

A CASE STUDY OF SCAFFOLDING INSTRUCTION IN COLLEGE ENGLISH WRITING TEACHING

Zhang Xia¹ and Wu Tielei²

^{1,2}*MianYang Teachers' College Sichuan, China*

Abstract

Writing is an important way of communication to convey information and exchange feelings in writing. One of the purposes of English teaching is to cultivate students' preliminary writing ability. Writing teaching is an important part of junior high school English teaching, which should run through the whole process of English teaching, always accompanied by the teaching of vocabulary, dialogue, grammar and text. For English teachers, how to help students improve their writing ability is extremely important. For many years, scholars at home and abroad have devoted themselves to the study of a variety of effective teaching models of constructivism. With the help of this wave of research, Scaffolding Instruction has come out. This article aims to study the applicability of scaffolding theory in school English writing teaching, and explore the use of effective scaffolding teaching strategies to better promote students' English writing ability and literacy in college English teaching.

Keywords: Scaffolding Instruction, Writing Teaching, College English

Introduction

With the development of society and frequent communication, English, as one of the most essential interaction tools among people, is gaining more and more attention. Writing, being one of four basic language skills, is an important way to express one's ideas and personal feelings. English writing not only requires students to translate their experiences and thoughts into written language through conception, but also needs to master the norms and frameworks of different writing genres so as to cultivate students' comprehensive ability to use the second language. Therefore, writing is an indispensable part of English teaching. However, English writing teaching is a weak link English teaching. Although teachers and students spend more effort and practice, they only achieve small progress. Therefore, the author hopes to apply the scaffolding teaching mode to English writing education, focusing on the exploration and application of various scaffolds in English writing class, aiming to help students to construct the framework, acquire skills, accumulate expression, and thus improve their writing ability.

For many years, scholars have been devoted to studying various effective teaching modes of constructivism. With the help of this wave of research, scaffolding teaching has come out and the proposer of it is the famous psychologist Vygotsky of the former Soviet Union. Scaffolding instruction is defined as providing a conceptual framework for learners to construct their understanding of knowledge according to the relevant documents of the Distance Education and Training Program (DGX III) of the European community. In the process of research, scholars have unified the concept core of Scaffolding Instruction. Over the years, scaffolding teaching research at home and abroad has focused on the effective implementation strategies of Scaffolding Instruction from five aspects, including how to build scaffolding, how to create effective teaching situation for specific lesson, how to guide students to analyze and solve problems, how to practice effective learning in groups as well as how to implement effective evaluation. In a word, front-line educators and relevant experts have given practical demonstration and theoretical support on how to reflect the ideas and views of Scaffolding Instruction in the classroom.

Scaffolding teaching mode refers to teacher-guided teaching. Students can master the construction and internalization of knowledge and skills, and then improve their learning level. In short, the task of regulating learning is transferred from teachers to students through scaffolds, so that students can take charge of their own learning and continuously improve their self-discipline and self-control ability. The main purpose of this study is to test the applicability of Scaffolding Instruction in the process of English writing, find several appropriate and effective ways to apply scaffolding teaching mode, and gradually cultivate students' ability of problem-solving and autonomous learning so as to lay the foundation for students' mutual learning and independent inquiry.

The following table is about are review of the relevant literature of Scaffolding Instruction

Table 1 are review of the relevant literature of Scaffolding Instruction

A review of the relevant literature of Scaffolding Instruction		
	Researcher	Point of view
1	Jerome Bruner (1976)	It is used to describe the informal guidance by parents.
2	Palinsar (1982)	Teachers should play various roles.
3	Long and Sato (1983)	Scaffolding plays an important role in learning.
4	Fisher and Mercer (1999)	Scaffolds are the support provided by teachers to students.
5	Raymond (2000)	Learners can acquire new knowledge base don existing knowledge.
6	Smagorinsky (2000)	Teacher-student dialogue can produce new ideas.
7	Hartman (2002)	The purpose is to develop learners' ability to understand and solve problems.
8	A. Walqui (2006)	Various scaffolds should be taught to student.
9	He Kekang (2002)	Five steps: setting up scaffolding, entering the situation, independent exploration, cooperative learning and evaluation
10	Wu Xiaoyan (2006)	should be applied in all links of oral English class
11	Dai Qin (2010)	is important in listening and reading teaching

The Definition of Scaffolding Instruction

Scaffolding Instruction is not only a teaching idea, but also a teaching mode. It is a teaching model that helps students understand specific knowledge and construct knowledge meaning through a set of appropriate concepts. With the help of conceptual framework, students can independently explore and solve problems and construct meaning by themselves.

As a teaching method, based on constructivist learning theory, Scaffolding Instruction takes learners as the center and aims to promote students' ability of problem-solving and autonomous learning. The scaffold was originally used in the construction industry to temporarily assist the construction operation. Once the construction is completed, it will be removed. Constructivists use it as a metaphor to provide students with a temporary support suitable for students' learning needs in the learning process to assist students to gradually complete tasks that they cannot complete independently, and gradually withdraw or fade out with students' progress, until students can complete tasks independently and internalize corresponding knowledge and skills. Scaffolding Instruction is a teaching model in which teachers or other facilitators and learners complete a certain activity together. External support will be provided for learners to participate in the activity, and help them complete tasks that they cannot accomplish alone. As the activity progressed, teachers gradually reduce external support and make common activities give way to students' independent activities. With the help of teachers, the task of managing learning and the responsibility of exploration are gradually transferred from teachers to students themselves, so that students can learn independently. In scaffolding teaching, teachers, as the representative and guide of culture, help students to master and internalize the skills which can enable them to engage in higher cognitive activities. Once students acquire these skills, they can self-regulate their learning more.

Research Methodology

Participants

Participants are 72 sophomore students of Mianyang teachers' college, they are from two classes: experimental class 5 (36) and control class 6 (36) their English teacher is the same: that is the author.

Measures

Both the students of experimental class 5 and control class 6 were given the same topic to write: opinions on conspicuous consumption: but using different teaching methods: the students of class 5 were given the task only after the first class of unit 2, and the students of class 6 were given the task after finish learning unit 2, so the methodology is using scaffolding instruction and comparison, In-depth Interview, documentation method, mathematical statistics and case analysis.

In-depth Interview

Interview is an important method for qualitative research. Mehedi Hasan (2016) In-depth interview (IDI) is a qualitative data collection technique in which respondents are engaged in a one-to-one setting to elicit thoughtful responses. IDIs can be used for a variety of purposes, including ideation, needs assessment, issue identification, and strategic planning. In-depth interviews are most appropriate for situations in which you want to ask probing questions that incite a meaningful conversation/response designed to produce a depth of information from relatively few people (as opposed to surveys, which are conducted with larger numbers of respondents), As IDIs use an open-ended, discovery-oriented method of data collection, the interviewer is allowed to deeply explore the respondent's feelings and perspectives on a subject, which should result in rich background information that can provide contextual

insights and shape further questions relevant to the topic, in which the interviewer prepares the outline of the questions in advance, and then the interviewer collects the required information by means of oral conversation with the interviewees informally. Compared with the questionnaires, the interview can provide more in-depth information on the study. Therefore, in order to obtain more detail information, the in-depth interview was designed based on the specific problems. In this research, the author first interviewed eight students who came from experimental class and controlled class. The following table is their name lists.

No.	Name	Gender	Class
1	Li Hongxia	Female	5
2	Guo Wen	Female	5
3	Liao Zongzhi	Male	5
4	Peng Tianzhi	Male	5
5	Li Panpan	Female	6
6	Li Wen	Female	6
7	Wan Xianbin	Male	6
8	Du Xiaolong	Male	6

Fig. 1 Name lists of Interviewers

Interview questions:

1. Do you prefer the traditional teaching mode or this scaffolding instruction mode?

Most students said that scaffolding instruction was an indispensable part of writing teaching in college English teaching

2. Which factors do you think are the most influential ones to the writing teaching of college English?

Most students replied that the most influential factors are the methods of writing and useful words and expressions which are associated with the topic of the writing.

Research Results

Etudes

In this process, teachers can explain to students the connotations of participation in curriculum development. Participating in the development of the curriculum, From the micro aspect, it usually refers to the evaluation of courses, teaching materials, teaching, or the analysis, evaluation, development and utilization of a specific aspect of the curriculum, teaching materials, curriculum standards, etc., such as the development and utilization of curriculum resources, the discovery and correction of problems in the main text or annotations in the teaching materials, and the discovery and correction of inaccuracies in the preparation of teaching materials.

Exploration

At the beginning, teachers set goals for students. Various possibilities of the situation will be triggered, encouraging students to explore and try. At this time, the goal may be open, but teachers will have a great influence on the direction of exploration. At this stage, teachers can

offer inspiration and guidance, make demonstrations, provide problem-solving prototypes, and provide feedback to students. However, they should gradually increase the exploratory component of the problem and gradually give way to students' own exploration.

Excursions

Teachers let students decide the direction and problems of exploration, choose methods and accomplish independently. At this time, different students may explore different problems. Learning is not only a cognitive activity conducted by learners, but also a process a complexion of social construction. It is the internalization of culture through activity participation. Teachers and more mature members of society can provide learners with learning support, guide and help learners complete activities that they cannot complete independently. Learners can also support and help each other. With the help of this cognitive apprenticeship, learners can gradually internalize more advanced knowledge and skills in real activities.

Discussion

Scaffolding instruction is generally composed of several steps: creating teaching situation, building teaching scaffold, independent exploration and research, cooperative learning and evaluating learning effect.

1) Creating teaching situation

To create a teaching situation is that teachers should first set up a teaching theme, which contains the main knowledge that students need to acquire. At the same time, the main problems should be raised to students for the purpose of inspiring their ideas.

2) Building teaching scaffold

The knowledge content that students want to learn should be regarded as the main development area. Relevant questions and important knowledge concepts in textbooks are the basic points to build a teaching support, laying a foundation for students' independent exploration as well as mutual discussion.

3) Independent exploration and research

Independent exploration and research on the connotation and extension of knowledge is the best means to exercise students' comprehensive ability. Teachers mainly play the role of a learning consultant in this process. In turn, when students experience difficulties, they can consult and seek help from teachers.

4) Cooperative learning

It is advisable to divide students into different groups according to different styles and types of students, letting each learning group study the relevant textbook contents through cooperative and mutual learning. Students can get a positive experience through this teaching mode. On the one hand, they can express their understanding of the learning problem, on the other hand, they can exercise their language expression ability. In this way, students' different opinions and various understandings can be unified in group cooperative learning. What's more, their complex attitude towards research problems can be gradually clarified. Finally, through cooperative learning, students can effectively concentrate the collective wisdom to reasonably construct the learning content, so as to gradually acquire the deep-seated meaning of knowledge. When grouping students, teachers need to consider students' interests and hobbies, learning basis, ability level, personality characteristics and so on.

5) Evaluating learning effect

Evaluating learning effect is an important step of scaffolding instruction. Teachers' evaluation of students' learning should be divided into two parts: one is the overall learning evaluation of the group, and the other is the evaluation of students' comprehensive performance in the group. In the specific implementation of the evaluation, the following different emphases

should be accurately evaluated. The principle of more praise and less criticism should be attached more importance when evaluating. In the first place, teachers need to evaluate the rationality and excellence of the knowledge framework designed by students. Second, it is necessary to pay attention to the close degree of interaction and cooperation among group members in the process of designing knowledge framework. Additionally, the process and effectiveness of each group's independent inquiry ought to be evaluated. Fourth, in the process of improving and correcting the knowledge framework, teachers should evaluate the final effect and comprehensive performance of the group. At length, the overall performance of students in the experiment class (class 5) are much better than the control class (class 6). The details can be seen from the following table

Conclusion

Scaffolding instruction is a teaching method that takes students as the center, makes use of teaching forms such as problem, exploration and cooperation, gives full play to students' initiative, and enables students to construct the meaning of the knowledge they have learned. Scaffolding instruction is a complete process, including three stages: building scaffolding, exiting scaffolding and the transfer of teachers' responsibility. None of the three stages is indispensable. Without any part of them, it should not be called Scaffolding instruction. In these three stages, building the support is the basis for exiting the support and realizing the transfer of responsibility. Teachers' withdrawal from the scaffold means that teachers will build a scaffold again in the process of teacher-student interaction. They repeatedly experience the process of building and withdrawing from the scaffold in teaching. After several times of building and exiting the scaffold, it means the continuous improvement of students' ability level. The characteristics of Scaffolding instruction corresponding to its three stages can be summarized as follows: dependence, retreat and responsibility transfer.

First, scaffolding teaching model can stimulate students' interest in English writing. Under this mode, there is more interaction between students and teachers, and students have more voice and decision-making power. Scaffolding Instruction advocates creating a real and reasonable writing situation, and therefore students' enthusiasm is mobilized. Second, the scaffolding teaching model can help students sort out their writing ideas and master the writing framework, so as to improve their writing performance. What's more, as mentioned above, different types of scaffolding can give students different help.

To sum up, research and practice have proved that Scaffolding instruction theory is applied to writing class, which also has a significant impact on the improvement of students' writing ability. Teachers should try to change their own positioning, take students as the main body, keep up with the pace of the new curriculum reform, and highlight the cultivation of students' English core literacy. Given the author's shortcomings, the author will also broaden the scope of her research in future studies to make the research results more comprehensive, and make Scaffolding instruction effectively applied to the practice of English writing teaching.

References

- Badger, R. and White, G. (2000) A Process Genre Approach to Teaching Writing. *ELT Journal*, 54(2):153-160.
- Beed, P. L. (1991) *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press,
- Boldrini, E. & Cattaneo, A. (2014) Scaffolding collaborative reflective writing in a VET curriculum . *Vocations and Learning*, 7(2):14-19.

- Chen Qiaozhi. (2017) Scaffolding Teaching Method in College English writing teaching empirical research Master's thesis (Xi'an University of Engineering.
- Ellis, R. & Barkhuizen, G. (2005) Analyzing Learner Language. Oxford: Oxford University Press,.
- Hartman, H. Scaffolding & Cooperative Learning. (2002) Human Learning and Instruction. New York: City College of City University of New York.
- Hogan, K. & Pressley, M. (1997.) Scaffolding Student Learning: Instructional Approaches and Issues. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.
- Karen, B. & Christine, R. (2010) Ready to Write from Paragraph to Essay. New York: Pearson Education.
- Lier, L. V. (2004) The Ecology and Semiotics of Language Learning: A Sociocultural Perspective. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers,.
- Nuttal, C. (2005) Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language. Shanghai: Foreign Language Education Press,
- Read, S. (2010) A Model for Scaffolding Writing Instruction: IMSCI. The Reading Teacher, 64(1):47-52.