



## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCAFFOLDING METHOD IN EFL CLASSROOM: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

Belly Ubaidila<sup>1</sup>, Afida Safriani<sup>2</sup>, Agus Salim<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, <sup>3</sup>MAN Kota Surabaya

<sup>1</sup> [bellyubaidila@gmail.com](mailto:bellyubaidila@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup> [afida.safriani@uinsa.ac.id](mailto:afida.safriani@uinsa.ac.id), <sup>3</sup> [agussalim34084@gmail.com](mailto:agussalim34084@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract:**

This study explores the various kinds and the benefits of scaffolding methods that are implemented in EFL classrooms at the secondary school of MAN Kota Surabaya to enhance language acquisition. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, the research involved systematic classroom observations and student interviews to identify specific scaffolding implemented by the teacher in their teaching process and the benefit that the students get in their learning process. The findings revealed that the scaffolding methods used like visual aids, translation, group work, feedback, and activating prior knowledge significantly contribute to improving students' linguistic competence, confidence, and engagement. Visual aids improve students' understanding of abstract concepts. The translation is effective in bridging the gaps in linguistics. Group work can facilitate peer learning and decrease anxiety. Activating prior knowledge can recall and strengthen the previous knowledge, and feedback verbally and physically build up a positive attitude, error correction, and a supportive learning environment. This study explores the various kinds of scaffolding strategies and the benefits for the students in EFL education, showing its benefit to offer tailored instructional support that suits the specific students' needs.

**Keywords:** *EFL Classroom, Scaffolding Method*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the alternative methods that can be implemented by teachers to teach English, especially to non-native speakers, is scaffolding. These methods are aligned well with the socio-cultural theory of Zone Proximal Development (ZPD) from Vygotsky, which allows teachers to gradually support the students in becoming independent (Alghamdy, 2024). This instructional method supports the students in a structured way that encourages them to face challenging work while continuously progressing the necessary skills and knowledge to gain independence (Van Der Stuyf, 2002). The implementation of scaffolding by the teacher can help learners understand complex concepts by offering guidance and gradually withdrawing support as the students become more proficient (Larkin, 2001). Originating from the initial study of Wood, et al. (1976), scaffolding is a well-established theoretical background, particularly in educational psychology and pedagogy (Santos & Fabrício, 2006). The main goal of scaffolding is as the assistance temporarily but responsively (Van de Pol, et al., 2010). It means that the support adapts to the student's needs and will be decreased as their understanding and abilities grow (Al-Yami, 2008). This approach is closely connected to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It is stated that students can reach more by the teacher's guidance before their independence. Scaffolding aligns with ZPD by providing the "bridge" for learners' current need to achieve beyond their current capabilities into higher levels of competence (Face, 2024).

In EFL instruction, scaffolding takes various forms with teachers adapting strategies based on the particular needs of their learners. Such as translation, modelling, offering feedback, encouraging group work, activating prior knowledge, pre-teaching



essential vocabulary, and employing visual aids (Utthavudhikorn & Soontornwipast, 2024) are some of the approaches that can decrease cognitive overloading for students. Highlighting this cognitive burden, scaffolding enables learners to direct their mental resources towards acquiring new skills rather than becoming overwhelmed by the complexity of the task itself (Ibid). For example, teachers can use translation to clarify instructions or complex language, while group work facilitates peer support, providing students with both social and linguistic benefits. Activating prior knowledge allows students to bridge the additional material with their previous knowledge, thus it is easy to integrate new concepts. Similarly, pre-teaching vocabulary equips students with the language they need to understand lesson content, and visual aids help students comprehend abstract ideas through concrete images or representations. Each of these strategies fosters an environment of supportive learning that helps the English language learners.

Some studies on scaffolding as a pedagogical tool have shown that it has significant advantages for various students of different levels and backgrounds. It can positively impact motivation, engagement, and performance of academics. A study by Van de Pol, et al. (2010), in their meta-analysis of scaffolding research, identifies various main characteristics of scaffolding as support, decrease, and independence. Furthermore, it indicates that scaffolding positively influences students' learning outcomes. Gibbons (2002) also highlighted the importance of scaffolding in helping second-language learners acquire academic proficiency, noting that the careful structuring of tasks enables these learners to gradually develop the linguistic skills necessary for academic success. Gibbons advocated for scaffolding strategies that are aligned to the language abilities of the learners, especially in multilingual classroom settings, where different language backgrounds may need different instructional approaches and design. By creating a connection between conversational and academic language, scaffolding reinforces students to progress through different linguistic levels, therefore making it more understandable and easier for complex language.

Furthermore, Hammond and Gibbons (2005) examine the adaptability of scaffolding methods, emphasizing the teacher's role in managing the support level as the improvement of learners' skills. Thus, this dynamic nature of scaffolding contributes to the highly effective support for students' development, since the teachers can develop, maintain, or decrease support based on individual learners' progress. Their study highlights that scaffolding should not be static, but it should be dynamic with a responsive process that adapts based on learners' needs. In addition, scaffolding can help students to get to higher levels of understanding and achieve skills than they would grasp by themselves, thus making the learning process more meaningful and effective.

Besides the number of studies on scaffolding across a variety of education levels, there is a gap regarding its implementation in secondary EFL classroom settings. Some of the studies have focused on early childhood education for young learners (Radford, et al., 2015; Hughes, 2010; Choi, et al., 2019) where scaffolding is believed to be an essential foundation in learning, and another is for adult learners (Ortega, 2023; Li & Zhang, 2022) where it can support complexities in academic skill development.



However, secondary school students, who are particularly learning English as a foreign language (EFL), face different challenges that need suitable instructional approaches. For example, secondary EFL students often face language anxiety, which can be a challenge for effective language learning. They also come with various levels of existing language knowledge and different levels of motivation, which can affect their learning experience. These unique factors encourage the importance of exploring scaffolding in secondary education settings, where learners are not only increasing their language abilities but also focusing on social, emotional, and cognitive dynamics that can affect their learning.

Additionally, the existing literature on scaffolding has tended to focus on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, with a few studies exploring practical implementation in the real classroom. Although foundational works such as those by Van Lier (2004) have contributed valuable insights into the sociocultural aspects of scaffolding and the importance of interaction in language learning, there is still a lack of research that explores how these theories translate into actual classroom practices. Van Lier emphasized the social interaction's role of contextualized learning for effective scaffolding methods, it suggests that language learning is not only about mastering vocabulary and grammar but also about being able to use meaningful language in the context of social. While his work is instrumental in providing a deeper insight of the scaffolding foundations theoretically, it limits the specification of empirical classroom practices that is implemented by the teachers.

Therefore, to fill the gap, the current research aims to explore the practical practice of the scaffolding method in an EFL classroom at MAN Kota Surabaya, a secondary school setting. This study explores identifying the variety of specific scaffolding methods implemented by the teacher, as well as knowing the advantages for students' language learning experiences. The research set to address these attached research questions:

1. What kinds of scaffolding methods are implemented by the teacher in the EFL classroom at MAN Kota Surabaya?
2. What are the benefits of implementing scaffolding methods for the students in the EFL classroom at MAN Kota Surabaya?

According to these 2 research questions, this study aims to expand the contribution of the pre-existence literature on scaffolding by offering information and insights into the practical implementation in secondary EFL classroom settings. The result of this research is expected to help educators understand deeply how to implement scaffolding strategies in tailoring the various and specific needs of secondary EFL learners. In conclusion, this study intended to provide a teaching and learning framework that teachers can use in various educational contexts to create a supportive learning environment through scaffolding methods, thus fostering language development and engagement of students. This study also illustrates how scaffolding is implemented in the classroom to bridge the gap between theoretical principles and practical classroom implementation that are effective and responsive to student's needs, especially in language learning.



## 2. METHOD

As stated above, this study used qualitative case study research design focuses on the following research questions: 1) what kinds of genre and text type are assessed in PISA, TOEFL, English book and English curriculum? and 2) What kind of genre and the text types was recommended on English course in Indonesia as language policy?

## 3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The research methodology of this current research adopts a qualitative descriptive to explore the application of the scaffolding method in EFL classrooms at MAN Kota Surabaya. Using both observation and semi-structured interviews, aiming to examine the specific scaffolding method employed by the teacher and the benefits of these methods in the student's learning experiences in the classroom. The participants include 1 pre-service teacher, who is teaching using these methods of scaffolding, and 5 tenth-grade students (XJ class), as the representative samples during these learning activities.

Moreover, the observational aspect of this study includes details of classroom interactions and processes, where scaffolding methods are implemented into teaching naturally. This observation was held for three class meetings, with a total amount of time of 1 hour, 30 minutes, and 2 seconds through the video recording. The recording of the teaching process allows for a comprehensive and repetitive analysis of the scaffolding practices in a structured way, looking at both verbal and non-verbal teacher-student interactions during the teaching and learning process. Repetitive observations can help to ensure a well-rounded insight into the process of scaffolding, as it captures the frequency of implementing these methods across the lessons. The observation process is focused on identifying specific scaffolding methods implemented.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews are also conducted with 5 students selected through purposive sampling to select the students who are capable of providing relevant information on the effectiveness of the scaffolding method. This method is proposed to know the student's perceptions and experiences during the scaffolding method implementation by their teacher in their classroom. Understanding the students' perspectives will inform a well-rounded understanding of how these instructional strategies affect the learners' motivation, engagement, and comprehension of the material. The semi-structured interviews also give a flexible form that enables students to tell their personal experiences and reflect on how scaffolding influenced their learning processes in studying English. The interview will be recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and narrated to ensure the students' viewpoints are accurate.

The data analysis is processed by coding the data into two main categories: (1) the kinds of scaffolding methods implemented by the teacher and (2) the benefits of the scaffolding method as perceived by the students. The first category, the recording of classroom observations is replayed three times and then carefully analyzed to ensure a comprehensive coding process accurately. This repetition allows for the correct identification and categorization of the various scaffolding methods. Then, each



identification will be categorized according to its instructional purpose and the theory behind that.

The second category focuses on the benefits of scaffolding, which involves analyzing the transcribed interview data from the students. Then, the students' responses are coded to identify the positive impacts of scaffolding on their learning experience in the classroom. These codes are then categorized to provide a clear picture of how scaffolding helps the students learning about English. With the combination of observational and interview data, it aims to address the two research questions offered with a comprehensive analysis that shows both the teacher's instructional practices and the students' subjective experiences in the classroom.

This methodological approach aims to describe the practical implementation of scaffolding methods in secondary EFL classrooms and give insightful information on how the methods can be tailored to fulfil the students' specific needs at the secondary school level. The results are expected to contribute a deeper understanding of scaffolding methods in EFL contexts and offer guidance for educators to implement these methods effectively for secondary students.

Based on the observation and interview on the implementation of the scaffolding method in the EFL classroom at the secondary school at MAN Kota Surabaya shows some types of scaffolding methods implemented by the pre-service teacher in the classroom and the benefits that students get. The methods of identifying and observing through classroom activities videos and students' interviews bring up multiple kinds of scaffolding methods to reinforce the EFL learning experience during the lesson. The following key scaffolding methods were prominently observed:

**Table 1** Scaffolding Method Observed in EFL Classroom (Meeting 1)

No.	Scaffolding Method	Implementation Process
1.	Visual aid	(2.05-7.55) The teacher began to show the video as an example of the project that the students made then
2.	Translation	(12.56-12.59) The teacher asked the students whether they had questions or not in English and then followed in Bahasa
3.	Group Work	(19.50-27.20) The teacher asked the students to make a group and the students worked in group
4.	Activating Prior Knowledge	(13.02-13.27), (16.27-16.44), (18.19-18.33) The teacher explained to the students to use the correct grammar between simple present tense and past tense as what they have learned previously

**Table 2** Scaffolding Method Observed in EFL Classroom (Meeting 2)

No.	Scaffolding Method	Implementation Process
1.	Group Work	(1.35-31.12) The students were asked by the teacher to work in groups to continue discussing their project



**Table 3** Scaffolding Method Observed in EFL Classroom (Meeting 3)

No.	Scaffolding Method	Implementation Process
1.	Visual aid	Video 1 (2.10-6.38) The teacher showed the first video of the students' project to review it together Video 2 (10.45-14.44) The teacher showed the second video of the students' project to review it together Video 3 (17.23-20.08) The teacher showed the third video of the students' project to review it together Video 4 (22.24-25.20) The teacher showed the fourth video of the students' project to review it together
2.	Translation	(1.12-1.15), (1.22-1.37) The teacher asked the question in English, then translated it into Bahasa (8.33-8.40) The teacher said "Your performance is good", then translated and repeated it in Bahasa
3.	Feedback	Review 1 (6.41-7.44) The teacher gave the feedback verbally and physically, such as saying "good job", and "excellent", and correcting the pronunciation "occur". For verbal, the teacher asked the class to clap their hand for their friends' project (7.46-8.32) The teacher encouraged the students to give feedback such as doing peer-review (8.33-8.40) The teacher appreciated the effort by saying "Your performance is good" Review 2 (14.05-14.09) The teacher invited the students to give applause for their friend's work (14.18-14.37) The teacher gave the feedback verbally about the performance of the students' video (14.42-15.52) The teacher encouraged the students to give feedback, to do peer review Review 3 (20.09-20.13) The teacher invited the students to give applause for their friend's work (20.36-21.40) The teacher encouraged the students to give feedback and to do peer review. Without first giving the review from her (21.45-21.54) The teacher repeated to invite the students to give applause for their friend's work (22.06-22.10) The teacher repeated to invite the students to give applause for their friend's work Review 4 (25.21-25.27) The teacher invited the students to give applause for their friend's work after the video finished playing (25.38-26.27) The teacher encouraged the students to give feedback and to do peer review. Without first giving the review from her (26.35-26.37) The teacher repeated to invite the students to give applause for their friend's work (28.56-29.08) The teacher appreciated the students' work verbally (29.10-29.15) The teacher repeatedly invited the students to give applause for their work.



### 3.1 Visual Aids

Visual aids, including photos and videos, were extensively used to enhance students' understanding of abstract concepts. These visual tools helped students organize information visually, making it easier to grasp complex ideas. For instance, the teacher used videos to introduce project-based learning tasks, providing a vivid example of the expected outcomes. This multimodal approach catered to different learning styles and made the material more accessible. Visual aids also served as reference points during lessons, helping students recall information and apply it in new contexts.

In this study, visual aids were applied in meetings 1 and 3 as a primary tool to demonstrate expected outcomes and clarify concepts. In meeting 1, in the minutes of (2:05–7:55), the teacher showed an example project video to give the overview to the students. In the following meeting 3, the teacher showed the multiple student projects videos as an output of their product, specifically at minutes (2:10–6:38), (10:45–14:44), (17:23–20:08), and (22:24–25:20). After replaying the videos, the teacher invited them to review and highlight key points shown. Having the following viewing and discussion allowed the students to visualize qualifications and identify aspects of successful projects, thus helping them to understand and replicate these qualities in their projects later.

Visual aids can be one of the strategies to create a scaffolding learning environment for the students to bridge the theoretical instructions with the real examples provided. To achieve the standardization of student work, the teacher should tell and put the relevant examples to avoid ambiguity, thus maximising students with clear and measurable standards.

### 3.2 Translation

Translation can be very helpful in the EFL classroom to bridge linguistic gaps and develop understanding. Teachers can employ translation to make it easier for students to grasp complex concepts by using their native language (L1). Translation strategies can be implemented to ensure students fully understand the instructions and feedback during the class. For example, in meeting 1 at (12:56–12:59), the teacher asked the students whether they had questions using English, then repeated in Bahasa to emphasize comprehension. Another translation method was also implemented in meeting 3 at (1:12–1:15), (1:22–1:37), and (8:33–8:40), where the teacher gave compliments in English like “Your performance is good”, then she translated the phrases into Bahasa.

In summary, translation serves as a linguistic scaffold that helps the students to understand the content without hindrance in language. By integrating both English and Bahasa in the English classroom, it can create an inclusive learning environment to keep balancing comprehension and participation to ensure that the students can engage fully with different English proficiency levels.

### 3.3 Group Work

Collaborative activities such as group or pair work, can develop interaction and engagement between student-to-student. By facilitating group work activities,



it can have peer-to-peer learning, thus the students can discuss topics, share ideas, and overcome challenges together. This student-to-student learning process can reduce anxiety in contrast to teacher-student interactions. Students will feel more comfortable discussing and exploring concepts with their friends. In project-based learning of these current observational activities, group work helps the students to fix complex works collaboratively and build responsibility collectively. This collaborative environment can give the students opportunities to boost critical thinking and communication skills since they share their ideas and give feedback from their peers directly.

In the data, Group work was emphasized in meetings 1 and 2, where students collaborated on projects to foster peer learning. In meeting 1, at (19:50–27:20), the teacher instructed students to work in groups, while in meeting 2, at (1:35–31:12), group activities continued as students discussed their projects together.

This collaborative structure leveraged peer support as a scaffold, providing an alternative to teacher-led instruction. Group activities encouraged students to navigate tasks together, share diverse ideas, and build on each other's strengths. This structure not only enhanced engagement but also promoted social learning, allowing students to learn from their peers' insights and strategies. It is aligned as the students' interview results stated that by having group work, they can engage and contribute to managing their team in completing their work in a more confident situation. They also feel motivated to work creatively and collaboratively.

### **3.4 Activating Prior Knowledge**

Teachers employed strategies to activate students' existing knowledge at the outset of new lessons. This method involved eliciting students' prior experiences and connecting them to new content, thereby creating a relevant and relatable context for learning. For example, at the beginning of a lesson on environmental issues, teachers might discuss local environmental problems that students are familiar with. By integrating new information into existing knowledge, allows the students to develop new understandings in cognitive structure forms. Having this approach in teaching and learning activities can engage the student's interest and curiosity about the topics.

Activating prior knowledge was implemented in the first meeting to recall the previous understanding of grammar concepts. The teacher told students to use the suitable tenses (simple present & past tense) for their current project, specifically at (13:02–13:27), (16:27–16:44), and (18:19–18:33) minutes.

Implementing this strategy can provide the foundation for learning new material for students and help them to connect the current works to existing knowledge that can enhance understanding and memory.

### **3.5 Feedback**

Verbal and physical feedback has an essential impact on forcing positive behaviours and correcting errors immediately. The teacher can give verbal feedback such as saying "well done" or "good job," to show the students on their efforts and successes in completing their work, thus being able to create a



supportive learning environment and boost students' confidence and motivation in learning. Additionally, physical feedback, such as clapping, smiling, and nodding, can reinforce a positive learning environment for students. These kinds of affirmations not only value students' correct responses but also motivate them to keep up their good efforts. Moreover, constructive feedback can show students' errors and guide them to correct their answers. It helps them to be aware and understand the mistakes that they have made in a supportive way.

This observation shows that feedback was frequently implemented in various ways to encourage learning and develop a positive atmosphere in the teaching and learning process. Across meeting 3, verbal feedback and peer review opportunities were abundant: in (6:41–7:44) and (14:18–14:37), the teacher offered positive affirmations like “good job” and encouraged peer applause after presentations. Physical feedback, such as clapping and applause, was also integrated at (7:46–8:32) and (8:33–8:40). Peer reviews were prompted at (14:42–15:52), (20:36–21:40), and throughout additional review sections, promoting student-led reflection.

Feedback acted as a reinforcement scaffold, guiding students in both skill improvement and confidence building. It is supported by the students' interview results that said they feel more confident after getting the guidance or recommendation of their work. In involving students in the process of giving feedback, the teacher empowers them to evaluate work critically, appreciate peers' achievements, and receive validation from their community, all of which contribute to an environment that is both supportive and growth-oriented.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study explores the practical application of the scaffolding method, particularly in the context of MAN Kota Surabaya as a secondary school in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It demonstrates the various scaffolding methods implemented in the classroom, including visual aids, translation, group work, activating prior knowledge, and feedback, in supporting language learning. Moreover, it also brings up the benefits of the student's English language learning that they feel more confident, engaged, and motivated by the implementation of scaffolding methods in the classroom.

Through these methods, students' language proficiency, engagement, and confidence are notably enhanced, as visual aids help students grasp abstract concepts more easily. Translating is useful to overcome language barriers in the process of English learning. Group work reinforces peer learning and can reduce anxiety among the students. Additionally, activating prior knowledge allows students to strengthen their existing knowledge. Verbal and non-verbal feedback can encourage positive behaviours, correct mistakes, and create a supportive learning atmosphere. Thus, this research contributes to showing valuable insights for EFL educators into how the scaffolding strategy can fix common challenges of language learning for secondary school education and create a supportive environment for English skill development.



In relation to these findings, it is suggested that teachers diversify scaffolding methods in their classroom by integrating more multimodal resources, such as digital media tools, to engage with various learning styles of students. Additionally, facilitating peer feedback in a more structured way can deepen the evaluative skills of students and encourage a collaborative learning environment as well as improve critical thinking. It is also recommended for EFL educators to get professional training on the implementation of scaffolding to maximize the benefits of these methods, and to support their students' specific needs. For future research, it is needed to explore scaffolding methods from different contexts and educational levels. Longitudinal studies can also assess the long-term impact of scaffolding for language memory and overall proficiency in language learning. This approach will further notify for the curriculum development and the best practical for EFL instruction in various educational settings.

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