

English Teaching of Writing in Junior Middle School based on Scaffolding Instruction

-- A Case Study of "Write a Description of Your New Invention"

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Abstract

There is a new teaching method called Scaffolding, which is so well-adapted that is very popular in various kinds of fields. In English, compared to the traditional English writing, students can not improve their ability under a boring teaching. Worse still, day after day, they lose their passion. At the same time, teachers cannot clearly find the root of the problem in the face of such a dilemma, neither. As a result, what is of great significance is that teachers should step out the comfort zone and try a new way- Scaffolding Instruction. This paper just takes one writing task in 3b, Section B, Unit 6 in the English textbook for grade nine of the People's Education Press' edition--Write a description of your new invention as an example, which aims to illustrate the application of Scaffolding.

Keywords

English Teaching of Writing; Scaffolding Instruction; A Case Study; Building Scaffolding; Undo Scaffolding.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

As is known to all, listening and reading are input skills while writing and speaking are output skills. Writing allows students to express their ideas and emotion in a written form. Chomsky once said that the ability of written expression could not be naturally acquired (Lu Yanping, 2015). However, due to the limitation of class time, teachers usually assign writing homework as the most time of training writing (Ma Saiwen,2019). As time goes by, students' writing ability is worse and worse and their autonomy is not high.

1.2. Research Purpose

It is to make teachers use effective method of teaching writing. It is not an uncommon phenomenon that some teachers will directly explain how to write the beginning, middle and end of a composition. Of course, the students can understand it. However, without a careful teaching design, the teacher may not achieve the ideal effect.

It is to improve students' writing skills. Scaffolding Instruction creates different types of scaffoldings and each of them has its unique function. Students fully exercise their thinking ability in a short class. Thus, it also further improves their writing ability.

1.3. Research Significance

It is conducive to creating a good classroom atmosphere. Scaffolding Instruction is an interesting teaching method to regulate the status of both students and teachers. Its structure is very clear. Especially for teachers, they can keep a clear mind all the time. And students can also have a general grasp of the whole link. Unlike the boring writing teaching, such teaching method blocks the vicious circle of the old methods.

It is propitious to carry forward the spirit of innovation. If a teacher directly says how to write a composition, he will certainly save a lot of time. However, teachers must be too lazy to try new method. They are afraid of a series of problems associated with it. Therefore, Scaffolding Instruction prevents the generation of changeless thinking patterns.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition

Scaffolding was proposed by Bruner in the 1970s. It refers to the process that teachers or companions who are more capable provide help and support for students who can't deal with the problems alone (Zhu Ling,2016).

2.2. Theoretical Basis

2.2.1. The Zone of Proximal Development Theory

Wu Lirong and Gao Suxia (2008) said that what students can't do independently today can be done with the help of adults. Although today they can only rely on others to do it, tomorrow they can do it independently. Thus, Vygotsky identified two levels of development, -- "zone of existing development" and "zone of proximal development".

2.3. Study at Home and Abroad

2.3.1. Study at Home

Many scholars have researched the benefits of applying Scaffolding Instruction in English writing. Zhu Ling (2016) claimed that it can effectively reduce students' problems in writing and improve their writing ability through building scaffolding, cooperative discussion, independent exploration and so on. It also makes students have something to write and finally improve students' writing ability and comprehensive ability to use knowledge (Kang Yi,2021). Zhang Rongting (2019) thought that it reduces learning difficulty and strengthens students' self-awareness in writing. Besides, it told that the task of teachers is to build a suitable support for students at an appropriate time, so that students can reach another higher level of development in writing (Ren Jiaoping,2019). Wu Lirong and Gao Suxia (2008) thought that Scaffolding Instruction heightens students' self-study ability.

2.3.2. Study Abroad

The literature of Scaffolding Instruction and English teaching of writing is not much. But many researchers emphasized the importance of Scaffolding Instruction for learning. Boche and Henning (2015) illustrated how to incorporate multimodality into the classroom as a way to scaffold learning. Lee (2018) thought that evidence-based writing, a complex standard in the Common Core that is at the center of the writing curriculum, can be scaffolded for English learners using three steps focused on three basic writing moves. Carol, Willy and Jun (2014) talked about the impact of metacognitive scaffolding and monitoring on reading comprehension. Besides, Larkin (2002) said that scaffolded instruction optimizes student learning by providing a supportive environment while facilitating student independence. Safadi and Rababah (2012) reported that it is recommended that scaffolding instruction be integrated into the EFL curriculum, and that teachers be advised to match their teaching techniques with the students' zones of proximal development.

3. A Case Study

3.1. The Analysis of the Textbook

According to the English textbook (The People's Education Press, 2014), it is for grade nine which is published by the People's Education Press. And the writing case is in Unit 6 where the

topic is about invention and the function is to talk about the history of inventions. In addition, students have to grasp passive voice and past tense. A whole unit is divided into Section A and Section B, and the writing part is just in the end of Section B. In addition, there are several new nouns, verbs, adjectives and phrases.

3.2. Build Scaffolding

3.2.1. Create Interest Scaffolding

The teacher assumes that she is a businesswoman who is holding a press conference to explain her invention to the public. Then she can prepare some teaching aids as prompts for students. Multimedia is also a good choice. In this step, some previous words can be reviewed and some new words can be introduced. Teacher's role-playing adds fun to the classroom. Though a subject-related situation, the theme will also be introduced naturally and amusingly (Liu Tingting,2020).

3.2.2. Create Problem Scaffolding

The teacher puts forward a problem--Imagine that the student is a businessman, write a description of his new invention and try to sell the invention to the class. Important the difficulty level of language should be. The difficulty had better be close to the Zone of Proximal Development. Namely, it is both challenging and students can do it with efforts. In addition, this problem scaffolding is based on a real situation.

3.2.3. Create Language Scaffolding

The teacher requires students to read the content on PPT which are the words to describe the form of the invention, the verb indicating the invention' effect, and the expression of the past tense and the passive voice, such as "it was invented in when", "it was invented by who" and "it is used for".

3.2.4. Create Structure Scaffolding

The outline can be divided into three parts. The first part briefly introduces the invention. The second part focuses on the role and reasons why you invented it. And the third part is a summary. A clear structure is just like a compass and it also reduces students' psychological pressure. Then students discuss in groups, which leads students to become scaffoldings for each other (Tang Liping, 2021).

3.2.5. Create Evaluation Scaffolding

The teacher shows an evaluation standard for students to consult when they grade the composition. The evaluation standard contains the aspect of calligraphy, number of words, structure, grammar, language and other elements. Students need to know where the points should be deducted and how to be deducted. They should also know what a good composition is like.

3.3. Undo Scaffolding

Students begin to write by themselves. As long as they can expound the inventor, time, place, shape, color and role, this composition basically take shape. Then, students evaluate themselves. After this, they modify the composition with each other and imitate selling in groups. In this process, the students unknowingly improve the ability of self-evaluation and mutual evaluation. Finally, well-written students sell inventions at the platform. After class, the teacher modifies the composition. And students revise the composition again.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Results

For architecture, scaffolding is an essential part. In English teaching of writing, writing is just like architecture. Teachers need to use Scaffolding Instruction. At first, the teacher creates scaffoldings, such as the scaffolding of interest, problem, language and structure. There is a gradual relationship among them, which pave the way for the final output of writing. However, the ultimate goal of setting up the scaffolding is to remove it. Students should ultimately complete the task without the help of their teacher or classmates. They ought to write a composition by themselves. At some levels, students are approaching the Zone of Proximal Development by degrees.

With regard to Scaffolding Instruction in an English writing class, students are the center. Therefore, a teacher should think over student's needs and interests all the time, which is fully reflected in the design of scaffoldings. In addition, timely and appropriate feedback is an indispensable part. Furthermore, the school also has to assign more class hours to writing. Only in this way, can Scaffolding Instruction be applied better.

4.2. Limitations

This study is just an idealized thought, and it is not put into practice. So it is not clear if a good effect can be achieved. Thus, the author hopes to have the opportunity to take the writing class one day. Moreover, it can be further improved through the feedback of students and colleagues and the final writing effect.

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