An Exploration of Thai Primary School Teachers' Experience of Using Scaffolding Techniques in an EFL Classroom

Muanchan Utthavudhikorn[a], Kittitouch Soontornwipast[b,*]

[a] pam.muanchan@gmail.com, Language Institute, Thammasat University, Thailand
[b] kittitouch.s@litu.tu.ac.th, Language Institute, Thammasat University, Thailand
[*] Corresponding author, kittitouch.s@litu.tu.ac.th

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate teachers' experiences with the utilization of scaffolding techniques, such as translation, modeling, feedback, group work, activating prior knowledge, pre-teaching vocabulary, and visual aids, in elementary school classrooms. The primary objectives are to gain insights into the techniques employed by teachers, the challenges they encountered, and their problem-solving strategies. The study involved nine elementary school teachers instructing in a regular English program located in Petchabun Province, Thailand. Data was gathered through semi-structured one-on-one interviews and non-participant classroom observations. The findings of the study revealed that teachers employed various scaffolding techniques during their lessons, with the choice of techniques often guided by their experience and personal judgment. Notably, teachers encountered challenges related to students' motivation, concentration, proficiency

levels, and self-confidence, which influenced their use of scaffolding strategies.

Keywords: problems, solutions, elementary students, and scaffolding techniques

Introduction

Learning language is a vital means of communication, and the English language is unquestionably prevalent in numerous countries worldwide. English serves as a global language utilized not only in education but also across various sectors, such as science, business, and technology. The era of globalization has significantly elevated the prominence of the English language to an international scale. Furthermore, the role of the teacher is seen as a crucial factor that not only impacts students' anxiety levels but also their overall academic performance. Research by Roopchund and Wang (2015) suggests that teachers with overly strict and unfriendly personalities tend to contribute to higher levels of anxiety among students. As highlighted by Naibaho (2019), being a teacher encompasses much more than simply imparting knowledge; teachers can assume various roles, including that of a participant, a prompter, an organizer, a resource, an observer, a performer, or even a controller. Different situations require different roles; therefore, it is imperative for teachers to comprehend and possess knowledge about each of these roles because they undeniably hold the power to influence students' current and future performance, either positively or negatively.

The researcher has identified significant gaps in previous studies related to the exploration of teachers' experiences with scaffolding usage during English lessons in the Thai education system. Prior research has examined various facets of scaffolding techniques aimed at enhancing students' learning proficiency. These include investigations into the effectiveness of different techniques, such as translation (Ghobain, 2015), modeling, and bridging (Arlinda, 2019). Additionally, previous research has explored the impact of scaffolding on students' learning motivation (Bassiri, 2012) and their levels of engagement. A substantial portion of scaffolding research has centered on Thai higher education (Buenner, 2013; Rungwarapong, 2019; Yusuk, 2018). However, limited attention has been directed toward elementary schools, which serve as the foundational stage for English language learning.

The objective of this study is to explore teachers' teaching experiences using scaffolding techniques. Moreover, it aims to explore what problems they encounter during teaching and how they solve them.

1.3.1 What scaffolding techniques do the teachers use in teaching?

1.3.2 What are the problems the teachers experience in using scaffolding techniques when teaching?

1.3.3 How do teachers solve the problems that they encounter when using scaffolding?

Literature Review

Definition of Scaffolding

According to Gibbons (2002), scaffolding is defined as a teaching technique designed to activate language learning. In this process, an expert, typically the teacher, provides temporary support to help students complete tasks they cannot yet accomplish independently. This support gradually diminishes as students develop the necessary skills to execute the task autonomously. Various forms of scaffolding, such as questioning, modeling, explaining, reinforcing, instructing, and inviting student participation, can enhance learners' understanding (Buenner, 2013). Temporary support from the teacher during lessons increases students' comprehension of new topics and boosts their ability to complete tasks independently, while breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps makes them less intimidating.

However, Taber (2017) contends that scaffolding transcends structuring the learning process or activities. It is equally essential to align the task with learning goals that students might otherwise struggle to achieve. Scaffolding, therefore, gradually constructs a learning framework for students, with the support fading as they become self-sufficient. Positive emotional support from the teacher fosters motivation while providing ample time for students to process answers, which actively engages their learning and critical thinking abilities. Regularly posing appropriate questions helps correct misunderstandings and enhances learning awareness.

Types of Scaffolding

Expert-novice scaffolding is an interaction between an expert (teacher) and a novice (students). This is found to be useful when students' responses are inadequate. Scaffolding enables teachers to intervene and guide students, directing their focus toward specific goals. This supportive approach, as outlined by Hammond and Gibbons (2005), encompasses six types of interactional scaffolding that extend students beyond their zone of proximal development (ZPD): Linking prior knowledge: Teachers facilitate learning by connecting new information to students' existing knowledge,

ensuring a foundation for understanding the concepts and objectives of the lesson. Summarizing key points: Scaffolding involves summarizing the essential elements of interactions, helping students grasp the core aspects of the subject matter. Modeling: Teachers convey their own thoughts or ideas, serving as examples for students to emulate and integrate into their understanding. Reshaping student contributions: Scaffolding extends to assisting students in refining their expressions, making their language or ideas more suitable and coherent. Providing cues or gestures: Teachers employ cues or gestures to prompt expected responses from students, guiding them toward desired outcomes. Offering more opportunities for expression: Scaffolding also entails creating an environment where students have ample opportunities to voice their thoughts and reflect on their responses. Moreover, peer scaffolding is not only provided by adults to novices but also among peers themselves. Sari and Rozimela (2020) described peer scaffolding as a process of negotiating contexts of shared understanding. This approach demonstrates that even a novice, when working alongside peers, can successfully tackle tasks. Through such collaboration, learners have the opportunity to expand their knowledge of a second language (L2) and enhance their linguistic development in tandem with their peers.

Scaffolding Strategies

1) Translation is mainly used in classrooms where English is the second language. It can serve as a valuable tool in the teaching and learning process, despite being a subject of controversy among educators. However, an increasing number of scholars have come to support the use of translation or students' native language (L1) due to its potential to enhance the learning experience. The mother tongue is a potent resource that can aid in conveying messages, explaining grammar concepts, and providing examples (Ghobain, 2015). Additionally, several scholars assert that L1 can compensate for students' learning deficiencies. As a consequence, a complete disregard for L1 can lead to demotivation among L2 learners who may feel lost in the learning process.

2) Modeling is when teachers provide clear instructions and examples for students to imitate. They will know what to expect from the tasks and how the process runs. Walqui (2006) in Arlinda (2019) showed that modeling is aimed at improving students' understanding of the content, which they can later adjust for personal use. Explicit modeling is facilitated through the teacher's physical expression. Simply put, "show and tell" is one of the ways teachers can convey what is expected from the students (Munawar,2019).

3) Feedback can be categorized into verbal and physical

reinforcement. Teachers can encourage students by praising correct behavior, such as saying "well done" or "excellent" (Munawar, 2019). For physical reinforcement, teachers can positively encourage students by smiling, clapping, or signaling. This reinforcement will allow students to recognize their correct responses and ways of learning, which will eventually lead to an increase in motivation and confidence.

4) Group work, which can include both group and pair work activities, can increase students' practice during the class. Moreover, it will provide opportunities for students to negotiate meanings with their peers, which can produce less anxiety compared to negotiations with teachers (Munawar, 2019). They can also work together to solve problems and initiate ideas, or seek advice when needed.

5). Activating prior knowledge is a technique employed when students have prior exposure or knowledge related to the topic at hand. This approach serves to familiarize students with the subject matter and enables them to connect their existing knowledge to the current lesson. This helps reduce confusion and prevents students from feeling lost in the subject matter.

6). Pre-teaching vocabulary involves introducing vocabulary before engaging in learning tasks, which can significantly enhance students' comprehension. Pre-teaching vocabulary involves familiarizing students with new words through visual aids, contextual associations, or imagery. Insufficient vocabulary can hinder a student's ability to grasp the overall context, underscoring the importance of this preparatory approach.

7). Visual aids, such as graphics, photos, and videos, can help students organize information, visually represent ideas, and grasp concepts. According to Shabiralyani et al. (2015), visual aids can create an engaging learning environment, particularly when the subject matter may initially appear complex or obscure. For instance, utilizing tools like PowerPoint presentations, videos, flashcards, or tangible artifacts can facilitate students' comprehension by providing visual clarity and reinforcing key concepts.

Problems in Scaffolding

When students engage in group or pair work, they need essential skills such as effective communication to progress to higher levels of learning (Spadafora & Downes, 2020). Not all students possess these skills inherently, and they may require instruction. Mercer (2013), as discussed in Spadafora and Downes (2020), highlights the importance of argumentation skills in scaffolding, as they play a vital role in fostering critical thinking and enabling students to explore topics from various angles. Without these skills, students

may not truly undergo the transformative processes necessary for successful scaffolding.

However, scaffolding is infrequently employed in classrooms, as it demands more than a mere understanding of its types. Effective scaffolding necessitates an assessment of students' existing comprehension of the subject before providing support. Identifying each student's understanding can be challenging, potentially leaving some students overlooked or not fully diagnosed, thus limiting the utility of the support provided (Pol etal., 2010).

Finally, providing effective scaffolding is a demanding task. Different teachers have varying perceptions of their roles in the learning process. These differences in teacher beliefs can influence the application of scaffolding techniques. For example, in the study by Rasku-Puttonen et al. (2009), two distinct types of teachers were compared: controllers, and those who encouraged self-regulation among students. The research showed that teachers who preferred control took more initiative than their students, while teachers who promoted self-regulation saw students taking greater initiative. This suggests that teachers' varying concepts and beliefs significantly impact students' experiences with scaffolding.

Solutions to Scaffolding Problems

It is imperative for teachers to adopt suitable strategies tailored to students' individual needs to ensure a sense of equality and support. For instance, students with learning difficulties often struggle with tasks, leading to reduced confidence and difficulty keeping up with lessons. Teachers should be vigilant in identifying signs of these challenges and devising appropriate solutions. Anggadewi (2017) suggests that an effective approach is to create learning materials tailored to students' needs, thereby enhancing their confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

The teacher's language proficiency is another crucial factor in delivering successful scaffolding. As demonstrated in Arlinda (2019), a teacher's language proficiency, particularly for young learners, influences language models, boosts learner confidence, and increases participation. Acting as a mediator, teachers with a certain level of language proficiency and expertise can facilitate meaningful interactions, helping students achieve their optimal goals through scaffolding.

Moreover, the use of students' native language (L1) in English reading classrooms has proven to be beneficial. It serves as a valuable tool not only for translating new words but also for explaining and defining new concepts. Thus, employing the mother tongue maximizes learner engagement rather than minimizing it (Bhooth et al., 2013). This finding is consistent with the importance of code-switching in students' learning, as emphasized by Mulia

(2015). Despite the perception of code-switching as negative in some communities, research has shown that it aids preschoolers in linking prior knowledge and deriving new meanings from language use.

Methodology

Research Method and Instruments

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach. The adoption of this method is emphasized by Dornyei (2007), who stated that qualitative research provides the flexibility to cope with uncertainty occurring during the research as it focuses more on a smaller population and the interpretation of subject's experience; therefore, it is important to leave space for something new that might have happened in the research. To ensure the acquisition of authentic data, this study employed the following qualitative research instruments: semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observations. These pre-observation one-on-one interviews with the teachers served as a preliminary step. Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection method. While predetermined questions were prepared, the interview format allowed for flexibility, enabling questions to be adapted or modified based on the specific circumstances. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with all teachers to obtain in-depth qualitative data on the usage of scaffolding in classrooms. Semi-structured one-on-one interview questions were used to understand teachers' backgrounds, beliefs, and ways of teaching, focusing on scaffolding. Then, classroom observations were conducted to gain insight into the entire teaching process, encompassing its procedures and practices. This approach offers a comprehensive view of real-world teaching, allowing the researcher to grasp the actual practices, identify challenges, explore solutions, and understand the application of scaffolding in an authentic context. After the observations were completed, the data was used as a guideline for developing post-observation interview questions. Finally, post-observation one-on-one interviews were conducted with the teachers. These aimed to provide further clarification on any points that remained unclear. By employing these three data collection methods, the study aimed to triangulate data, thereby enhancing the validity of the research findings.

Participants

In this study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants, with specific selection criteria in place. The criteria included selecting Thai nationals who had a minimum of three years of experience teaching English,

taught English in a regular program, and actively used scaffolding techniques in their teaching methods. To identify suitable participants, the researcher utilized the snowball technique, where initial participants were asked to recommend other teachers meeting the specified criteria. Ultimately, a total of nine elementary school teachers were included in the study. Class sizes ranged from 20 to 35 students per class. However, it is unfortunate that none of the teachers had received any professional development training on scaffolding usage; instead, they primarily used the techniques based on their instincts and experiences.

Teacher A is a Thai teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Education. Teacher A is currently teaching English in a private school and has teaching experience of 17 years.

Teacher B is a Thai teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Education. Teacher B is currently teaching English in a private school and has teaching experience of three years.

Teacher C is a Thai teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Education. Teacher C is currently teaching English in a private school and has teaching experience of 13 years.

Teacher D is a Thai teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science. Teacher D is currently teaching English in a private school and has teaching experience of 24 years.

Teacher E is a Thai teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Education. Teacher E is currently teaching English in a public school and has teaching experience of three years.

Teacher F is a Thai teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Education. Teacher F is currently teaching English in a public school and has teaching experience of 20 years.

Teacher G is a Thai teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Education. Teacher G is currently teaching English in a public school and has teaching experience of 26 years.

Teacher H is a Thai teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science. Teacher H is currently teaching English in a public school and has teaching experience of three years.

Teacher J is a Thai teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Education. Teacher J is currently teaching English in a public school and has teaching experience of 30 years.

Procedure of Data Collection

For the data collection process, first the researcher made appointments with all the teachers by talking to them face-to-face and asking when they were available for the pre-observation interview. Then, the

interviews were conducted based on their time slots. It generally took about 20 to 30 minutes per person, and all interviews were done onsite at the schools.

After the pre-observation interviews, non-participant observations were conducted in which the researcher silently observed and took field notes throughout the lesson. School A was a private institution where the research involved observations and interviews with four teachers responsible for teaching primary 1, 4, 5, and 6. In the case of primary 1, observations were conducted for four lessons per week, while primary 4-6 were observed for two lessons each week. Each lesson lasted for one hour. School B and School C, on the other hand, were public schools recognized as opportunity expansion schools. This designation mandated that they admit students from their respective areas regardless of the timing or reasons for their departure from previous schools. At School B, there were three teachers responsible for primary 1, 3, 4, and 5. Primary 1 and 3 were subjected to observations for two lessons per week, while primary 4 and 5 were observed once a week, with each lesson lasting one hour. School C had two teachers in charge of primary 3, 4, and 6. Observations were conducted once a week for primary 3 and 4, while primary 6 was observed twice a week, with each lesson being an hour in duration. These observations and interviews were carried out in the context of Petchabun Province, Thailand.

Next, the researcher made appointments for post-observation interviews with the teachers and started the interviews through phone calls, which took about 30 to 40 minutes per person. As most teachers had busy schedules, it was more convenient for both of us to do the post-observation interviews by phone. Nonetheless, each interview was done one at a time and was then analyzed. Subsequently, the next teacher was interviewed. This allowed for a constant comparison of the data, along with grouping and regrouping according to the changes. The researcher contacted some teachers after the post-observation interviews to seek clarification on any remaining or unresolved points.

Validity and Credibility of Research Instruments

According to Cypress (2017), validity is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings. Moreover, in qualitative research, valid instruments should measure exactly what the study aims to explore. Therefore, in this study, the interview questions were validated by three experts.

Credibility and trustworthiness are essential aspects of qualitative research, as they bolster the research's reliability. Given the potential for subjectivity in this type of study, it is crucial to prioritize authenticity and

truthfulness (Brigitte, 2017). To establish and maintain these qualities throughout the study, the researcher employed several strategies, including peer review, triangulation (involving pre-observation interviews, observations, and post-observation interviews), and offering rich, detailed descriptions of the participants. These measures were taken to verify the accuracy of the data and enhance the overall credibility and trustworthiness of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Sanjari et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of safeguarding participants' anonymity, confidentiality, and consent, particularly when the research delves into sensitive topics, involves children, or includes vulnerable individuals. In light of these ethical considerations and in accordance with the study's approvals, every interview and observation were conducted with the explicit consent of the teachers. To preserve the teachers' confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were employed in place of their actual names. Additionally, given that the observations involved young children, parental consent was sought to observe the classroom activities.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Furthermore, thematic analysis was applied, with the data categorized into themes. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), thematic analysis is a method used to examine data by identifying recurring patterns. It serves the purpose of not only describing the information but also constructing specific themes. Given that this study aims to understand experiences, thoughts, and behaviors, which aligns with the goals of thematic analysis, this method was chosen for the research. The data obtained from the interviews was transcribed and analyzed, while the observation notes underwent thematic analysis. During the process, the researcher crossed-checked the data analysis with the advisor to make sure it was accurate. However, the data was recorded by one researcher.

Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot interview with one Thai teacher whose qualifications aligned with the study's criteria. Following the pilot interview, certain adjustments were made to the methodology section. The interview revealed the need for some modifications in question wording and the inclusion of more detailed information in the questions. For instance, it became apparent that the use of the term "scaffolding" should be minimized

or replaced in the questions. The primary focus of this study is to explore the teaching processes of educators who employ scaffolding techniques in their instruction, rather than assessing their knowledge of the scaffolding concept. This approach allowed participants to concentrate on explaining their teaching methods rather than becoming preoccupied with the concept of scaffolding and its specific definition. Furthermore, the sequence of the questions was reorganized to establish a logical flow during the interview. Accordingly, certain interview questions were adjusted to enhance their coherence when posed to the interviewees. It's worth highlighting that the interviewed teacher expressed discomfort with the idea of classroom observation. As a result, for future participant selection, the researcher prioritized building rapport with potential participants to ensure that they felt at ease and were willing to permit classroom observations.

Results

Teaching Techniques

The teaching techniques found in this study were enhancing students' attention, activating prior knowledge, pre-teaching vocabulary, translation, modeling, group work, and positive feedback.

First, teachers enhanced students' learning ability and increased their attention through incorporating pictures, videos, and PowerPoint presentations into lessons, as they believe it helped students to focus better throughout the lesson. Secondly, activating prior knowledge is another technique the teachers used in the beginning of the lesson. This enhanced students' memory of previous lessons and connected them to the current one. Some teachers verbally asked their students what they learned previously without teaching materials, and some tried to activate their knowledge through videos and PowerPoint presentations. Thirdly, pre-teaching vocabulary is a technique that teachers used before getting into the main activity because it enabled students to understand the content and complete the activity at a certain level. The vocabulary is put into a presentation with pictures, English words, and Thai translations. Students tended to take down notes so that they could go back and check in case they forgot. Fourthly, translation from English to Thai was commonly used among teachers because English is the students' second language. If teachers give all instructions in English, students will be completely lost. Fifthly, teachers employed modeling as a strategy; they demonstrated a particular activity to the entire class and then allowed students to work independently. This helped increase students' level of participation as they feel more at ease working among their peers. Nonetheless, group work was rarely implemented in class because it is time

consuming. Lastly, teachers tended to encourage students to learn through positive feedback. They normally did that verbally, for example, they would say "It's ok" or "You're doing great" to assure the students it is alright to make mistakes but at the same time encourage them to try again.

Problems

The results showed that there were five main problems that were evident during the observations and mentioned in the interviews: low motivation, poor concentration, diversity, a low level of proficiency, and a lack of confidence in using English in general.

The primary problem most teachers found was students' low motivation and a lack of interest in learning English. The environment where these students are living does not enable them to see the world on a macro level. They do not have the opportunity to practice the language outside the school, which has a negative effect on their level of motivation. The undermining of teachers' utilization of scaffolding arises when students fail to perceive the importance of learning the language. Although teachers play a pivotal role as facilitators in the students' learning journey, it is crucial to recognize that if teachers themselves do not appreciate the significance and maintain motivation, it can hinder their ability to bring about positive change. In an interview, Teacher E revealed a prevailing sentiment among students in Petchabun—many feel trapped within their local environment. These students lack the drive and motivation to seek out diverse job opportunities with greater potential, often settling for farm work or labor. Consequently, they struggle to perceive the relevance of learning English.

> "I want to help fulfill my students' lives because kids these days don't even know what the purpose is of studying or what would they get in return. I just wanted them to feel like if they study hard in English lessons, at least they will get some gifts as rewards. This might inspire some of them to have hope that in the future, there will be something great waiting for them. I want to change their mindset; as of right now, they only think that when they become adults, they will just end up working on a farm like their parents."

Students' lack of concentration during the lesson is another problem for teachers. One of the contributing factors to this issue is the prevalent addiction to mobile phones among students, leading to distractions that hinder their full engagement in the classroom. The majority of students possess mobile phones, which are allowed to be brought to school. However, many lack the discipline and self-control necessary for responsible use.

Classroom observations have revealed that students frequently take out their phones during lessons, posing a significant challenge for teachers. Teachers find themselves in the position of having to consistently remind students to put away their phones.

> "Students bring their mobile phones to school because our
> school does not have a policy not allowing it; the problem is
> they have ADHD, so they will constantly play with their
> phones and try to hide them under their desks."

Another significant challenge associated with using scaffolding in the classroom is the issue of diversity. Students come from diverse backgrounds, which can vary widely in terms of their life experiences and circumstances. This diversity can be especially pronounced in public schools, where there is an obligation to admit students from the local community, regardless of their individual situations or challenges. This diversity poses challenges for teachers, as they must cater to a wide range of student needs and backgrounds. In some cases, this may include students dealing with issues such as substance addiction or coming from broken families. This can be particularly demanding on teachers, as they need to address these complex issues while trying to provide effective instruction. On top of that, many students in public schools come from economically disadvantaged families, which limits their exposure to the English language and educational resources. Both Teacher E's and Teacher H's schools have a significant number of students facing challenges, such as parental separation, substance addiction, or insufficient financial support. These factors can significantly impact students' well-being, mindset, and ability to learn.

Furthermore, students' English proficiency is considered low, and it extends to various aspects of English language learning, including reading skills, as highlighted by Teacher J. He pointed out that his students face considerable difficulties when it comes to reading. While they can comprehend a text when it's read aloud by the teacher, they struggle significantly when presented with written texts. Even though he has attempted to teach them phonetics, the challenge persists due to their weak foundational knowledge. Compounding the issue is the weak foundation in their mother tongue, the Thai language. This dual challenge further exacerbates their language learning struggles, as they lack a solid foundation in both their native and second languages.

> "If I write vocab on the board, students will not be able to
> read. So their reading skills are problematic. I tried teaching
> them phonetics; however, it did not work because the
> students also struggled with Thai language. They cannot

accurately spell words in Thai. The strong ones, of course,
have no problems with this aspect."

Finally, Thai students not only lack confidence in practicing English during their class but also when they are not in school. Students will avoid making eye contact with their teachers and rarely raise their hands to answer questions, as they think they might lose face among peers if they give the wrong answer. This affects teachers' usage of scaffolding, as the level of interaction is considered low. Their exposure to the language is predominantly confined to the school environment, and once they return home, English is rarely used. However, Teacher J makes concerted efforts to engage his students in English conversation as frequently as possible in his Primary 6 classroom. Nonetheless, the students' lack of confidence in using English has posed challenges to teachers, impacting their effectiveness in the classroom as student participation levels remain relatively low.

> "They lack confidence in using English, and one of the reasons is they don't have many opportunities to use the language. After they learn at school, it's done. There is no further practice. They don't have the chance to practice with people around them, so I try to interact with them in English when they are with me. Some who are confident will say "Hello, good morning teacher," but those who are not will just avoid talking to me."

Solutions

Some solutions emerging from the observations and interviews were a reward system, repetition, being understanding, providing equal opportunities, providing positive feedback, and implementing a variety of activities.

For teachers to fully maximize their teaching techniques, it requires students' attention and motivation to learn English. A star chart is one of the solutions a couple of teachers use to overcome problems, such as a low level of motivation and students' limited attention spans. Teachers have implemented a chart-based incentive system to motivate students. In this system, students receive stars for active participation in class, such as answering questions and completing tasks. The number of stars awarded can vary and is determined by factors like the speed of task completion and the teacher's judgment. However, stars can also be deducted if students engage in misbehavior or conflicts with their peers. As the semester progresses, students have the opportunity to exchange their accumulated stars for rewards provided by the teachers. Both Teacher E and Teacher H have successfully employed this technique, significantly impacting student

behavior. Students are motivated to concentrate on their lessons to earn more stars, as these stars directly influence the rewards they will receive at the end of the semester. Simultaneously, misbehavior during class, such as using mobile phones, chatting with peers, or not paying attention to the teacher, results in deductions from their star chart. Teacher E has found this technique to be particularly effective, especially when working with primary students.

> "I tried pointing to our star chart. If there is a fight or any misbehaviors, I will deduct stars. As soon as they hear deducting stars, all chaotic situations will be paused immediately. It is like the stars are very important to them."

Repetition is another strategy that teachers commonly use in class. The lack of students' concentration makes teachers repeat themselves frequently. In the classroom, repetition is a common technique employed when students struggle to recall vocabulary. Teachers repetitively pronounce and explain the words, using both English and Thai, to help students with pronunciation and comprehension. While this approach allows students to memorize the words in the short term, it often proves less effective in the long run. Despite teachers' awareness of this limitation, they frequently resort to this technique as a means to address immediate vocabulary challenges.

> "It's like we teach today and tomorrow they forgot, so I try to use repetition."

Addressing the diverse backgrounds of students poses a unique challenge with no one-size-fits-all solution. According to the teachers, the keys to handling this diversity are understanding and empathy. However, during the classroom observations, no specific problems arising from diversity were observed; it was primarily highlighted during interviews. To effectively address the diverse backgrounds of students, it is crucial for teachers to cultivate understanding and empathy. This understanding forms the foundation for guiding students towards positive transformations in their learning experiences.

Another solution is to provide equal opportunities and not discriminate against students based on their abilities. Teacher J mentioned in the interview that he tries giving everyone a chance to participate in class and activities. As he understands that some students have certain limitations, he will not push them too hard in learning English. Instead, he makes sure that his students can enjoy the lesson and have a positive perception of the language. He believes that if they are happy, they are more likely to enjoy the class and eventually learn something.

Despite the students' lack of confidence in using English, he actively supports students in both in-school and extracurricular English activities. For weaker students, Teacher J adopts a gradual approach, starting with smaller opportunities for in-school practice, such as participating in events like Christmas Day performances. On the other hand, for stronger and more confident students, he encourages them to take on challenges outside the school environment. This can include activities like giving speeches, storytelling, and engaging in pictorial writing competitions. While Teacher J acknowledges that his students' proficiency levels may not match those of students from more privileged private schools, he firmly believes in nurturing their growth step by step. Through this patient and persistent approach, he envisions his students gradually blossoming and developing their English language skills.

Furthermore, providing positive feedback is commonly used to encourage students. Despite the low level of proficiency, most teachers try giving compliments instead of discouraging them. This approach has a favorable impact on students' mindset, fostering a more relaxed and comfortable relationship between students and their teachers. Interestingly, many teachers place greater importance on students' attitudes toward learning English than on their actual proficiency levels. While the observable improvements in results may not always be substantial, the teachers find them acceptable. Their primary focus is to cultivate an environment where students genuinely enjoy learning and develop a positive attitude toward the subject.

Moreover, it is important to involve students in a range of activities to ensure that the content is effectively conveyed to the majority of the students in the class. Different activities can be beneficial, as students have various learning styles. Hence, it can enhance their level of understanding and eventually increase their level of participation. In addition, providing rewards can enhance their level of confidence. After students get the answers right, teachers should reward those behaviors as a reminder that they are doing well. Students who lack confidence also need positive feedback. Compliments and positive feedback from teachers can boost their confidence to participate in lessons, as they will feel at ease in answering questions and be certain that even if they get the wrong answers, teachers will help them out with no judgment.

Discussion

Scaffolding Techniques Used with Thai Elementary School Students

According to the observations, a significant challenge faced by most students is their lack of motivation to learn English. Students find it

challenging to bridge the gap between theory and practice, especially when they have limited opportunities to use the language outside the classroom. The findings of the study align with those of Kapur (2022), which suggest that students can become overwhelmed by task difficulties, insufficient support, or boredom due to the lack of challenges. To address this motivation issue, teachers in this study have adopted a reward system and introduced various activities. Teachers E and H implemented a star chart to track student performance during lessons. Students who actively participate receive stars, which accumulate over the semester and lead to rewards based on their rankings. This approach has proven effective in boosting students' motivation instantly.

However, it's important to note that, as mentioned by Chen (2023), the reward system can have both positive and negative effects on student behavior. While it can increase interest, motivation, and positive learning habits, teachers should be cautious not to overuse it, which might lead to dependency and negatively impact students' intrinsic motivation.

The use of YouTube videos, as implemented by Teachers E and H, has proven effective in maintaining student concentration to a certain extent. Teacher A also introduced songs throughout her lessons for her younger students, helping to regain their attention when distracted. While technology is considered beneficial for English language learning, some teachers in this study feel uncomfortable using it due to limited knowledge or technical challenges.

Furthermore, most students exhibit low proficiency in learning English, which hinders their ability to comprehend the content. They often struggle with foundational aspects like the English alphabet and phonetic sounds. This lack of foundational knowledge requires teachers to spend a significant amount of time addressing basic issues, preventing the introduction of new activities. Translation is frequently employed by teachers to bridge students' prior knowledge to new content, as highlighted by Ghobain (2015). This technique helps convey messages effectively and compensates for L2 learning deficiencies.

Pre-teaching vocabulary is another common practice that helps students understand concepts and complete tasks more effectively. Most teachers introduce vocabulary before tasks, ensuring students can pronounce and write down the words when needed. For example, Teacher B lists vocabulary in PowerPoint presentations and goes through them with the students. Some teachers incorporate songs to aid vocabulary memorization, with Teacher A finding success in singing with her students to maintain their interest.

Problems with the Usage of Scaffolding and Solutions to Overcome Them

According to the observations, most students lack motivation to learn English. This is a huge problem for teachers as students struggle to comprehend the language and do not understand the importance of learning. This means that students struggle to relate the theory to practice. They do not get to practice the language outside the classroom. The lack of regular use of the language makes it harder to grasp the concepts. Students can feel overwhelmed by the difficulties of tasks and insufficient support or feel bored by the easiness of tasks and insufficient challenges. In this study, teachers tried to increase students' motivation through a reward system and incorporating different activities. Teacher E and Teacher H set up a star chart which tracks their performance during the lesson. Students who participate in class will be rewarded with stars. They will keep collecting them until the end of the semester and be rewarded with gifts according to their rankings. This solution has shown to be effective, as teachers can quickly boost their learning motivation by putting up the chart. Chen (2023) showed that a reward system can both positively and negatively impact students' behavior. While a reward system can elevate students' levels of interest, motivation, and positive learning habits, teachers should be mindful of the potential adverse effects. It is crucial to prevent students from developing dependencies or restricting their intrinsic motivation. Teachers also need to understand students' nature and their strengths and weaknesses. This will allow them to tackle problems more effectively. Another solution is incorporating group work in class. Students often feel less pressured when collaborating with their peers, creating a relaxed environment that can enhance their focus on learning. Some teachers take it a step further by introducing friendly competition among groups. This element of competition serves as motivation, encouraging students to engage more actively in the learning process.

Another concern for teachers is students' lack of concentration, which hinders the smooth flow of their teaching. Constant efforts are needed to capture and maintain students' attention throughout the lesson. In the case of Teacher A, F, G, and H, who have younger students, it poses a more significant challenge for them to sustain focus throughout the entire class period. Nonetheless, this does not mean older students can fully concentrate; in fact, they are easily distracted by other factors, such as social media, peers, and personal interests. Teachers tried incorporating a variety of teaching aids, such as videos, pictures, and songs. Wahyuni (2016) in Mongar (2019) emphasized the positive impact of animated movies for teaching writing, as this can increase students' attention and understanding. In this study, Teacher

E and Teacher H implemented YouTube videos with their students. It showed that students were interested and able to maintain their level of concentration to a certain degree. Teacher A incorporated songs into her lessons, particularly effective for her younger students. This practice significantly aids their learning, serving as a helpful tool when distractions arise. When students become inattentive, Teacher A initiates singing, and the entire class joins in. The repetition of these songs has led to most students being able to sing along. While technology is acknowledged as beneficial for enhancing English language learning (Mongar, 2019), some teachers in this study express discomfort with its use, leading them to predominantly rely on workbooks. The hesitancy arises from a lack of familiarity with technology and the perceived difficulty in acquiring the necessary skills.

Another problem is that the proficiency level in learning English for most students is low. They face challenges in grasping the content due to a weak foundation in English and insufficient vocabulary. Instead of progressing, teachers find themselves addressing these issues daily. This impedes the introduction of new and diverse activities, as they may prove too challenging for students to complete. Translation is an important technique for English learning in a Thai environment, as it helps link students' prior knowledge to new content. All the teachers use translation throughout their lessons to help students understand the content. According to Ghobain (2015), translation plays a beneficial role in facilitating the learning process for students by aiding teachers in delivering effective messages. Translation can serve as a powerful tool to address deficiencies in L2 learning. Students with a high level of proficiency are less likely to rely on translation. Therefore, in the context of a study where most students exhibit low proficiency, translation is deemed a useful and appropriate technique. Furthermore, pre-teaching vocabulary is implemented regularly as it helps students to grasp the concepts and work on the task better. Most teachers introduced the vocabulary before the task so that students know how to pronounce the words and are able to write them down in case they need to look back. For example, Teacher B will put the vocabulary in PowerPoint slides and read through the list with her students. Some teachers use songs to help the students memorize the vocabulary. Teacher A normally sings with her students, as she found that her students are more interested when she starts singing.

Conclusion and Implications

The study revealed that elementary school English teachers in Petchabun Province, Thailand implemented a number of scaffolding techniques during the lessons, for example, visual aids, activating prior

knowledge, pre-teaching vocabulary, translation, modeling, group activities, and feedback. Most teachers activated prior knowledge and pre-taught vocabulary at the beginning of lessons to increase students' interest and understanding of the content. The rest of the techniques were commonly used during the lessons in no particular order. Some teachers intended to summarize the core content at the end, although it rarely happens due to time limitations. Low levels of motivation, poor concentration, and limited proficiency emerged as the predominant problems identified in this study.

The results of the study showed that teachers had implemented several scaffolding techniques during the lessons. Nonetheless, other teachers who are considering making use of scaffolding need to take into consideration the problems and factors influencing scaffolding usage. As the school contexts and students' backgrounds vary, this may impact the degree of scaffolding usage. This study revealed that scaffolding techniques were implemented by most teachers; however, they often lack the theoretical knowledge to underpin these implementations and guide their future steps. Instead, they tend to rely on their instincts and years of teaching experience. The school environment and limited financial support constrain teachers' abilities to excel and enhance their expertise. In view of this, continuous training is deemed essential for effective and sustainable teaching outcomes. Parental support is also necessary, as teachers cannot be held solely responsible for their students' performance. Collaborative efforts are needed to ensure the smooth functioning of a teacher's work. For teaching implications, scaffolding usage has shown a great potential to enhance students' performance in English learning.

Recommendations

While the findings of the study hold potential benefits for teachers, school administrators, and curriculum developers, it's important to consider some limitations. One key limitation is the relatively small number of participants involved in the study. Due to time constraints, the researcher was only able to interview and observe nine teachers. Therefore, future research could benefit from allocating more time for classroom observations and expanding the study to include educators at the secondary or university levels. Furthermore, this study exclusively focused on Thai teachers in its observations and interviews. Future research could broaden the scope by including foreign teachers in observations to gather more diverse and detailed information. Additionally, it's important to note that this study's findings may not be readily generalizable to wider contexts. To address this limitation, the insights gained from this exploration can serve as a foundation for developing quantitative instruments that can be distributed to a larger and more diverse

population. Lastly, future research should delve deeper into teachers' understanding of scaffolding techniques, their perception of the techniques' relevance, and whether these techniques align with their educational goals. By focusing on students' performance outcomes, future research can rigorously analyze the effectiveness of teachers' scaffolding practices, providing valuable insights for ongoing improvement. The Hawthorne effect—when people who are the subjects of research change or improve their behavior because it is being studied—is another aspect that future researchers could consider, especially in a study where classroom observations take place. In this study, despite some teachers demonstrating the potential to enhance their teaching during the observations, there was no specific evidence indicating a correlation between the awareness of being observed and modified behavior reactivity. Finally, it is suggested that the relationship between years of teachers' teaching experience and students' English proficiency should be investigated and discussed in future research to determine if there are any correlations between the two aspects.

About the Authors

Muanchan Utthavudhikorn: An MA ELT student at Language Institute Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand. Her research interests include English Language Teaching and scaffolding techniques.
Kittitouch Soontornwipast: An Assistant Professor at Language Institute, Thammasat University. His research interests are materials development, innovation in ELT, qualitative research, and mixed-methods research.

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