Scaffolding in Second Language Context

For learning to take place, appropriate social interactional frameworks are a must. One of the key elements for the frameworks is scaffolding. Scaffolding involves the teachers' natural or instructional efforts to support learning. For language teaching, instructional scaffolding is common. Instructional scaffolding assists learners in a new task through modeling, supporting, encouraging, and providing additional props.

There are five criteria for effective scaffolding (Applebee, 1986)

1. Learners' ownership of the learning event.

The instructional task must allow students to make their own contribution to the activity as it evolves.

2. Appropriateness of the instructional task (making it the right level).

This means that the tasks should build upon the knowledge and skills the learner already possesses, but should be difficult enough to allow new learning to occur.

3. A structured learning environment.

This will provide a natural sequence of thought and language, thus presenting the student with useful strategies and approaches to the task.

4. Shared responsibility.

Tasks are solved jointly in the course of instructional interaction, so the role of the teacher is more collaborative than evaluative.

5. Transfer of control.

As students learn new procedures and routines, they should take a greater responsibility for controlling the progress of the task. Thus, the amount of interaction may actually increase as the learners become more competent.

One thing to be noted is that as the learner's competence grows, the scaffolding is gradually reduced until the learner is able to function autonomously in that task and apply their ability to real circumstances. As a language teacher, it should be kept in mind that the purpose of scaffolding is to make the learner an independent speaker of the target language.

References

Applebee, N. (1986). *Problems in process approaches: Towards a reconceptualization of process instruction*. A. Petrosky & D. Bartholomae (eds.). The teaching of writing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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