

# Interaction and Second Language Development in EFL Based on Scaffolding Theory

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**Abstract.** How to facilitate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) interaction in the classroom is one of the key subjects of current research. In this area, interactive teaching has an important impact on EFL second language development, but there are still some gaps in specific teaching methods. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore how to effectively interact with EFL to improve their second language development under the guidance of scaffolding theory. This study examines two interactive tactics: 1) stopping as a communication tactic; 2) scaffolding as a mistake treatment. Besides, this study also reviews two teaching methods including language tasks and willingness to communicate based on scaffolding theory. By analyzing the characteristics of the four strategies, the researcher tries to find out appropriate teaching strategies that could be used, targeting at improving EFL's second language development. The study shows that error treatment and pausing can broaden EFL's zone of proximal development (ZPD) and language tasks such as role plays and improving willingness to communicate can facilitate interaction to promote L2 development.

**Keywords:** Interaction; Scaffolding theory; Second language development.

## 1. Introduction

With the development of China's new curriculum reform, curriculum design is increasingly changing from the traditional way that teachers impart knowledge and students passively accept knowledge. Instead, students are encouraged to actively participate in the interaction and express their opinions. In this way, students can develop innovative thinking and better comprehend the input of knowledge. In this context, how to correctly and effectively instruct students to participate in the interaction has become an important issue for our educators. This analysis utilizes Vygotsky's Scaffolding theory as a theoretical framework [1]. In addition, it also includes two interactive techniques, scaffolding as mistake treatment and stopping as a communication strategy, and two instructional approaches, language tasks and willingness to communicate. All of these strategies are essential, which can promote EFL's second language learning and help teachers activate the classroom atmosphere to deepen the understanding of what students learn. This paper will review these four strategies in detail in the main body part.

## 2. Scaffolding theory

### 2.1 The definition of Scaffolding theory

A teaching strategy known as scaffolding theory encourages students to work with teachers or with their assistance in order to advance in learning or to accomplish goals that were previously out of reach. The idea behind scaffolding is that rather than learning on their own, students learn better when collaborating with others who have a wider range of abilities and knowledge than they do. These instructors or peers are two "scaffolding" subjects who assist the student in extending his or her learning boundaries and learning more in negotiated contact than he or she would be able to on their own [2].

### 2.2 An educational concept: Zone of Proximal Development

The educational concept known as the "zone of proximal development," or ZPD, was developed by Vygotsky based on the scaffolding hypothesis. ZPD refers to a student's capacity to attain a degree

of knowledge that they are unable to do on their own but can do with the assistance of others, such as teachers. It speaks of the level that learners can presently reach. [2]

ZPD is frequently compared to a collection of concentric circles. The smallest circle represents the set of abilities that students can master on their own, while the middle circle represents ZPD, which kids can only complete with the assistance of their professors or classmates. And the largest circle is a zone that students are not able to achieve yet, even with assistance. For example, there is a kindergartner who needs to learn how to speak. Although he is very familiar with the alphabet and can say some simple words like Dad or Mom, he can't speak a complete sentence or deliver a speech by himself or under lots of guidance. However, with the teachers' help, he can speak some simple sentences like "Good morning!" or "I am hungry" because this skill is within his ZPD. Without teachers' help, he may learn how to speak in the future, but it needs a long time. Depending on assistance, he can reach this level quickly and also understand the meaning of the sentence. In brief, uncomplicated sentences is the student's ZPD, and the teacher who teaches him these phrases is the scaffolding. Supporters of ZPD and instructional scaffolding, according to Sarikas, argue that these strategies can assist students in learning as much as possible [2]. She emphasized that while scaffolding can be used to assist anyone of any age with something new, it is most usually employed in the classroom with younger kids (including preschool and elementary school) since they are regularly exposed to new capabilities and concepts. Nevertheless, according to Michael Long's interaction theory, interaction leads to SLA when meaning is discussed between two or more learners. It proves that scaffolding is also suitable for those EFL in high school.

### 2.3. Interactive Strategies

It is significant for both educators and students to recognize the specific interactive strategies so as to assist others. Pica demonstrates how linguistic units are rephrased, repeated, and restructured in negotiated engagement to enhance comprehension and enable learners the chance to detect aspects of the target language. [3] It demonstrates how communication can help someone learn a second language. Below is a sample of how negotiated interaction supports L2 development, as seen in example (1). Data for the example was obtained from Alison Mackey's recent study [4].

Example 1:

Native Speaker(NS): Over the plant, there is a set of reading glasses.

Non-Native Speaker(NNS): A what?

NS: To read the newspaper, do you need to wear glasses?

NNS: Glassi?

NS: If you are visually impaired, you should wear reading glasses.

NNS: Reading glasses, you say. Ah, ah, spectacles for reading.

NS: I agree.

(P.559)

In this instance, the NNS does not grasp the word glasses. Thus, the NS repeats it and rephrases it before giving it to the NNS and explaining a synonym to help the NNS understand and explain the term more easily.

#### 2.3.1. Scaffolding as Error Treatment

Scaffolding as error treatment is a very common interactive strategy to use between students. When interlocutors with weak English skills make mistakes in their discourse, others can provide corrective feedback. According to Metcalfe and Finn, scaffolding provides flexible and dynamic feedback that can be adjusted to each student's knowledge and skills. [5]. It can be found in the following example (2) from Lascotte [6]. In this example, there are two students: Marine (M) and Sylvie (S):

Example 2:

S: At the beginning of the year, I had a letter from Jack's mother in my work inbox, but I didn't read it for two weeks since I didn't get on the s—.

M: Address

S: Address. Anyway, she extends an invitation for me to attend their home-cooked meal.  
(p.266)

In this case, Sylvie agrees with Marine's linguistic suggestions. Typically, Sylvie will refer to this communication as "location" (due to L1 transfer from French: le site). Marine interrupts Sylvie with what she believes to be the correct term, as Sylvie repeats the corrections as a mediate uptake. In accordance with the scaffolding hypothesis, Marine successfully scaffolds Sylvie by giving her constructive criticism, and Sylvie is proficient with new vocabulary. It shows that when people with good English give feedback to people with poor English, people who are weak in English are always quick to accept it. But this example does not explain much about whether high-level students will accept corrective feedback from low-level students.

### 2.3.2. Pausing as a communication strategy

Pausing is another useful strategy to promote L2 development between two kinds of people: (a) students and students, (b) teachers and students

As for students in pairs, lower-level students often utilize pauses or circumlocutions as signals to ask for help. In this way, these students can be boosted to understand phrases that they are not familiar with. Here is an example (3) given by Lascotte [6]:

Example 3:

S: Address. Anyway, she extends an invitation for me to attend their home-cooked meal. I responded to her two weeks later with something like, "Uh, I didn't check my work email. I'm a fantastic teacher. Don't stress! also she (1)

M: She responded?

S: Yes, she replied, and I always invited them to join me for dinner in October, so I needed to confirm the date.  
(p.268)

In this illustration, Sylvie pauses to show her uncertainty. Although such a pause might cause the discourse to end, she still received Marine's corrective feedback soon after the pause. This suggests that low-level language learners sometimes use pauses to allow high-level learners to act as a scaffold in order to help them get the correct information faster.

As for teachers and students, teachers always use pauses to emphasize some key points or want students to pay attention. Below is an example (4) from Xie[7]:

Example 4:

T(Teacher): When the verb wish is used before a that-clause, followed is a ——(pause)

Ss(Students): Subjunctive!

T: Exactly.”

(p. 67)

In this example, the teacher uses a pause behind “a” in order to attract students' attention and hope that students participate in the class discussion. When students give a correct answer, the teacher says “Exactly” to praise it. This appropriate pause can better deepen students' impression of the knowledge point, so as to achieve the function of emphasis. At the same time, the right pause gives students enough time to think, which can promote the efficiency of classroom interaction between teachers and students.

### 3. The Way to Facilitate Interaction

Interactive strategies manifest that interaction can facilitate students' L2 development. Here are more specific details such as teaching methods concerning how to facilitate interaction in the EFL classroom. In educational settings, where interaction is defined as a scenario in which people act on one another, teachers and students act upon one another and may or may not interpret each other's behaviors [8]. Based on the questionnaire that was the subject of high school research, interaction is related to (a) the different kinds of language tasks and (b) the readiness to speak [8].

#### 3.1 Language tasks facilitating interaction

According to Rebecca, there are numerous language tasks that can be used in an L2 teaching classroom [8]. For example, some tasks include simulations, role plays, drama, games, and utilizing multimedia. Simulation is a very general term in which students participate in a wide range of activities in a very broad field such as art, military, life, trade, or everything. Role play is a form of simulation. In L2 role play, participants experience a particular character type and target culture. They were asked to memorize, rewrite, and even create new words for the role in front of the whole class. For example, if an American student will play the role of a waiter in a Chinese restaurant, he must be familiar with Chinese culture to make his role more realistic. When they are performing their roles, the teacher will give them corrective feedback on their language mistakes.

Besides, this kind of deduction is usually carried out in pairs or in a small group, which forms the role of the teacher as the leader and the members of the group as the scaffolding for each other. In addition, this deduction can greatly reduce the risk while allowing students to experience the target culture. If a high school student wants to experience the Model United Nations activities, it is safer than his real participation in the United Nations activities, which will not lead to other factors. Such tasks, according to Scarcella and Crookall, offer a significant amount of real language, encourage active student participation, and arouse students' motivation, interest, and interest in the target culture. They also give the learners the opportunity to utilize L2 communication skills [9]. A collaborative pattern of engagement, as opposed to other patterns (e.g., dominant/dominant or dominant/passive), is more favorable to L2 learning, according to Chen. What's more, the study discovered that these intermediate learners might transform their dyadic interactional relationship from a non-collaborative to a more collaborative end, along with an increasing frequency of language-related discussion [10].

Additionally, teachers should provide various contexts based on the many EFL features, with intersectional focusing primarily on the three dimensions of social, emotive, and intersectional. If the interaction factor is disregarded, this type of role-playing is unsuccessful. The following example (5) illustrates it [10]:

Example 5:

Dialog #1:[+episodic]

Flight Attendant: Sorry, this area is a smoke-free zone.

Passenger Attendant: I was unaware. Sorry.

Flight Attendant: I'll move your seat if you'd like.

Passenger: Oh, it's okay. I probably smoke too much.

Dialog #2:[-episodic]

Wife: John, you stated that you will quit smoking!

Husband: Sorry.

Wife: If you hand over your cigarettes to me. They'll be hidden from your view, I promise.

Husband: Dear, that's a wise concept. Here.

(p.30)

Although both dialogues have a similar theme about smoking, if neglecting the social dimension, the sentence that comes out of a wife's mouth sounds inappropriate when spoken by a flight attendant to a passenger. Based on this, teachers should consider EFL's own dimensions to establish appropriate situations to achieve more effective interaction.

### 3.2 Willingness to communicate which is a significant fact in interaction

The second element of classroom engagement is communication readiness, which affects how much students participate in class and the variety of opportunities there are for contact. So according to research, communication readiness is correlated with mood, self-worth, personality, anxiety, and perceived competence [11]. It indicates how being at ease, having a high feeling of one's own value, being outgoing, having low levels of fear, and being viewed as competent are typically associated with confident speakers. On the other hand, an unwilling speaker is associated with discomfort, low self-esteem, introversion, nervousness, and a sense of inadequacy. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, emotional factors can hinder or speed up language acquisition [12]. Language acquisition can only be completed under the following three emotional circumstances: (a) learners' attention is highly stimulated; (b) learners are confident and do not feel anxious. Based on this, the instructor should think about ways to encourage participation and provide learners, especially those who are mute, a sense of security. There is research made by Richard to get silent students to have the willingness to talk in Classroom [13]. The five students were classified by their teachers as being silent, untalkative, or non-verbal. He also gave a distinction between silent and non-verbal. The silent child is that they may answer the questions from teachers but they do not actively participate in the class discussions. If the teacher asks them to attend, they can also take part in the group discussion. Whereas nonverbal child, they seldom join in any type of discussion though teachers encourage them to do it [13].

With the purpose of stimulating speech, Richard chose three different techniques. The first technique is to let students take turns telling one story a week. The second technique is to increase teachers' involvement based on the first method. The teacher will share his experience as a story and then encourage students to participate in the story discussion. The third technique is to ask subjects directly instead of using the modeling procedure. The most obvious finding of the study is that nonverbal kids pick up the language. At first, none of the three techniques had any effect on the subjects' verbal stimulation. But after three weeks, the students became more active. Studies have shown that once students are willing to start talking, the teacher's words (direct or indirect questions) and their labels have no effect, eliciting just as many verbal responses.

Richard's experiment is a good demonstration of Krashen's affective filtering hypothesis. This suggests that children need an environment that is extremely relaxed and encourages them to talk. This reduces their anxiety and gives them confidence in their language skills. Those who remained silent did so because they perceived the risk of speaking was greater than the risk of not speaking. They are likely to receive negative criticism from teachers. If the teacher can make them think that talking in this environment is a low-risk, high-reward situation, they'll start talking. In addition, the study also proved that willingness to talk had nothing to do with labeling.

Based on this, a teacher can start with anxiety, self-confidence, and learning motivation to stimulate students' language output and classroom interaction.

## 4. Conclusion

This review paper is to investigate two questions: First, what methods do students utilize in negotiated interactions to scaffold themselves or to be scaffolded by their counterparts? Second, how can interaction facilitate second language development? This article illustrates teachers can utilize two interactive tactics based on the scaffolding theory: scaffolding as mistake management and stopping as a communication strategy to grab EFL's interest. Scaffolding as an error treatment is when native speakers repeat the correct words or sentences to a non-native speaker in order to deepen their understanding of this language. Pausing as a communication strategy has a dual impact on both teachers and EFL. High-level students often use a pause to give corrective feedback to low-level students aiming at making them correct the information faster. From another perspective, teachers use pause as a signal of emphasis, which can make students pay more attention to this content, and this pause will also give students enough time to exchange their opinions with each other and think

alone. In addition, it greatly strengthens the teachers' teaching efficiency and students' learning atmosphere. What's more, two teaching methods including language tasks and willingness to communicate show that students' interaction can make a great influence on their L2 development. These methods can also facilitate their effective interaction in the EFL classroom.

The main contribution of this paper is based on scaffolding theory, it is necessary to investigate how to use interactive teaching to improve their language learning ability and second language development in EFL classroom teaching. This paper shows that the traditional teacher-centered teaching model is no longer suitable for students' second language learning under the development of contemporary new education curricula. What's more, interactive teaching can better provide students with an authentic language environment and English learning ability.

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