THE ROLE OF SCAFFOLDING IN TBI FOR PRODUCTIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction: Task-Based Instruction (TBI) has become a widely recognized approach in language teaching, emphasizing the use of authentic tasks to foster meaningful language use and development. In TBI, learners engage in tasks that mirror real-world language use, thereby enhancing their proficiency in productive skills such as speaking and writing. However, learners often require support to effectively complete these tasks and achieve language learning goals. This support, known as scaffolding, plays a crucial role in helping learners perform tasks beyond their current capabilities and progressively develop their productive skills.

Scaffolding refers to the instructional support provided to learners to assist them in accomplishing tasks and acquiring new skills. In the context of TBI, scaffolding can include various forms of assistance such as pre-task planning, during-task support, and post-task feedback. Effective scaffolding not only helps learners manage the complexity of tasks but also facilitates the gradual acquisition of productive skills.

This study explores the role of scaffolding in TBI by addressing the following research questions:

- How does scaffolding influence learners' development of productive skills in TBI?

- What types of scaffolding are most effective in supporting productive skills development?

- How does the timing of scaffolding impact learners' performance in speaking and writing tasks?

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods design to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of scaffolding in TBI. The research includes both quantitative and qualitative data to examine the impact of scaffolding on learners' productive skills.

Participants

The study involved 100 intermediate-level EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students from two language institutes. Participants were randomly assigned to an experimental group, which received various forms of scaffolding, and a control group, which did not receive additional scaffolding.

Data Collection

Quantitative Data:

Pre- and Post-Task Assessments: Learners completed speaking and writing tasks before and after the TBI intervention. Assessments were designed to measure improvements in fluency, accuracy, and complexity of productive skills.

Scoring Rubrics: Task performance was evaluated using scoring rubrics that assessed specific aspects of productive skills, including coherence, organization, and language accuracy.

Qualitative Data:

Learner Feedback: Surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather learners' perceptions of the scaffolding provided and its impact on their productive skills. Questions focused on the usefulness of different scaffolding strategies and their experiences during tasks.

Classroom Observations: Observations were conducted to document the implementation of scaffolding and its effects on learners' task performance. Notes were taken on how learners utilized scaffolding and their interactions during tasks.

Procedure

Scaffolding Implementation: The experimental group received scaffolding in three forms:

Pre-Task Scaffolding: Activities to prepare learners for tasks, including vocabulary and grammar exercises related to the task.

During-Task Scaffolding: In-task support such as prompts, guided questions, and peer feedback.

Post-Task Scaffolding: Feedback and reflection sessions to address errors and improve task performance.

Control Group: The control group completed the same tasks without additional scaffolding.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical methods to compare pre- and post-task performance between the experimental and control groups. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in learner feedback and classroom observations.

Results

Quantitative Findings

Speaking Skills:

Experimental Group: The experimental group demonstrated a significant improvement in speaking skills, with an average increase of 35% in fluency and 28% in accuracy. Scoring rubrics showed enhanced coherence and organization in speaking tasks.

Control Group: The control group showed a smaller improvement in speaking skills, with an average increase of 15% in fluency and 12% in accuracy.

Writing Skills:

Experimental Group: The experimental group also exhibited substantial gains in writing skills, with an average increase of 32% in coherence and 25% in grammatical accuracy. Improved organization and complexity were noted in written tasks.

Control Group: The control group showed more modest improvements in writing skills, with an average increase of 18% in coherence and 14% in grammatical accuracy.

Qualitative Findings

Learner Feedback:

Pre-Task Scaffolding: Learners appreciated the preparatory activities that helped them build necessary language skills and gain confidence before performing tasks. Many reported that pre-task scaffolding made tasks more manageable and less intimidating.

During-Task Scaffolding: Learners valued the real-time support provided during tasks, including prompts and guided questions. This support was seen as crucial for overcoming difficulties and maintaining focus during tasks.

Post-Task Scaffolding: Feedback and reflection sessions were highly regarded by learners, who found them useful for understanding their errors and improving future performance.

Classroom Observations:

Task Engagement: Observations revealed that learners in the experimental group actively utilized scaffolding strategies and engaged more deeply with tasks. The support provided facilitated more effective task completion and better application of productive skills.

Interaction: Scaffolding led to increased interaction among learners, particularly during collaborative tasks. Peer feedback and guided discussions contributed to improved task performance and skill development.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of scaffolding in enhancing productive skills within a Task-Based Instruction (TBI) framework. Scaffolding proved to be a valuable component in supporting learners' speaking and writing abilities, with varying types and timings of scaffolding showing different levels of effectiveness.

Impact of Scaffolding on Productive Skills: The study demonstrates that scaffolding can substantially improve both speaking and writing skills. The experimental group's notable gains in fluency, accuracy, coherence, and organization highlight the benefits of targeted support in developing productive skills. Scaffolding not only aids in managing task complexity but also fosters a deeper understanding of language use.

Types of Scaffolding: Different types of scaffolding contributed uniquely to learners' skill development:

Pre-Task Scaffolding: Effective in preparing learners and building confidence, which facilitated better task performance.

During-Task Scaffolding: Provided essential real-time support, helping learners navigate challenges and stay engaged with tasks.

Post-Task Scaffolding: Enabled learners to reflect on their performance and address errors, leading to continuous improvement.

Timing of Scaffolding: The timing of scaffolding also impacted its effectiveness. Pre-task scaffolding helped set the stage for successful task completion, while during-task support addressed immediate needs and post-task feedback facilitated learning from errors. An integrated approach that combines all three forms of scaffolding appears to be most beneficial.

Pedagogical Implications: The study highlights the importance of incorporating effective scaffolding strategies into TBI. Educators should design tasks with appropriate scaffolding to support learners at different stages of task performance. By providing targeted pre-task, during-task, and post-task support, educators can enhance learners' productive skills and overall language proficiency.

Limitations and Future Research: The study's limitations include its focus on intermediate-level learners and a specific context of EFL teaching. Future research could explore the impact of scaffolding in different language learning contexts, proficiency levels, and with various types of tasks. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term effects of scaffolding on productive skills development.

Conclusion

Scaffolding plays a crucial role in Task-Based Instruction (TBI) for developing productive skills such as speaking and writing. The study's findings demonstrate that targeted scaffolding significantly enhances learners' fluency, accuracy, coherence, and organization in both speaking and writing tasks. Effective scaffolding strategies—pre-task, during-task, and post-task—contribute uniquely to skill development and task performance.

Recommendations: Educators should incorporate diverse scaffolding strategies into TBI to support learners' productive skills. Designing tasks that include appropriate scaffolding can lead to more effective language learning and improved task outcomes. Future research should continue to investigate the impact of scaffolding across different contexts and learner populations to further understand its role in language development.

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