeat the reading of the dialog.

The teacher uses such a repetition drill to guide the students' learning before performing the dialogs using a role-playing technique. This repetition drill is portrayed as motivating to students, particularly those who are less motivated due to factors such as shyness or lack of confidence.

These repetition drills are claimed to enable students' speaking ability enhancement as well as to capture students' learning interests (Aini et al., 2020). In addition, repetition drills are reported to improve students' understanding of speaking class (Larosa et al., 2020).

The fifth strategy applied is confirming learners' understanding. The researchers found that some students encounter several problems during the teaching and learning process. Cognitively, they lack vocabulary, specifically not knowing the words' meaning and mispronouncing them. Affectively, they feel unconfident, nervous, and shy. When the students experience the condition and cannot adjust themselves, the teacher is frequently observed to change his language use into a simple one. Sometimes, he re-explains what he has already delivered to his students to ensure they understood his explanation. By doing this, his students become more relaxed and show their best attempts to speak English.

This type of strategy is crucial to conduct as it will support students in entering their new area of knowledge. This is also the beginning of training them to learn independently. Sari & Rozimela (2021) highlighted that verifying learners' understanding is a way to direct students toward becoming independent learners. When students have comprehended new concepts and knowledge delivered by teachers, it will be easier for teachers to evaluate and assess the students' abilities (Yuvita, 2018).

The last strategy is giving feedback. When the students perform the dialogs in front of the class, the teacher gives his attention by listening, analyzing, and giving corrective feedback to his students. He mentions that the feedback is given

based on the criteria of assessment he has decided earlier. The assessment criteria comprise fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Getting feedback from the teacher directs the students to rectify their mistakes. They improve their pronunciation and accelerate their fluency. From the comments and praise given by the teacher, the students are motivated to learn and speak better. The study by Khairani & Refnaldi (2020) states that feedback functions to correct students' errors and appraise them.

Feedback from the teacher seems to either upgrade or lower their students' confidence. Those shy and nervous students get encouragement from the teacher to speak up. Feedback delivered in a scaffolded setting is empirically believed to increase students' self-esteem and diminish their feeling of uneasiness about speaking English (Zarei & Rezaoust, 2020).

Students' responses

The interviewed students expressed their approval of the use of the scaffolding strategy in their speaking class.

First, they see that the use of the strategy gives them more fun and excitement during their attempt to speak English. This condition surely creates a good learning atmosphere. The result is in agreement with research conducted by Piamsai (2020) that suggests scaffolding can build a positive learning environment.

Second, the students agreed that the scaffolding strategy directed them to foster their speaking skills. The components of English-speaking skills they specifically highlight are vocabulary and fluency. This finding is consistent with the research reported by Kulsoom et al. (2021) that scaffolding impacts students' English fluency.

Third, scaffolding in English-speaking classes is regarded as effective in promoting students' confidence. The students feel certain that everyone can speak English. By scaffolding the speaking class, they get so much support to explore new things they have not been familiar with. The fact is in harmony with a study reported by (Boonmoh, 2019). The study empirically proves that the scaffolding strategy is a great help for students who want a confidence boost in English-speaking.

CONCLUSION

The present research has indicated that micro-scaffolding strategies scaffold young learners' English-speaking classes: stimulating students' participation and engagement; providing explanations; modeling; repeating drills; confirming students' understanding, and giving feedback. The students show positive responses to scaffolding strategies in their speaking class.

The scaffolding strategy can be a solution for English teachers who want to intensify their students' speaking skills progress but encounter many obstacles during the teaching and learning process. In conjunction with the recent pedagogical developments during the pandemic, exploring new scaffolding activities with the infusion of learning platforms is highly recommended. Connecting to the current situation, scaffolding young learners' English-speaking classes may offer new possibilities for more enjoyable learning activities either in the setting of hybrid or full distance learning.

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