SCAFFOLDING METHOD FOR TEACHING SPEAKING TO INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS

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Abstract

Indonesian migrant workers in Penang, Malaysia, face significant challenges in acquiring English speaking skills, primarily due to their lack of self-confidence, limited speaking skill, and insufficient opportunities for practice. This research examines the application of the scaffolding method by teachers to bridge the gap between learners' current skills and their potential for growth in English speaking proficiency. Specifically, it analyzes the use of scaffolding in teaching speaking skills to Indonesian migrant workers at the English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the study involved the manager and two teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data collection methods included observation, interviews, and documentation analysis. The scaffolding method was implemented in four stages: assistance provided by others, assistance provided by the self, internalization, and de-automatization. In the first stage, teachers utilized affective, analytical, and social scaffolding techniques. During the second stage, students practiced speaking independently, with teachers emphasizing confidence by overlooking minor errors. The third stage, internalization, involved "outdoor activities" monitored via WhatsApp to facilitate real-life speaking practice. However, the final stage, de-automatization, was not fully realized, as students remained reliant on teacher instructions and preferred their native language outside of practice sessions.

Keywords: Indonesian Migrant Workers, Scaffolding, Speaking Skill

INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in English-speaking skills is a must for many people, especially for workers who seek jobs abroad. Workers fluent in English tend to have a competitive edge, as multinational companies require employees who are proficient in communication (Ubaedillah et al., 2020). However, Indonesia, a country that considers English a foreign language, has comparably low English competence compared to other countries. According to the EF English Proficiency Index, Indonesia was ranked 80th among 100 countries.(EF English Proficiency Index, 2024) On the other hand, Indonesia is also a nation with a considerable amount of manpower who seek jobs abroad (Nahartini et al., 2021). Indonesia's challenge lies in aligning its manpower for international opportunities while improving English language skills to meet global communication standards.

One of the nations that becomes a choice for Indonesian migrant workers is Malaysia. Malaysia is a country that considers English a second language. According to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), approximately 1,215,000 Indonesian laborers make up a significant portion of the total migrant workforce in Malaysia, which amounts to 1,849,600 individuals (Hierofani, 2021). This fact is an irony. Although Indonesia has the highest number of migrant workers in Malaysia, they often lack adequate English proficiency. According to (Keliat et al., 2013), despite being a primary source of labor within the ASEAN region, the English language proficiency of

Indonesian workers remains below the anticipated standard. The effect can be seen in their workplace when supervisors need to convey complex instructions to Indonesian workers who have limited English proficiency, making effective communication and project execution challenging as tasks increase in complexity (Ne'Matullah et al., 2021). As a result, many Indonesians are engaged in low-skilled jobs that offer low salaries (Maliki et al., 2022). The large number of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia with low English language proficiency underscores the need to improve English language competency to improve job prospects for Indonesian workers in Malaysia.

The preliminary observation done in English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia (EABM) showed that the speaking skills of Indonesian migrant workers in the early year of lessons were yet to meet the standard, as there were few issues regarding their speaking skills. The most obvious reason was that they were shy in expressing their thoughts as they lacked confidence. They remained silent when the teacher asked questions and only answered when directly prompted. The second reason was that they were unable to express their idea because they didn't have good proficiency in English grammar and vocabulary. The third reason was that they didn't have the opportunity to practice speaking as they mostly used Indonesian outside the class and workplace.

These are the issues that the teachers were paying attention to solving. Teachers had a vital role in class, as teachers were actors who designed how effective class can be (Oliveira et al., 2021). In the class, teachers implemented the scaffolding method to teach speaking skills, which can be reflected by various techniques that teachers implemented in class.

The above phenomenon interested researchers in finding out how teachers carried out class and implemented scaffolding methods to teach Indonesian migrant workers who had low proficiency in speaking skills. Teachers may find this research useful in employing effective methods for teaching speaking skills to adult learners, especially those with specific linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Similarly, institutions providing language training and support services to migrant workers can adapt and improve their curricula and programs based on the research findings to better address the specific needs and challenges faced by this group.

Scaffolding is a method to help students achieve the goal of learning through controlled assistance from a particular person. Scaffolding was first introduced by Jerome Bruner in 1976, which he defined as the process of children acquiring speaking ability when parents take a role as support (Margolis, 2020). This term was formulated from a theory by Lev Vygotsky. In his view, learning is not an isolated process. Instead, it is profoundly affected by social interactions taking place within meaningful contexts. The social interactions of students with individuals who possess more knowledge or skills, as well as the environment around them, have a significant impact on how they think and interpret their situations (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Puntambekar, there are 4 stages in scaffolding: the assistance provided by others, the assistance provided by the self, internalization, and de-automatization (Puntambekar, 2022).

Assistance Provided by others

In the initial stage, students heavily rely on the guidance and support of others. In this model, children are encouraged to work together, share ideas, and collectively

construct their understanding of various concepts. (Bakker et al., 2015) identified the assistance provided by others into 3 categories: analytic scaffolding, social scaffolding, and affective scaffolding.

Assistance Provided by The Self

In the stage of assistance provided by the self, children become less dependent on external support and increasingly build the skill independently. They start relying more on self-assistance as they have built their ability to the skill. self-assistance aims to decrease the level of assistance provided until the learner can complete the task autonomously. This process is commonly known as the 'fading' of support (van de Pol et al., 2015). Hence, the learner should become more capable of scaffolding their learning and require less external support.

Internalization

In the internalization stage, student's ability has reached the level of automation where their skills and knowledge have become more internalized. However, students haven't fully self-relied, and they're still exploring their self-identity. The internalization process transfers responsibility from the teacher to the learner. Therefore, the cognitive processes move from the transfer of knowledge to intrapersonal knowledge which Vygotsky called this process as internalization (Vygotsky, 1978).

De-automatization

In the last stage, de-automatization, students no longer rely on other's help and they can use the skill effectively on their own. De-automatization refers to the process where a learner consciously revisits a skill or knowledge area that has become automatic or routine, in order to improve, refine, or gain a deeper understanding of it (Puntambekar, 2022).

In combining this paper with existing literature, several new things emerge. This study identified four distinct stages of scaffolding: assistance provided by others, assistance provided by the self, internalization, and de-automatization. A prior study by (Goh, 2017) emphasized scaffolding using task repetition, pre-task planning, and communication strategies to scaffold learning. (Zarandi & Rahbar, 2016) also highlighted the effectiveness of the scaffolding intervention strategy. Meanwhile, (Sari & Rozimela, 2021) focused on several scaffolding techniques, such as modeling and verbal instructions, in specific learning environments.

METHOD

This research applied descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is designed to study and understand phenomena related to the behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions of research subjects in a comprehensive manner (Nasution, 2023). In this study, the researcher took the role of collector of data, which includes: interviewing correspondent, observing the object, and taking relevant documentation. The research took place in English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia, located in Tun Dr.Awang St. Sg. Nibong Kecil Bayan Lepas, 11900 Penang, Penang Island, Malaysia. The study was intended for the eleventh batch of English courses in the first-year class, which consists of 24 students, and focused on two teachers selected through purposive sampling,

considering the methods they used in teaching and their availability as sources. The research aimed to analyze teachers' scaffolding methods for teaching speaking skills to Indonesian migrant workers at English Academy Bengkulu, Malaysia (EABM), Penang, Malaysia in the academic year of 2023/2024. The objective of this study was to analyze teachers' scaffolding methods in teaching speaking skills to Indonesian migrant workers at English Academy Bengkulu, Malaysia. The data analysis technique in this research is based on Miles and Huberman which includes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The speaking activity was found to be effective during the practice session. It was conducted at the beginning of the class for teacher 1 and in the last session for teacher 2. Teacher 2 stated his reason for giving the practice last, as he intended to provide students basic grammar before practicing it in the practice session. Meanwhile, teacher 1 put it first. Despite not being clearly stated during the interview, it implied that she intended to check student's comprehension of earlier materials, such as simple past tense and simple present tense.

The integration of grammar and speaking skills in this session has been an intriguing topic among researchers. Previous studies discussed whether there were specific correlations between students' grammar skills and speaking skills. As such, prior research suggested a 13.8% improvement in speaking ability among students who have mastered grammar (Sacal & Potane, 2023). On the other hand, some studies also suggested a low correlation between students' competence in grammar and speaking ability. For instance, another study showed a low correlation between grammatical competence and speaking fluency ($r = 0.259$). However, the p-value for this correlation was more than 0.05, which indicates that the relationship is weak and not statistically significant. (Kusumawardani & Mardiyani, 2018). However, based on the observation, both teachers tended to be concerned with students' fluency rather than grammar by indicating high tolerance for students' grammatical errors. Therefore, students with relatively high fluency did not have a strong mastery of grammar.

There are 4 stages in scaffolding: the assistance provided by others, the assistance provided by the self, internalization, and de-automatization. In the initial stage, students receive guidance from experts or peers. As they progress, they move on to take more responsibility for their learning. Next, they internalize skills and processes and start to become independent learners. Finally, in the last stage, they navigate between external assistance and self-regulation (Puntambekar, 2022).

Assistance Provided by Others

The assistance provided by both teachers to students regarding speaking skills included giving motivation, translating unknown vocabulary, demonstrating, giving feedback, guiding sentence construction, and inviting peers to help.

The first type of assistance was giving motivation. Teacher 1 stressed that speaking English is not hard, and encouraged students to speak freely. Meanwhile, teacher 2 motivated students by telling them that better English skills could lead to career advancement and urging them to be courageous. Teachers also assisted with vocabulary

and structuring sentences. Teacher 1 often translated words. Meanwhile, Teacher 2 clarified that he helped with vocabulary and sentence structure during practice. Demonstrations were another form of assistance. For instance, Teacher 2 often provided examples of how to do storytelling.

Although guidance on sentence structure was offered when students struggled, both teachers tended to overlook minor grammar errors and focused more on building students' confidence. Teacher 2 emphasized the importance of speaking clearly and taking notes during practice. Feedback, primarily provided by Teacher 2, encouraged students to speak louder and to be more confident. Teacher 1 gave feedback on tenses and suggested more practice. On the other hand, teacher 2 sometimes gave special treatment by asking students to write vocabulary related to specific themes.

Both teachers also encouraged peer guidance. Teacher 1 asked capable students to help classmates, and Teacher 2 observed students collaborating during practice sessions. This collaboration often happened naturally or was encouraged during group activities.

The last observable assistance the teacher provided regarding speaking skills was through giving feedback. This was done particularly by teacher 2. Based on observations, Teacher 1 only provided feedback on paying attention to the use of tenses and encouraged speaking practice with everyone as the session was coming to an end. In contrast, Teacher 2 actively engaged with students during the practice session, offering feedback to speak louder and with great confidence, although he didn't give much attention to grammar.

Bakker (2015) identified the scaffolded assistance provided by teachers into 3 categories: affective scaffolding, analytic scaffolding, and social scaffolding. Affective scaffolding involves providing emotional support to students through interpersonal interactions and environmental resources, including encouragement, empathy, and understanding to help students overcome challenges and maintain a positive attitude, thus enhancing motivation and engagement. Analytical scaffolding provides support related to the subject matter that helps students develop a deeper understanding and greater fluency in a new language. It involves an instructional relationship where the educator helps the learner solve problems and develop cognitive skills through structured interactions. Lastly, Social scaffolding emphasizes the role of social interactions in the classroom to reinforce social norms and encourage student participation.

The motivation provided by the teacher is considered a form of affective scaffolding. Giving motivation helps reduce anxiety while students learn (Candiotto & Stapleton, 2024). Based on the findings, both teachers encourage students to overcome their fears and insecurities in speaking English. In this context, teacher motivation was to insist on the practicality of spoken English to students in their workplaces and ensure that making mistakes in learning is acceptable. Teacher's motivation aligns with the scaffolding principle, which holds that making mistakes during learning is acceptable, and encourages students to reflect on them either independently or with the help of others (Bıkmaz et al., 2010).

The second type of scaffolding is analytic scaffolding. Both Teachers applied this by offering vocabulary and grammar support, demonstration, and feedback. During speaking practice, these supports were consistently offered across multiple sessions whenever students experienced difficulty. A former study suggested that students tended

to learn vocabulary more effectively with a teacher's assistance compared to peer assistance and more traditional methods (Jamali Kivi et al., 2021). Additionally, both teachers also provided guidance on sentence structure when students struggled in formulating sentences although they were often ignoring minor grammatical errors to prioritize student confidence and participation. Teacher 1 allowed students to communicate even with grammatical errors, while Teacher 2 encouraged students to speak freely. Therefore, both teachers also aimed to create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable practicing their language skills and their grammar would gradually improve over time (Laksmi, 2006).

Furthermore, Teacher 2 specifically demonstrated how to perform storytelling in front of the class. This technique aimed to assist students who had difficulty understanding how to practice. Teachers hoped students would imitate similar communication styles by providing relevant examples. Demonstration makes the learning experience feel tangible and easy to understand and learn more(Li & Zhang, 2022). The teacher also provided feedback on students, particularly before the practicing session ended. In providing feedback, Teacher 2 focused on confidence rather than grammar. On the other hand, Teacher 1's feedback focused on reminding students to pay attention to tense usage and encouraging additional practice. A teacher who implements scaffolding incorporates feedback into teaching methods and ensures its effectiveness by integrating it into various learning activities (Li & Zhang, 2022).

Besides assistance from the teacher, the teacher also invited more knowledgeable students to assist their peers. This effort was in line with the social scaffolding. Peer help facilitated by Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 was evident in the classroom through examples where more able students helped their peers with grammatical structures and making sentences. Teacher 1 explicitly encouraged such collaboration. She occasionally delegated the role of helping fellow students to those more advanced in learning. A similar pattern was found in teacher 2's class, although in teacher 2's class, the initiative came from the students themselves. Peer teaching allows students to learn from their peers, providing significantly more practice opportunities (Merdjalilovna, 2022). Involving students in feedback enables them to contribute to knowledge creation (Wu & Miller, 2020). Previous research also highlighted the effectiveness of peer assistance in boosting students' confidence. This confidence stemmed from the feeling that students felt less intimidated when taught by peers rather than teachers (Gunawan & Nurbianta, 2020).

Assistance Provided by The Self

The assistance provided by the self is the process when students start to rely on self-learning. This process is heavily related to the concept of fading in scaffolding when the teacher slowly reduces the assistance to students to make them more independent (Han et al., 2021). A teacher who uses scaffolding believes in the process of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that an individual can complete a specific task successfully by himself (Sun & Hsu, 2019). During this process, student's learning turns from the level of social cognition to internal cognition (Puntambekar, 2022). Although students' learning is directed to be more reliant on themselves, teacher's support is still needed. As such, during speaking practice, both teachers were still concerned about giving limited assistance on what students couldn't do by themselves.

During the observation on teacher 1, it was noted that students demonstrated a degree of self-reliance in their learning, particularly in speaking activities where they were engaged in dialogue on specific topics. Despite encountering grammar errors, some students attempted to speak without seeking assistance from their peers or the teacher. Teacher 1 refrained from correcting errors immediately to maintain student confidence. In this learning environment, the teacher acted as an approachable peer. On the other hand, students in Teacher 2's class showed less confidence speaking in front of peers since the activity was storytelling in front of the class. To ease anxiety, Teacher 2 demonstrated speaking techniques and allowed students to use notes during presentations. Teacher 2 emphasized a supportive approach focused on encouraging students to speak without fear of mistakes.

Teacher 1's effort to not correct grammar too much indicated an effort to maintain a sense of independence and confidence in their language abilities. Rather than immediately correcting grammatical errors, teacher 1 prioritized maintaining students' confidence and comfort during speaking activities. During this process, teacher's interactions adapt continuously to meet immediate student needs (Bosanquet & Radford, 2019). Students during self-support need at least some level of support and guidance throughout the learning process (van de Pol et al., 2015). Therefore, teacher 1 would only start to assist if students asked for vocabulary or didn't know how to recite the sentence they wanted to utter. Reducing support slowly in teaching materials can benefit students, but withdrawing support too quickly can adversely affect their performance (Martin et al., 2019).

The similarity also was found in teacher 2's practice. He also prioritized student's confidence in speaking over grammatical accuracy. It was evident since the teacher didn't correct many students' grammatical errors. Instead, he just made a note for himself. The assistance was given when students didn't know how to say it in English. However, a challenge arose during the practice. Students tended to be more reluctant to speak when they had to in front of their classmates. A previous study found that when teachers use what is called a forced response, such as calling students to speak in front of the class, students will have relatively high anxiety levels (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020). Therefore, the teacher's assistance was focused on building student's confidence. He motivated them by asking them not to be afraid of making mistakes. The above assistance given by both teachers was a kind of teacher strategy of scaffolding called intervening scaffolding. It refers to limited assistance by teachers during specific stages of learning (Zarandi & Rahbar, 2016).

Internalization

The third stage of scaffolding is internalization when the teacher starts allowing students to rely on themselves as a whole. In this case, both teachers created an activity beyond the class which called outdoor activity. This activity was created to support students in implementing what they learned during the learning process. The implementation of outdoor activity varied among teachers. Nevertheless, most teachers used WhatsApp application to communicate with the students during outdoor activities.

Teacher 1 used the WhatsApp group to perform video or voice calls, motivating within the chat group, and encouraging them to practice speaking daily. The discussions

within the group often included everyday vocabulary and interesting topics, and voice notes were used to practice speaking directly. Teacher 1 also provided additional support that offered practical speaking tips.

Teacher 2, on the other hand, set challenges for students to practice spoken English daily. This effort involved practicing with roommates or speaking in front of a mirror and using sticky notes for vocabulary. The teacher also utilized the group to assist students, which involved answering questions at any time and using voice notes for complex explanations. He encouraged active participation by providing materials and insisting students ask questions if they struggled.

During this stage, students internalize the patterns and concepts they learn personally while the teacher greatly reduces the assistance. During this process, the teacher's role is collaborative rather than evaluative (West et al., 2019). The teacher's role in this activity was not only as a supervisor but also more actively facilitated the activity. This kind of activity was contemporarily well-known, especially during the Covid-19 outbreak. These kinds of research have been proposed. For instance, a prior research on the effect of WhatsApp interaction on improving students' speaking skills resulted in the improvement in student's speaking ability (Akkara et al., 2020). Another study also suggested the implementation of WhatsApp application to teach speaking ability might reduce student's anxiety as student didn't need to directly interacted face-to-face with teachers or students (Albogami & Algethami, 2022).

De-automatization

The final stage of scaffolding, de-automatization, aims for students to become completely independent in learning and autonomous in their daily speaking practice. This process is described as a transformation from external regulation to self-regulation as individuals learn new skills and explore different domains (Puntambekar, 2022). As students progress through previous stages, they become increasingly adept at managing their self-learning processes which results in gaining autonomy and mastery over the skills they are learning. This stage marks achievement in students' ability to self-manage and apply knowledge and competencies.

The main characteristic of students' de-automatization is spontaneity. Spontaneity is acquired once children can talk, plan, remember, think, and solve problems willingly and independently (Zhang, 2022). Reflecting on the observation, it presumed that neither teacher had implemented an effective strategy to achieve students' spontaneity. Observations showed that students in both classes had not progressed significantly in this part. It presumably happened since scaffolding needs a longer process to take effect, especially for students who have low proficiency in English (Margolis, 2020). Students' reluctance to initiate conversations during practice session without being asked by the teacher proved a reliance on external instruction rather than self-initiated actions, which indicated a lack of autonomy in their oral English practice.

Teacher 2 noted that the students' basic English skills were still very rudimentary, which affected their confidence and willingness to speak. To address this, teachers provided instructions, motivation, and stimuli to encourage students to converse. Teacher 1 clarified that students have varying levels of understanding, from basic to advanced, and teachers necessarily embed skills accordingly.

Furthermore, observations revealed that students tended to rely on their mother tongue, rather than English, even in communicative contexts outside of structured practical activities. Reliance on Indonesian indicated a lack of independence in spoken English and highlighted potential barriers, such as a lack of proficiency or confidence in English. If students have the same mother tongue as their peers, students feel comfortable and safe using their mother tongue in class when sharing or discussing course material as they try to prevent misunderstandings and fear of criticism from their peers (Penny, 1991).

CONCLUSION

The scaffolding method consisted of 4 stages the teacher used to build students' speaking ability. The stages are assistance provided by others, assistance provided by the self, internalization, and de-automatization. The stage of assistance provided by the others occurred particularly during speaking practice by both teachers. The assistance consisted of 3 scaffolding aspects: (1) affective; giving motivation, (2) analytic; vocabulary translation, structuring sentences, giving demonstration, and giving feedback, and (3) social scaffolding; Peers' assistance that appeared as well when the teacher asked peers in assisting other peers' vocabulary and grammar. The next stage involved assistance provided by the self, particularly evident during speaking practice activities. During this process, some students showed their self-reliance by trying to perform speaking without assistance. The teacher's strategy was to let students build up their confidence level by ignoring students' minor grammatical errors. The internalization of students' speaking skills occurred beyond the class by allowing them to practice daily. To monitor this, the teacher managed "outdoor activity" which used WhatsApp group to catalyze it. The "outdoor" activity consisted of various activities the teachers used to provide tasks and assist students' struggles. The last stage was de-automatization, which the teachers hadn't implemented effectively since students were not used to speaking English without instruction. Additionally, students preferred using their mother language rather than English to communicate during class activities beyond practice sessions.

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