Innovative Educational Practice for Impactful Teaching Strategies through Scaffolding Method

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Abstract: As technology progresses in education, 21st-century educators need to use impactful instructional methods to ensure that the focus of education is on preparing today's children for the future. However, the biggest challenge for most lecturers in Multimedia University is teaching the non-graded subjects (pass or fail in nature). Since the subjects do not affect the CGPA, students were found not being serious or showing interest in the class. Consequently, it affects the learning outcome of the subject and also the psychosocial and moral of the students and lecturers. Therefore, action research using the Scaffolding method with a group of lecturers teaching non-graded subjects to see the effectiveness and impact on student's learning. Grooming and Professional Etiquette subjects were chosen to be the focus of this study. The lecturers applied the new role of teachers in education using the scaffolding teaching method. Students were given tasks to organize a grooming and professional etiquette program while they showed groomed behavior. There were lectures and small discussions in the class before the event. There were peer discussion and collaboration before and during the event with minimum supervision from the lecturers. Survey questionnaires were distributed to the students at the end of the event/class for the particular semester. The results showed that this approach managed to boost up students' grooming and professional etiquette as well as their class participation. They enjoyed the activities, more attentive, and confident when experiencing the task themselves rather than listening to lectures and watching videos in the class.

Keywords: Education, Professional etiquette, Scaffolding, Teaching strategies

1. Introduction

Malaysia's education system is turning itself into the 21st-century inspired education system. Aspects of the 21st-century approach therefore allow students to apply critical thinking skills in problem-solving, be innovative in finding approaches, and interact or collaborate with the world to learn in projects.

At the same time, teachers are responsible for offering a holistic perspective and creating opportunities for students in decision-making, problem-solving, social skills, and team participation through 21st-century learning and teaching experiences (Aamirah, Lee & Melor, 2017).

According to a Professor of Instructional Design and Technology at Asia e University, Dr. Yusup Hashim (2014), teachers play a facilitating role in growing learner-centered, autonomous, and self-managed education. He highlighted two important points; 1) What are the new roles of the student in 21-century learning and; 2) What are the learning skills required in 21-century learning? The Assessment and Teaching 21 Century Skills (AT21CS), a research group stationed at the University of Melbourne Australia collaborating with a group of more than 250 researchers across 60 institutions worldwide have categorized 21 century AT21CS into four categories. The details are shown in Table 1 and 2 below:

Table 1: New Roles of Student in 21 Century Learning

1. Learner as a worker: The learner is doing the learning while the teacher is the designer of the learner's work
2. Self-directed learner: The teacher helps each learner to be an independent, self-directed, and self-motivated learner to prepare them for life-long learning
3. Learner as a teacher: The best way to learn is to teach. Learners will help other learners to learn as in peer tutoring practiced in massive open online courses (MOOC)

Source: Yusup Hashim (2014), Professor of Instructional Design and Technology, Asia e University

Table 2: The learning skills required in 21 century learning

1. Ways of thinking. Creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and learning
2. Ways of working. Communication and collaboration
3. Tools for working. Information and communications technology (ICT) and information literacy
4. Skills for living in the world. Citizenship, life and career, and personal and social responsibility

Source: Yusup Hashim, Professor of Instructional Design and Technology, Asia e University

Furthermore, Malaysia recognizes the critical role of education as the driving force of its process of transformation into a knowledge-based society as a required prerequisite in the information age to become a developed nation. The education industry is therefore expected to train young learners to become responsible people capable of making valuable contributions to the achievement of this national target in their respective capabilities. To prepare the education sector for this task, policy-makers considered the full integration of information technology in the education system at all levels of learning as necessary (Garba, Byabazaire & Busthami, 2015).

One of the methods that are growing in its popularity in teaching and learning is scaffolding. It is a method in which teachers model or illustrate how to solve a problem, and then step back, providing help where appropriate. The idea is that when students are given the help they need when learning something new, they have a greater chance of successfully utilizing that experience. The common model for understanding and describing the scaffolding involves flexibility, fading, and assigning responsibility. A contingency is used to clarify, or support, how the specialist influences the learner. The selection and deployment of effective contingencies depend on understanding the learner's current level of skills. This idea is derived from the concepts of social learning of Vygotsky (1980). Van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen (2010) defined scaffolding by considering three central characteristics shown in Figure 1.

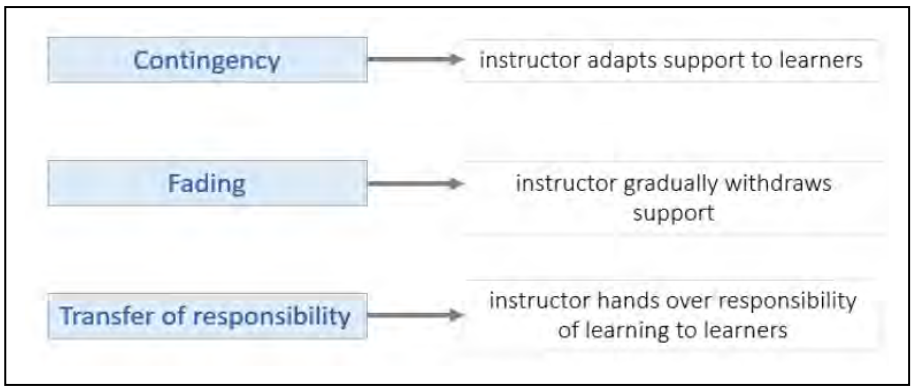

Fig. 1 Central characteristics of scaffolding

1.2 Problem Statement

Due to the advancement of technology in education, educators of the 21st-century must use impactful teaching strategies to ensure the focus of education is to prepare the children of today for the future (Shafie, Majid, & Ismail, 2019). However, the biggest challenge for most lecturers in Multimedia University is teaching the non-graded subjects (pass or fail in nature). Since the subjects do not affect the CGPA, students were found not being serious or showing interest in the class with poor attendance and participation in class activities. Consequently, it affects the learning outcome of the subject and also the psychosocial and moral of the students and lecturers. It is crucial to conduct action research using the Scaffolding method with a group of lecturers teaching non-graded subjects to see the effectiveness and impact on student's learning. Therefore, the study aimed to explore the impact of the scaffolding method as a strategy in teaching Grooming and Professional Etiquette class.

2. Literature Review

An important aspect of successful scaffolding is that students work within their area of proximal development (ZPD), which is defined as "the distance between the actual level of development as determined by independent problem solving and the potential level of development as determined by problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1980, p. 86). In other words, the teacher illustrates how to solve a problem, and then step back, providing help where appropriate. Then students were given the help they needed when learning something new. By doing this, the students have a greater chance of successfully utilizing that experience.

In support of the above, a study by Shin, Kim, and Song (2020) that designed to examine the effects of negotiation scaffolding for solving complex problems, focusing on peer interaction and learning performance in a computer-supported collaborative learning environment, showed positive results. In their research, 38 undergraduate students were recruited to perform complex tasks using a collaborative discussion tool that implemented scaffolding strategies including the fading of meaning-negotiation scaffolding (MS) and the provision of position-negotiation scaffolding (PS). The study showed that supporting each sequential learning phase with appropriate scaffolding was critical to inspire students to competently complete a complex task in a collaborative online learning environment. The results of fading MS then providing PS have been investigated as being related to peer engagement and success in learning.

The findings of this study illustrated the significance and usefulness of adequate discussion scaffolding for each collective problem-solving. It is especially important to consider the function of the scaffolding and the sequential nature of peer discussion when applying to fade. This research has practical implications and guidance for further studies on processes of interaction and verification of the effects of adequate scaffolding to help each step of learning in various learning contexts. However, in Shin et al. (2020) subject, it involved those students in a computer-supported collaborative learning environment, but the authors' study was focusing on soft skills and grooming etiquette. It created more demand for hands-on and on-site work. The "complex tasks" in Shin et al. (2020) may not be as complex as in teaching grooming and etiquette.

Moreover, another study by Shin, Brush, and Glazewski (2020) showed that students' academic achievement and group performance were related to their perceptions of the usefulness of hard, peer, and teacher scaffolds. By using a single instrumental case approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative analysis for their study, 163 students in a ninth-grade biology course were randomly selected. Statistical findings indicated that the most important predictor for predicting individual academic achievement was the perceived utility of hard scaffolding by the students, followed by peer scaffolding. The findings empirically pointed to the positive effect on individual academic achievement and group success behaviors of students' perceptions of the value of strong, peer, and teacher scaffolds.

3. Method

This was a descriptive study to seek the effectiveness of the scaffolding method in teaching and learning with non-graded subjects in Multimedia University. The subject chosen was Grooming and Professional etiquette among Diploma Students in the Faculty of Business, Multimedia University (MMU). There were about 150 students taught by the two lectures. Based on Three Central characteristics by Vygostky (1980), students were given tasks to organize a grooming and professional etiquette program while they showed groomed behavior. Before the practical tasks, they attended a face-to-face lecture and flipped with Blended Learning Tools such as Google Classroom and Padlet. Then, students were given a step by step guideline on the method to clean up, makeup, to have professional etiquette and grooming before the final project (program) was held. Then, students were given tasks to organize a grooming and professional etiquette program while they showed groomed behavior. There were lectures and small discussions in the class before the event (CONTINGENCY). There were peer discussion and collaboration (FADING) before and during (TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY) the event with minimum supervision from the lecturers.

Finally, survey questionnaires were distributed to the students at the end of the event/class for the particular semester. The questionnaires were created based on central scaffolding characteristics (Van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010). They were required to provide feedback about the classes and activities attended and organized. The researcher has then analyzed the survey with descriptive analysis. There are nine questions with a scale ranged from (5) as strongly agree (SA) , (4) as agree (A), (3) as neither agree nor disagree (N), (2) as disagree (DA), to (1) as strongly disagree (SD) were asked to the students as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Google form survey questionnaire

Do you?
Q1. Learn and understand the importance of personal hygiene
Q2. Learn to work with appropriate makeup for workplace
Q3. Learn the appropriate dressing for workplace or interview
Q4. Learn the do's and don'ts in the workplace such as meeting and greeting
Q5. The event that we organize has given us the experience of a real situation in the workplace. I do not only learn theory but I do it myself and experience it
Q6. The event that we organize has to boost up my confidence level to talk and be in front of the public.
Q7. I can sense that my lecturer has changed my attitude through her trust in me to get involved in the event and feel respected.
Q8. I became very responsible for my teammate/task given as compared to my other subject/class in the previous class.
Q9. Overall, I am satisfied learning this subject.

4. Results and Discussions

150 Diploma students from the Faculty of Business registered Grooming and Professional Etiquette Subject, attended lectures, class activities, and managed to organize a project entitled "Unlock the New You". The objective of the event was to;

i. Show professional image and etiquette for a working environment
ii. Present professional behavior and appropriate communication in the work setting
iii. Expose students to professional dress code in different industries
iv. Expose students to a healthy lifestyle

The data from Google Form were transferred to excel format. Then continued with data cleaning using SPSS. However, after the data cleaning, there were only 72 valid responses from the students. There were about 68.1% (49) female and 31.9% (23) male students. Most of the students were Chinese 70.8% (51), followed by 22.2% (16) Malays, and 6.9% (5) Indian. Most of the students were first-year students that carried out 88.9% (64), followed by 8.3% (6) second-year students, and 2.8% (2) third-year students. It is a subject for first-year students. Therefore, those second year or final year students who took this subject could probably repeat the subject or not follow the course structure due to several reasons.

The results of the survey showed positive students' feedback on the scaffolding method. Boud and Molloy (2013) stress the importance if it is to be of interest, of evaluation and feedback bearing on the learning experience of the students. As shown in Table 4, the results were highly skewed to the right (Agree – a combination of Strongly Agree and Agree) with the percentage above 80% that could be interpreted that the Scaffolding method has a good impact on student's learning. The highest percentage were on Q4 "Learn the do's and don'ts in the workplace such as meeting and greeting" and Q8 "I became very responsible to my teammate/task given as compared to my other subject/class in previous class" with 90% (65), followed by Q1 "Learn and understand the importance of personal hygiene" and Q3 "Learn the appropriate dressing for workplace or interview" with 89% (64). According to Henderson (2017) and Awidi, Paynter & Evers (2020), the assessment practices that form a basis for students assessing their achievement such as where they are at in the course and how they can improve on their learning experience were encouraged and supported. It could then be shared and replicated by others to improve the scaffolding

method in teaching and learning.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of the questionnaires

Questions	Neither agree or disagree		Agree	
	%	n	%	n
Q1 Learn and understand the importance of personal hygiene	9.7	7	89	64
Q2 Learn to work with appropriate makeup for workplace	15.3	11	85	61
Q3 Learn the appropriate dressing for workplace or interview	11.1	8	89	64
Q4 Learn the do's and don'ts in the workplace such as meeting and greeting	9.7	7	90	65
Q5 The event that we organize has given us the experience of a real situation in the workplace. I do not only learn theory but I do it myself and experience it	18.1	13	82	59
Q6 The event that we organize has to boost up my confidence level to talk and be in front of the public.	15.3	11	85	61
Q7 I can sense that my lecturer has changed my attitude through her trust in me to get involved in the event and feel respected.	13.9	10	86	62
Q8 I became very responsible for my teammate/task given as compared to my other subject/class in the previous class.	12.5	9	86	62
Q9 Overall, I am satisfied learning this subject.	9.7	7	90	65

These findings disclosed that the scaffolding method that was executed through this project, had a positive impact on teaching Grooming and Professional Etiquette class. The students were able to show professional image and etiquette for the working environment, specifically to demonstrate professional behavior and appropriate communication in the work setting. The students were exposed to professional dress codes in different industries and live a healthy lifestyle. The students also went out to find vendors that would collaborate with them for the event (as shown in Fig. 2). In other words, they were applying the theory that they learned in the class and experienced the real world with very minimum supervision from the lecturers. The students were also assigned to a department, instead of just a group work like the normal classes they attended. They were monitored as if they were working in a company in a different department. Specifically, there were four departments, i.e., Human Resource, Special Task Force, Finance, and Modelling Agencies. All activities were minuted as proof of their work.

Furthermore, this teaching strategy was not only enhanced, encouraged, and enabled learning, but also helped students to implement constructivism in the classroom. Scaffolding in this class has helped students become active learners and problem solvers. It can be used at any point on which teachers and students interact in between the three CLO: 1) Explain elements of professional image and etiquette, 2) Show professional image and etiquette for the working environment, 3) Present professional behavior and appropriate communication in the work setting. The idea for this method is to provide students with real experiences of working in an event management company. Even though in the first 2 weeks of the project the students seem a bit confused with the office work set up every time they were having classes. But starting the third week and onwards, they started to catch up and keep the momentum until the big day, which is the “Unlock the New You” event.

Fig. 2 Poster – Unlock the New You

The students work from A to Z on their own. Lecturers gave full freedom with minimal supervision. They planned strategies and learned to make a decision. As a result, they feel appreciated and respected as a working adult with the trust given to them. Besides, these strategies also applied Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). HOTS learning prepared students for success in today's challenging labor force (Akhyar, 2020). HOTS is best described as the capacity to think objectively, creatively, reflectively, using metacognitive, and imaginative thought that are higher-level learning skills (Sze, 2015). The HOTS was priceless to them since they also experienced how the real worker faced a problem at work. For instance, as a boss in their own company, the boss was able to play his role to lead and manage the department. At best, the student learned to be responsible for the trust given to them. They were not punished like the lecturers punished students for misconduct but they were observed utilizing 3 methods – warning, show cause letter, and fired. Additionally, it was all done among them with minimal supervision.

Similar to Shin et al. (2020) and Shin et al. (2020), the scaffolding method as a strategy in teaching Grooming and Professional Etiquette class has shown a good impact on teaching and learning. Results showed that the students were contented as presented with the rate cumulatively more than 80% for Strongly Agree and Agree. According to Abu Seman, Hashim, Roslin & Mohd Ishar (2018), we have to be creative to get the attention of the millennial to focus in the class. Thus, it could be surmised that through the scaffolding method, teaching and learning have become more effective and interesting as students can equip themselves with the soft skills and new technologies that they will be dealing with within the job market (Hawa, Rohaidah, Mohd Hairul Anuar, Nor Huda & Nurhazlini, 2019) and experience the learning by doing.

5. Conclusion

In brief, through scaffolding, teaching and learning methods have become more successful and fascinating as students learned and observed what they learn in classrooms through "doing it." The students were more optimistic when they encountered the challenge themselves rather than listening to lectures and viewing the video in the classrooms. When students obtained the trust and the obligation to fulfill their mission, they felt respected and voluntarily encouraged to do more and to make it clear to the lecturers. As educators for the millennial generation, with the latest advances in technology and new pedagogy, we should be more innovative and agile. Now is the time for us to learn, relearn, unlearn and go beyond our comfort zone. However, the results can not be generalized in accordance with the same method for all subjects, since this study refers only to the Grooming and Etiquette subject in the MMU. This approach,

however, should be tested and replicated for different groups of students and syllabuses in order to see the impact on teaching and learning. Another recommendation is to compare the different characteristics of fields like mathematics and psychology for future research.

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