DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 080 CS 510 771

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TITLE Scaffolding Experiences in Reading Instruction.
PUB DATE 2002-00-00
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Environment; *Constructivism (Learning); Elementary Education; Oral Reading; *Reading Instruction; *Scaffolding (Teaching Technique)

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of scaffolding and other techniques in teaching reading. It details numerous ways to employ scaffolding, such as the following: a teacher may read aloud new passages while students follow along; a teacher may print new words on the chalkboard before students read a passage which uses the words; and teachers may suggest students use the public library. The paper emphasizes that scaffolding may also be accomplished through Learning Styles Theory, which focuses on: classroom situations, such as temperature and seating; emotional elements such as conformity; sociological factors; scientific intelligences; and artistic intelligences. The article also discusses constructivism in reading instruction--in constructivism, the student is heavily involved in making curricular decisions. (PM)

Scaffolding Experiences in Reading Instruction.

by Marlow Ediger

Scaffolding Experiences in Reading Instruction

Scaffolding is a relevant term to emphasize in the teaching of reading. To scaffold means to bridge the gap between where the learner is presently in achievement and some higher ideal or goal. The goal can only be attained through instruction. This gap needs to be taken care of through careful planning by the reading teacher. What might the reading teacher do to assist pupils to move from present achievement to a higher and more complex objective (See Ediger, 1989, 7- 9)?

Scaffolding in the Reading Curriculum

More is expected from pupils and the teacher to assist the former to achieve well in reading. With annual state mandated tests for al pupils in grades three through eight being in the offing for the 2005- 2006 school year, measurable results are expected from students which will attempt to pinpoint which pupils are not achieving at an acceptable level. High stakes testing may come about whereby a pupil may not receive a high school diploma due to low test results. It behooves the teacher to have high achievable reading standards for each pupil. The best of teaching then needs to be in the offing.

First, in basal reader use, the teacher may read aloud selected passages to pupils which are perceived to cause problems in reading comprehension. The read aloud makes it possible for pupils to follow along these same words in their basal to comprehend the ensuing passage(s). Otherwise, the passages may cause word recognition difficulties by pupils which then hinder comprehension of content. Then too, pupils may learn to identify the words as the read aloud is in evidence. Sometimes too, there are too many new words for pupils to identify on a page of content. Scaffolding may hurdle these difficulties. If necessary, the entire selection may then be read aloud by the teacher as pupils follow along in their texts during the read aloud.

Second, when individualized reading is being emphasized, the pupil who has reading difficulties may scaffold by using accompanying cassette tapes or CD ROMS. As the recorded voice progresses in the sequential read aloud, the reader may follow along in his chosen library book. Here, the pupil learns to identify new words and comprehend content read. The recorded voice helps the pupil to grasp ideas which would not be possible without the recording. Thus, scaffolding is in evidence.

Third, the teacher may assist pupils to identify new words by printing these on the chalkboard, prior to silent reading activities. The new words will be contained in the ensuing content to be read. Otherwise, without pupils seeing and discussing each new word in terms of contextual meaning, pupils will not be ready for reading the new selection. By learning to identify the printed words as well as knowing the meaning of each, prior to silent/oral reading, the teacher scaffolds experiences for pupils so that comprehension problems are minimized.

Fourth, the teacher may assist pupils to use context clues to identify unknown words within the ongoing reading activity. Otherwise, the wrong word may be inserted contextually and obstruct meaningful reading. Without the scaffold, using context clues to identify the unknown word, the pupil would be hindered in word recognition. Using context clues assists the reader to become increasingly independent in reading. Also in helping pupils use needed phonics elements, the teacher guides learners to unlock the unknown word when using grapheme/phoneme relationships.

Fifth, the reading teacher needs to assist pupils to attain increased complexity levels of understanding print script. Creative thinking may be stressed in narrative writing by having pupils modify, for example, the character in the story. The setting, too, may be recreated. Brain storming can be important in creative thinking. Critical thought may be scaffolded by asking pupils to analyze facts from opinions, fantasy from reality, as well as accurate from inaccurate statements. Detecting bias, band wagon writings, and propaganda techniques in expository print need to be achieved by pupils. The teacher then scaffolds experiences for pupils so that higher cognitive level objectives my be achieved. Problem solving might well be implemented with the teacher demonstrating/modeling how this is done with identifying a problem, gathering information in answer to the dilemma, developing an hypothesis, and evaluating the latter. With evaluation, the hypothesis may be revised or accepted as is (See Dewey, 1916). Selected educators have emphasized that teachers think aloud when demonstrating the problem solving means of instruction. With indepth discussions, creative and critical thinking may be stressed in ongoing reading activities. Problem solving experiences, too, should be emphasized in context within an ongoing lesson/unit of study. The discussions and demonstrations help pupils to achieve more complex knowledge through scaffolding. Scaffolding represents the

teachable gap between what the pupil is achieving at the present time with that which stresses a more complex level of pupil attainment. The difference here may be taken care of, in degrees, through quality teaching as well as pupil effort.

Sixth, parental efforts may assist in scaffolding pupils to higher levels of achievement. For example, the parent needs to read quality library book's aloud to offspring. Carefully chosen books, interesting and comprehendible, provide pupils background information, useful to the listener in the school curriculum and in society. General knowledge acquired here will assist pupils to relate more of what has been learned in the home setting to new learnings to be achieved in school. The involved scaffold aids pupils to achieve, learn, and grow.

Seventh, pupils need to be assisted to achieve sequentially. The sequence must help pupils attain new objectives which are challenging and attainable. Diagnosis and remediation are inherent to take care of gaps in learning. Scaffolding is then necessary for the teacher to notice where background information is needed to take care of deficiencies. Quality learning opportunities are necessary to eliminate/minimize the deficiencies so that an improved sequence of experiences result.

Eighth, pupils who lack understanding of selected concepts and generalizations need assistance to scaffold what is known to a higher, more ideal level of achievement. Concrete, semi-concrete, and abstract materials, used in instruction, might well guide pupils to attach meaning and comprehension to identified concepts and generalizations. Being able to use these concepts/generalizations in functional situations might well indicate indepth understanding of these abstract terms.

Ninth, public library services need to provide time for a librarian to read aloud to children at prescribed times. Proper and appropriate oral reading skills must be in evidence. Also, a librarian, well versed in children's literature, needs to be available to assist learners to checkout developmental reading materials. The goal of a public library should be to help pupils checkout and read as many trade books and other materials as possible. The public library has an important role in assisting pupils to become good readers. No doubt, library books read to children as well as those books read at home will assist in scaffolding readers to higher levels of achievement.

Tenth, reading communities of parents who study pupil achievement in how to read need to establish goals in how to help pupils increase their reading skills. A planned series of meetings will help the community to become well versed in

assisting pupils in reading. Objectives need to be determined , activities to achieve these objectives, and appraisal procedures to notice if the objectives have been attained, need to be in the offing.

Advance organizers may be used to provide scaffolding to pupils to attach meaning to new knowledge and skills. Advance organizers as the name indicates are to assist pupils to obtain comprehendible subject matter prior to reading a given selection. The subject matter relates directly to the new content to be read. Scaffolding is being done here in helping pupils to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown. The gap is narrowed through the use of advance organizers. The subject matter, used to narrow the gap, is presented in small sequential steps. If the content in the advance organizer is too complex to narrow the gap, the teacher may need to provide smaller steps, progressively more difficult, to guide pupils to achieve the new objective(s) or goals (Ediger, 2002, 7- 10).

Constructivism in Teaching Pupils

Constructionists emphasize that pupils experience a developmental curriculum, not one imposed by state mandated objectives. Pupils construct their own knowledge in ongoing learning opportunities. Meaning and understanding by pupils is definitely emphasized in ongoing lessons and units of study. The teacher motivates and encourages pupils to learn. Students differ from each other in a plethora of ways. One size does not fit all, but learners bring to the lesson/unit of study a variety of talents and abilities. Gardner (1993) lists the following intelligences which pupils individually possess:

1. verbal intelligences such as pupils strengths lying in reading and writing to show what has been learned.
2. logical thinking, such as in mathematics, to reveal that which has been acquired.
3. musical/rhythmical intelligences to show through movement and dance what has been achieved.
4. intrapersonal intelligence to indicate strengths on an individual level, not a collaborative setting, to indicate what has been achieved.
5. interpersonal intelligence where a group has committee strengths to work together on a project, for example, to reveal learnings gained.
6. bodily/kinesthetic intelligences in which a pupil reveals through manual dexterity and kinesthetic procedures that which

has been acquired.

7. scientific intelligences whereby a pupil reveals strengths through objective thinking.

8. artistic intelligences which stresses pupils showing what has been learned through creative endeavors and in space figures.

Several of these intelligences cut across all curriculum areas such as logical thinking may be stressed in each academic discipline. Then too, objective thinking may be used across the curriculum. Objective thought emphasizes that the observer is emotionally neutral in what is being discussed so that personal opinions, biases, and prejudices are removed. Only that which describes accurately is in evidence. Creativity is valuable in all academic areas since novel, unique ideas are needed in problem solving. The "tried and true" may not work in solving a new problem, whereas an original solution may. By using multiple intelligences theory, the pupil uses his/her strengths to reveal achievement. In this way scaffolding is done by pupils individually to achieve as optimally as possible.

In constructivism, a philosophy of instruction, the pupil is heavily involved in making curricular decisions. He/she

1. develops knowledge. The teacher's role is to encourage and motivate pupils to stay on task.
2. feels intrinsically motivated to learn, work, and achieve.
3. sequences his/her very own learning.
4. has a preferred way of learning be it individually or collectively with others.
5. establishes purposes for learning subject matter.
6. appraises the self in terms of desired criteria.
7. identifies questions and problems on his/her own.
8. monitors his/her own progress.
9. relies upon the self to work out, harmoniously, dilemma situations where disagreements occur.
10. is able to work with others involving quality human relationships (Ediger, 2001, 37- 42).

Scaffolding may also be done through Learning Styles Theory (Searson and Dunn, 2001) including the following facets:

1. acceptable noise levels, temperature readings, and informal versus formal seating arrangements.
2. emotional elements such as conformity versus nonconformity, as well as preferences for structure versus choice in terms of what to learn.
3. sociological factors such as studying alone versus

with others as well as preferring a collegial versus a more authoritarian teacher.

4. physiological elements such as using auditory, tactual, and/or kinesthetic ways of learning. Included too are moving around or sitting still as well as eating versus not eating while concentrating on the task at hand.

5. psychological factors such as analytic learners who focus on facts in a step by step fashion which lead to an understanding, as compared to global learners who desire to understand how what is learned relates to themselves before focusing on to facts. Analytic students respond best to printed words whereas global learners respond better to illustrations and pictures.

Thus, the pupil may reach higher levels of cognition if he/she has opportunities to use personal learning styles to achieve vital objectives of instruction. Adhering to personal styles of learning, the pupil may use these theoretical constructs to bridge the gap between where he/she is achieving presently to some higher level of attainment.

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