

APPLYING SCAFFOLDING TO TEACH READING SKILLS FOR THE FIRST YEAR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS IN HANOI METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: *The present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of scaffolding in improving students' reading comprehension skills of the first year English major students in Hanoi Metropolitan University (HNMU). The question of the study is stated: "Whether scaffolding boosts the English reading comprehension skills for the first year English major students in HNMU or not?". A scaffolding instruction program lasted for six weeks, five periods per week. The objective of this research was 64 first year English major students in HNMU in the academic year 2020-2021. They were assigned to two groups: 32 students in the control group (NNA.D2020.N01) and 32 students in the experimental group (NNA.D2020.N02). Using scaffolding instruction, the experimental group was taught twelve units in the textbook, named Active Reading 1, while the control group was taught the same units with no scaffolding. Pre- and post-test procedure was used to measure the impact of the scaffolding strategies on the students' achievement. Results of the study revealed that there are significant differences in the subjects' achievement in reading comprehension skills, in favor of the experimental group. Therefore, it is recommended that scaffolding instruction be integrated into the English reading lessons.*

Keywords: *Scaffolding, reading sub-skills, reading performance.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is seen as one of the most important skills for language learning. At the same time, it boosts the emergence of such other language skills as listening, speaking and writing. Harmer (2007: 99) stated that reading is useful for language acquisition provided that students more or less understand what they read, more they read, they better get at it. Reading is the act of interpreting printed and written words. Reading requires understanding or comprehension the means of the reading text. Through reading we can get the messages that the writer had expressed.

Reading is a dynamic process in which an active reader engages with a text in order to

create meaning. It plays a very important role in learning process because reading skill supports the success of students in learning many things particularly in daily life. Reading is an active process and the readers need to use reading skills to make them attain good reading comprehension. Anderson (1999) said “With strengthened reading skills, ESL/ EFL reader will make greater progress and attain greater development” (p.1). Therefore, it can’t be denied that reading skills support significantly to readers’ reading comprehension. The better the reader uses reading skills, the better he/ she gains reading comprehension. Therefore, how to teach reading skills well and effectively has been the concern of the teachers. There are various and effective techniques of reading skills which help language teachers and researchers when they teach reading. Willets (1992) claimed that “*The effectiveness of such help depends on it being used appropriately by teachers and educators*”. More recently, both educationalists and psychologists have paid more attention to the concept of “scaffolding” to as the useful and active support given by language teachers during the process of learning. In fact, with the essence of scaffolding, learners are provided more assistance when they learn new skills since they start to demonstrate more developing levels, and the support will be decreased gradually in order to shift the responsibility of learning from the teacher to the pupils. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that “*with the assistance of an adult, children could accomplish tasks that they ordinarily could not perform independently*”. Scaffolding refers to it as “*the support the teacher gives to the pupil in any number of ways, ranging from hints or feedback to doing the task for the pupil as demonstration*” (Stager & Harman, 2002). In respect to this, Bull and others (1999) say that “*scaffolding can be provided by teachers, peers or computers, and may include the use of tutoring, a performance system and online support. Furthermore, scaffolding can be embedded in the information or the input such as providing visual supports*”.

It can’t be denied that scaffolding brings a lot of benefits to language learners. Instructional scaffolds boost reading comprehension skills (Duffy, 2002; Palinscar, 2003; Pressley, 2002). Through scaffolding processes, readers acquire a broader perspective of reading materials to improve their comprehension (Clark & Graves, 2004). Instructional scaffolds also play an important role in facilitating reading which ensures comprehension or understanding independently (Many, 2002). In terms of Procedure of Scaffolding Strategy applied in teaching reading comprehension, Billett (1993) gives the scaffolding approach by illustrating some steps it incorporates. He suggests ways to gradual removal of scaffolding as knowledge and skill increase: initial knowledge building, demonstration, initial practice, guided practice, independent practice, and assessment.

In fact, in the process of scaffolding, the teacher helps the students master a task or concept that the students are initially unable to grasp independently. The teacher offers assistance with only those skills that are beyond the students’ capability. The scaffolding supports students during first steps, then decreases helping and gives chance to take responsibility after students can do the task. In fact, scaffolding is a special kind of temporary help that supports and motivates learners in order to get them to a higher level of

understanding and succeed in accomplishing the targeted task.

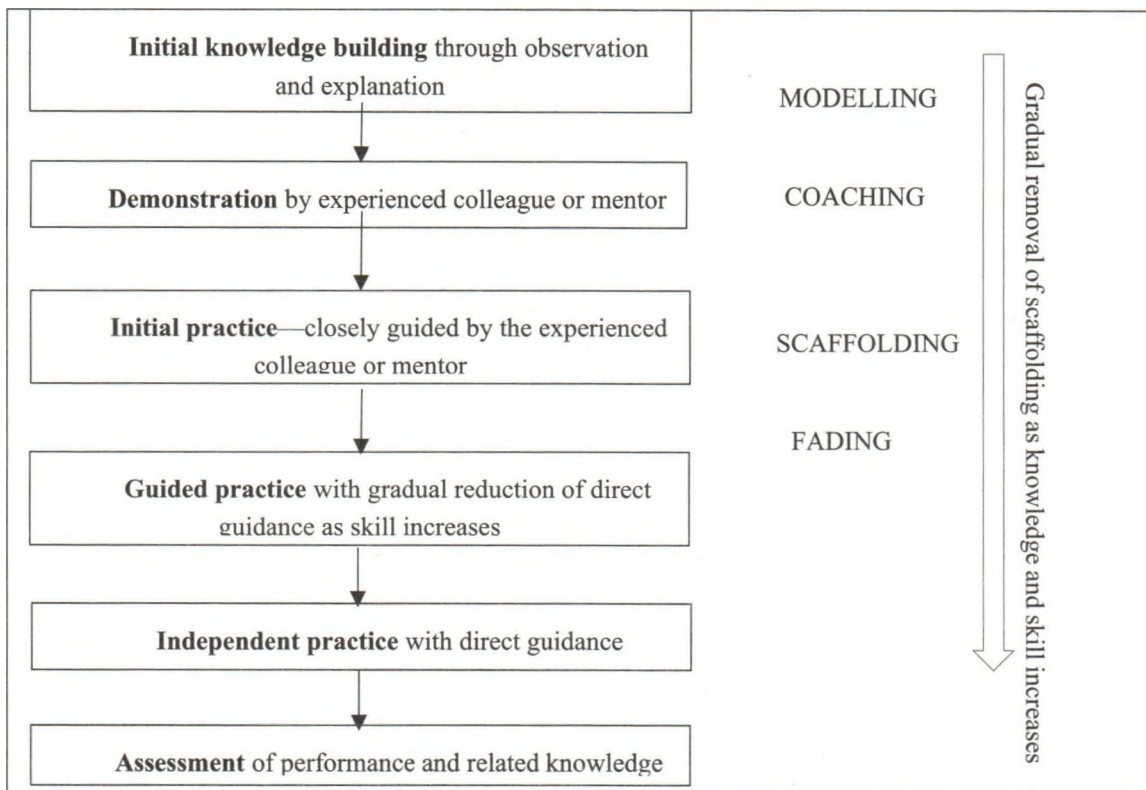


Figure 1: The Scaffolding approach

2. CONTENT

2.1. Review of Related Studies on Reading Comprehension

It is proved by many studies that different teaching techniques and activities develop reading comprehension skills of young and adult learners effectively. Ibrahim (2004) implemented an action research to improve Egyptian EFL teacher's pedagogical awareness of teaching reading. The researcher applied scaffolding throughout the different stages of the program implementation. Vygotsky (1978) also conducted a study to explore the effectiveness of scaffolding. He used scaffolding as the process component of the suggested integrated program. The participants consisted of twenty-two trainee teachers in this program. The study results showed that there was a significant improvement in different aspects of the trainees' pedagogical awareness of teaching reading. Chang, Chen and Sung (2002) did a research to investigate the effects of learning three concept-mapping methods on students. Three concept-mapping methods were designed with 89 varying degrees of scaffolding support, namely, map construction by correction, by scaffold fading, and by generation. There were 126 fifth grade pupils who were randomly chosen. The results indicated that scaffolding given by the map-correcting method was a more suitable way for conducting concept mapping for elementary pupils than such other methods as scaffold-fading and map generation. Abou-Hadeed (2000) conducted a study to investigate benefits

of cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies on enhancing students' listening and reading comprehension. The study was both analytical and experimental. The subjects were 85 students, 40 students in the experimental group, and 45 students in the control group. Students in the experimental group were provided with a self-instructional program based on cognitive and metacognitive strategies for developing their listening and reading skills. Students in the control group received no treatment. The results of the study showed that the self-instructional program which was used with cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies helped students to improve such listening comprehension skills as getting the general idea, getting the specific idea, predicting the next incident, and making inferences. The program also developed their reading comprehension skills such as skimming, scanning, guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words, predicting, making inferences, and summarizing. In fact, several studies were conducted to investigate the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies for developing reading comprehension skills. It was proved that scaffolding brings a lot of benefits to English learners.

2.2. Methodology

The main purpose of the current study was to find a practical way for improving learners' reading comprehension ability in English language. This study is set out to investigate the effectiveness of the designed scaffolder interactive activities in developing the reading comprehension skills of the first year English major students in HNMU involved in the treatment of the study. Therefore, the current study aims to answer the following question: *"Whether scaffolding boosts the English reading comprehension skills for the first year English major students in HNMU or not?"*.

2.2.1. The Study Sample

In the present study, the sample consisted of sixty-four students from two classes selected at random from first year major students of English in HNMU in the academic year 2020-2021. One class was randomly assigned to be the experimental group (NNA.D2020.N02). This class consisted of thirty-two students and they received the treatment based on scaffolding activities designed and taught by the researcher during six weeks in the first term. The other class was assigned to be the control group (NNA.D2020.N01). It consisted of thirty-two students and this group had the regular English reading lessons with no treatment. Here are the results of Pre-test.

Table 1. Results of Pre-test

Data Class	N	M	S.D.	Level of Significance
Control class	32 -	16.75	1.63	Not significant
Experimental class	32	16.51	1.64	

Table 1 indicates that the difference between the mean scores of the students in the two groups was only 0.01. This means that there was no statistically significant difference

between the mean scores of the students in the experimental and control groups. Therefore, it can be said that the groups were almost at the same level before the experiment.

2.2.2. *The Design of the Study*

In this study, the experimental group was exposed to the scaffolding interactive activities designed to help enhance their reading comprehension skills. The experimental group and the control group were subjected to a pre-post reading comprehension test, prepared by the researcher to validate the effectiveness of the experimental activities. The pre-test was given to both groups to make sure of the equivalence of the level of the students in the two groups.

2.2.3. *The Instrument*

The researcher used a reading test with three passages. All questions are in the form of multiple choice question (MCQ). The reading test is considered as a tool for testing in order to know students' reading comprehension skill. There are 50 items with four alternative options that are A, B, C, and D in the test. The specific tests of pre-test and post-test were as follows:

1. Pre-Test (25 items). The researcher gave pre-test to the students before giving the treatments in order to know students' reading comprehension skill before the treatment. The test has done by given multiple choice questions. The students answered the questions on the answer-sheets. Then the researcher did the scoring based on their answers on the test

2. Post-Test (25 items). The post-test gave to students after conducting the treatment. It reflected the students' reading comprehension skill by using scaffolding strategy. The researcher gave the students the same test. The students also were asked to answer the reading comprehension test in form to multiple choice question consisting of 25 items.

Here are aspects of Pre-test and Post-test:

Table 2. Aspects of Pre-test and Post-test Total

Reading Skills	Items	
	Pre-test	Post-test
1. Scanning	5	5
2. Supporting Idea	4	4
3. Vocabulary in context	3	3
4. Grammatical features	3	3
5. Main Idea	4	4
6. Facts or Opinion	4	4
7. Inference	2	2
8. Expression in context	2	2

2.2.4. *Procedure*

The pre-test was conducted in order to know students' ability of reading comprehension skill before the treatment.

The pre-test was administrated on October 27th, 2020 for the experimental class. The

pre-test was administrated on October 29th, 2020 for the control class. The post-test was conducted in order to know students' ability after the treatment. The post-test was administrated on December 5th, 2020 for the experimental class. And it was carried out on December 3th, 2020 for the control class. This test was designed to measure the students' mastery of reading comprehension skills that are included in the lessons selected from the textbook, Active Reading 1. It was mainly based on the reading skills found in the textbook.

2.3. Results and Discussion

The results of the post-test in the experimental class and the control class was as follow:

Table 3. Comparing the results of Pre-test and Post -test

	Group	N	Mean	S.D.
Pre-test	experimental	32	16.75	1.63
	control	32	16.51	1.64
Post-test	experimental	32	23.03	2.16
	control	32	20.45	1.82

Table 3 shows that the difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students in the reading comprehension post-test (as a whole) and their mean scores in the pre-test. This result demonstrates that the level of the reading comprehension skills of the students in the experimental group improved as a result of their exposure to the scaffolding strategies included in the treatment. It was found from the finding that there were significant differences between the students who were provided Scaffolding Strategy and the students who weren't used any treatment. It could be seen from the mean score of post-test in the experimental class was 23.03 higher than the mean score of post-test in the control class that was 20.45. The findings indicated that the experimental group predominately benefited from receiving scaffolding strategy. That is, "applying scaffolding strategy" appears to be a practicable instructional device for enhancing reading comprehension skills

3. CONCLUSION

Based on these results, the following conclusions can be drawn that there was a significant influence of scaffolding strategy towards reading comprehension skill of the first year English major students in HNMU. The mean score of post-test in experimental class was 23.03 and the mean score of post-test in control class was 20.45. It showed that the students' post-test score in experimental class was higher than students' post-test score in control class. This study concluded that comprehension as the main factor in reading is enhanced by using scaffolding strategy. Therefore, the scaffolding strategies were very effective in developing the reading comprehension skills of the first year English major students in HNMU. Also, the scaffolding strategies can be learned and promoted in English reading lessons.

3.1. Limitations of the Study

The present study was limited to:

Firstly, a sample of 64 first year English major students enrolled in two classes in HNMU. They were assigned to two groups - one class (N.32) as the control group, the other class (N.32) as the experimental group. Secondly, a limited duration for implementing the proposed activities, it lasted six weeks in the first term of the school year 2020-2021.

3.2. Suggestions

For the teachers, in teaching English reading lessons, they can conduct scaffolding reading experience and other strategies in teaching reading comprehension. They should be friendly, devoted and be a good motivator for the students. Teachers should also adjust their teaching methods, use a variety of strategies in accordance with students' English level in order to help them improve their reading comprehension. For the students, they should motivate themselves, improve their reading comprehension more intensively, and enrich their vocabulary through reading a lot of books. They are encouraged to read materials as much as possible, or read for fun.

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SỬ DỤNG PHƯƠNG PHÁP “BẮC GIÀN GIÁO” ĐỂ DẠY KỸ NĂNG ĐỌC CHO SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN ANH NĂM THỨ NHẤT TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC THỦ ĐÔ HÀ NỘI

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích điều tra tính hiệu quả của việc sử dụng phương pháp “Bắc giàn giáo” trong việc nâng cao kỹ năng đọc hiểu cho sinh viên năm thứ nhất chuyên Anh tại trường Đại học Thủ đô Hà Nội (ĐHTĐHN). Câu hỏi được đặt ra là: “Liệu sử dụng phương pháp Bắc Giàn Giáo có nâng cao kỹ năng đọc hiểu tiếng Anh cho sinh viên năm thứ nhất chuyên Anh tại trường Đại học Thủ đô Hà Nội hay không?”. Nghiên cứu kéo dài trong 6 tuần, mỗi tuần 5 tiết. Chủ thể của nghiên cứu này là 64 sinh viên năm thứ nhất chuyên ngành tiếng Anh của HNMU, năm học 2020-2021. Họ được chia thành hai nhóm: 32 sinh viên trong nhóm đối chứng (NNA.D2020.N01) và 32 sinh viên trong nhóm thực nghiệm (NNA.D2020.N02). Cả hai nhóm đều học 12 bài trong giáo trình Active Reading 1. Nhóm thực nghiệm (NNA.D2020.N02), giáo viên có sử dụng phương pháp Bắc Giàn Giáo để giảng dạy, nhóm đối chứng (NNA.D2020.N01) dạy theo phương pháp truyền thống, không sử dụng phương pháp Bắc Giàn Giáo. Quy trình trước và sau khi kiểm tra được sử dụng để đo lường tác động của chiến lược phương pháp Bắc Giàn Giáo đối với mức độ đọc hiểu của sinh viên. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy có sự khác biệt đáng kể trong việc nâng cao kỹ năng đọc hiểu, nghiêng về nhóm thực nghiệm khi áp dụng phương pháp Bắc Giàn Giáo. Do đó, phương pháp Bắc Giàn Giáo nên được tích hợp vào chương trình giảng dạy Kỹ năng đọc Tiếng Anh.

Từ khóa: Phương pháp Bắc Giàn Giáo, kỹ năng đọc hiểu, hiệu quả đọc.