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Development of Speaking Ability through Motivational and Metacognitive-based Scaffolding

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Abstract

This study investigated the development of EFL learners' language proficiency considering motivational and metacognitive scaffolding techniques. The participants included 90 EFL learners. The recruitment procedure took place based on the participants' performance on a sample Preliminary English Test (PET). To collect the data and address the research questions, the participants were assigned into two experimental groups of metacognitive-based and motivational-based scaffolding and a control group with an equal number of participants in each group. In the metacognitive-based scaffolding group, metacognitive strategies such as producing a story within the framework and listening to and retelling the story were implemented. In the motivational-based scaffolding group, the speaking instruction was based on activities which provided maximum assistance for the learners. They were provided with songs, a relaxed environment, and opportunities to talk, i.e., turn-taking and wait-time to stimulate their motivation. The findings of the study shed light on the metacognitive and motivational-based scaffolding to promote EFL learners' speaking in foreign language skills. It was

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found that motivational-based scaffolding was more conducive to enhancing Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability.

Keywords: EFL students; Metacognitive-based scaffolding; Motivational-based scaffolding; Scaffolding; Speaking ability

INTRODUCTION

The role of productive skills in social interactions seems to become more and more evident in modern communities. Speaking and writing a second language could be recognized as essential skills for educational, business, and personal reasons. According to Richards (2008), speaking is the systematic articulation of verbal utterances to convey meaning. Speaking can be considered an interactive skill because you are processing information to produce speech while involved in a speech. It is "often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving" (Florez, 1999. p. 1). Speaking in a foreign or second language has great value for individual language learners since their proficiency in language learning is often measured by productive skills especially speaking ability. Speaking is the primary skill for evaluating the efficacy of a course since it is a medium to realize proficiency in other language skills and sub-skills.

According to Richards (2008), concerning speaking instruction, three issues should be considered. First, a decision needs to be made on speaking skills in class based on questionnaires, interviews, and diagnostic testing. Second, the types of teaching strategies to teach speaking should be identified. The third issue refers to characterizing the expected level of learners' performance on speaking and the criteria for assessment of their performance.

Teachers use several different strategies to help language learners enhance their understanding of the language. Thus, the application of scaffolding as discussed in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) contribute to formulate a workable approach to language learning. In Vygotskyan theory, scaffolding constitutes the main mechanism of internalization and a vital component of developmental activity in the ZPD (DeGuerrero & Commander, 2013). Vygotsky (1987, p. 86) defined ZPD as

> "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers."

To be more specific, Vygotsky (1987) believed that there are some activities that a child would be able to handle independently so that these functions are matured to be specified as the products of development. Therefore, if this is true for some independent functions, it can also be the case for other activities to be

independently managed by a child. In this regard, ZPD defines those functions that have not yet been matured but are of course, in the process of maturation, functions, which reach maturity in the future but the meantime are in an embryonic state (Vygotsky, 1987).

Alias (2012) classified scaffolds into three main categories called *cognitive*, *metacognitive*, and *affective* or *motivational scaffolds*. Alias postulated:

> While Cognitive and metacognitive scaffolds provide assistance, support, hints, prompts, and suggestions regarding the content, resources, and strategies relevant to problem-solving and learning management, motivational scaffolds involve techniques designed to maintain or improve the learner's motivational state, such as attribution or encouragement. (p. 138)

Alias (2012) argued that most of the studies conducted in the realm of scaffolding address cognitive and metacognitive scaffolding. It was suggested to implement motivational scaffolds through the use of strategies that elicit and reward learners' confidence and make learners' achievements more explicit. For the same reason, Belland, Chan Min, and Hannafin (2013) and Chen (2014) focused their attention on the lack of research on motivational scaffolds and the need to design and perform research on scaffolds meeting the learners' motivational needs. Chen (2014) highlighted the necessity of designing scaffolds that "not only focus on students' features such as cognitive status but psychological traits that affect their learning" (p. 342). It was also argued that scaffolds should be presented in order to stimulate learners' motivation while they attain conceptual knowledge. Chen (2014) elicited from the theory of zone of proximal motivational development (Brophy, 1999) as well as self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) to pose the possibility of creating scaffolding strategies that promote intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Belland et al. (2013), similarly stated that although all kinds of the scaffold are aimed to make learning tasks more controllable which, in turn, improve success expectancies and contributes to motivation. Scaffolding activities are explicitly designed to help learners in keeping their motivation and interest.

Bradley and Bradley (2004) discussed the effectiveness of scaffolding if visuals are included during instruction. Kriteman (2006) highlighted the importance of prior knowledge for scaffolding instruction in reading and listening. The participants felt prior knowledge is definitely the key to support learners with reading instruction. Lessow-Hurley (2003) also showed that cooperative learning as a scaffolding strategy could increase ESL learners' comprehension skills.

Rivera (2010) examined the role of systematic scaffolding techniques in literacy acquisition amongst second language learners. Several scaffolding strategies were used and the results emerged in student artifacts, reflections, and observations. It was found that integrating culturally relevant materials, background

knowledge, and relatable content is essential in literacy acquisition. In other words, scaffolded instruction needs to be continuous and relatable in order to be an effective tool for use with second language learners.

Sun and Rao (2012) investigated the Chinese adults' use of scaffolding in problem-solving tasks when they interact with their children. The participants were 57 children who were from low and high socioeconomic status. They did a task with both their mothers and teacher. Their interactions were videotaped and analyzed based on adults' adjustment of their scaffolding. The results showed that teachers were more successful in adjusting their scaffolding than mothers. It was also found that higher socioeconomic status children received better scaffolding than those from lower socioeconomic status. Generally, it was suggested that family socioeconomic status, adults' professional training, and task characteristics influence interaction with children.

Lan (2013) investigated different kinds of scaffolding to find out their effects of learning Chinese by having students use their L1 (English) to learn the L2 (Chinese), the target language. In order to find the answers to the research questions, a self-study narrative inquiry was employed as the primary research method. The data were collected from interviews, documents, reflection journals and questionnaires. The analysis of this data set argues that three types of scaffolding are useful for making Chinese learnable by L2 learners, namely, music-based scaffolding, sociolinguistic-activity-based scaffolding, and pattern-based scaffolding. This thesis presents a range of evidence about these three modes of scaffolding. Music-based scaffolding was used to with kindergarten to Year 3 students to promote their Chinese language learning. Second, sociolinguistic-activity-based scaffolding made it possible for students in Year 4 to Year 6 to practice Chinese as an everyday sociolinguistic activity and develop their own self-scaffolding for learning Chinese. Third, like other forms of scaffolding, pattern-based scaffolding was used to reduce Year 4 to Year 6 students' cognitive load when learning the complexities of Chinese, which included a shift from teacher scaffolding to students' scaffolding. This thesis provides several evidence-driven models for other teachers of Chinese to draw upon to make Chinese learnable for English speaking students.

Yuanhua and Guocai (2016) combined the scaffolding theory with oral English teaching to stimulate the learners' interests and improve their speaking ability in English. The analysis of the content of language teaching in the oral class indicated that scaffolding, from a constructivist perspective, in oral class is significant and practical in current educational research and can be applied in oral English teaching.

Statement of the Problem

Upon examining the relevant literature, one can understand that the studies concerning the role of scaffolding for L2 learning are in abundance. For example, in a descriptive study, Lai and Kritsonis (2006) stated that the use of

technology had a positive effect on the achievement levels of L2 learners, but it still had its limitations and weaknesses, such as financial, isolated, and knowledge required issues. However, very scarce studies have investigated the attitudes of learners towards the assessment of productive skills. Because productive skills are crucial for many EFL learners and language teachers in developing their language proficiency, the present study could fill the gap in the literature by providing a more comprehensive picture concerning the assessment of productive skills. The present study was designed to investigate the effects of metacognitive and motivational scaffolding strategies on Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability. The following research questions were posed to address the purpose of the study:

1. *To what extent motivational-based scaffolding could affect Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability?*
2. *To what extent metacognitive-based scaffolding could affect Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability?*
3. *Which type of scaffolding has a more significant effect on improving Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability?*

METHODS

Participants

For the purposes of this study, 90 intermediate EFL students were recruited non-randomly based on their performance on the English language proficiency test, i.e. Preliminary English Test (PET). They undertook a placement test and their level of English language proficiency was known as intermediate. The participants included both male and female students whose age ranges from 18 to 28, with Persian as their native language. Participants who voluntarily agreed to take part in this study were both male and female who enrolled for the 2019 Spring and Summer English courses. They participate in English courses to improve their language proficiency level in English language skills. The selected participants were randomly assigned to three groups of metacognitive-based scaffolding and motivational-based scaffolding and control.

Instruments

The instruments used in this research study included PET, pretest and posttest. According to the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, the Preliminary English Test (PET) is compatible with investigating students' language proficiency level. The PET sample test was used to homogenize the participants with regards to their language proficiency. The version of test used in this study refers to 2004. PET is a standard test of language proficiency for intermediate level; therefore, the reliability and validity of the test are self-evident. PET consisted of four main parts of reading, listening, writing and speaking.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) speaking section was used as a pretest and posttest of the study. IELTS is one of the world's most popular English language

proficiency tests used in this study to measure EFL learners' language proficiency. IELTS consists of four components measuring four major skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The speaking section was used in this study as pretest and posttest.

Speaking section consists of three parts. The examiner introduced herself in the first parts (introduction and interview) and asked participants to introduce themselves. The examiner asked general questions on familiar topics, e.g. home, family, work, studies and interests. In the second part (individual long turn), the examiner gave a task card which asked the participants to talk about a particular topic, and it includes the points they can cover in their talk. One minute was given to prepare their talk. In the third part (two-way discussion), the examiner asked other questions relevant to the topic of the second part 2. The questions provide an opportunity for learners to discuss more abstract ideas. Assessment is based on fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, pronunciation.

Procedure

The first step of the study was the administration of the pretest. The pretest measured the participants' knowledge of speaking before treatment sessions. Pretest was administered to the participants of all groups. Two raters scored each paper independently, according to the IELTS rating scale.

In the motivational scaffolding group, speaking instruction was based on activities, which stimulated learners' motivation. Researchers selected a topic and gave 5 minutes to students to think about this topic and brainstorm. The students' seats were arranged in U-shape. It was done to create a good and comfortable atmosphere in the class, which facilitated the movement of the learners around the classroom and made their conversations more interactive. They discussed the topic together.

Furthermore, one of the researchers was present to assist students if required. In each session, learners were asked to speak and perform simultaneous activities such as classifying the issues, judging them, and sequencing the events. These activities required learners to get into different degrees of cognitive involvement and different degrees of wait-time strategies in their conversations. Songs and rhymes were also used to motivate and activate the participants. Songs could facilitate learning language as their repetitive nature may enhance the learners' use of turn-taking during speaking and simple structures of English (Arfaei Zarandi & Rahbar, 2014). The researcher allowed the learners to select the next speaker in the classroom discussions. It could help them to raise their confidence in using turn-taking in their conversations. The teacher provided opportunities for learners to use their knowledge, skills, and strategies in different contexts and for different purposes.

In the metacognitive scaffolding group, the scaffolded instruction of speaking was integrated with metacognitive strategies. In each session, students were given an introduction of what would happen in that

session. For example, the learners were asked to produce a story within the framework set up by the task. In practice, they retell a story provided by the teacher. The students read and listened to the story (which progresses in length and difficulty throughout each text) as they look at a sequence of comic-strip style illustrations. The teacher asked some questions to check learners' understanding. The learners' ambiguities were clarified. The participants were asked to retell the story by summarizing and presenting vividly, identify the issues. The titles of the stories were *face to face after 56 years, man ties the knot with stranger, out on a limb, man eats out and gets more than he ordered; engineer is enthusiastic about odd new home*. The stories corresponded to the participant's level of language proficiency.

The traditional group participated in a normal speaking class, with routine teaching techniques and strategies. The teacher used authentic language – the language as it is used in an authentic context by giving the students a piece of recent news and a video episode of recent events. The teachers provided necessary directions for the learners. The purpose was an emphasis on the process of communication than using scaffolding strategies. The learners were given opportunities to express their ideas and opinions and their response to the activities.

RESULTS

The participants of the study were randomly assigned to three equal groups consisting of 30 learners. Then, they took IELTS as pretest. Two experienced raters scored the subjects' scores. The detailed descriptive statistics related to the pretest scores are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The descriptive statistics of the participants' scores on pretest

		N (Subjects)	Speaking
Pretest (motivational-based)	Rater 1	30	4.15
	Rater 2	30	4.04
Pretest (metacognitive-based)	Rater 1	30	4.40
	Rater 2	30	4.38
Pretest (control)	Rater 1	30	4.12
	Rater 2	30	4.04

To measure the inter-rater reliability of (total) scores on pretest obtained by two raters in the groups of the study, a Pearson-product moment correlation coefficient was performed. The results of correlation for motivational-based group are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Inter-rater reliability of the motivational-based group on pretest

		motivational-based - Pretest (Rater 1)	motivational-based - Pretest (Rater 2)
motivational-based - pretest (Rater 1)	Pearson Correlation	1	.985**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It showed that there is a significant relationship (r = 0.98, p < 0.05) between the scores of the pretest obtained by the two raters in the motivational-based group. Thus, the inter-rater reliability of the scores for motivational-based group is highly significant.

Another Pearson-product moment correlation coefficient was performed in order to test the inter-rater reliability of scores on pretest obtained by two raters in metacognitive-based scaffolding group. The results of correlation for metacognitive scaffolding group are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Inter-rater reliability of the metacognitive-based scaffolding group on pretest

		Pretest metacognitive-based group (Rater 1)	Pretest metacognitive-based group (Rater 2)
Metacognitive-based-pretest (Rater 1)	Pearson Correlation	1	.996**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N		30	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of another Pearson correlation for the metacognitive-based group revealed that there is a significant relationship (r = 0.99, p < 0.05) between the scores of pretest obtained by two raters in this group. Thus, the inter-rater reliability of scores is highly significant. This statistical procedure is repeated for the control group. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Inter-rater reliability of the control group on the pretest

		control - Pretest (Rater 1)	control - Pretest (Rater 2)
control - pretest (Rater 1)	Pearson Correlation	1	.932**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results showed a significant relationship between the scores of two raters ($r = .93$, $p < .05$) and therefore the inter-rater reliability of their scores is high. In order to ensure that there is no significant difference between the groups regarding their language learning skills at the beginning of the study, a one-way ANOVA was performed. The results are provided in Table 5.

Table 5

One-way ANOVA of pretest

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	28.033	2	14.017	1.071	.350
Within Groups	746.150	57	13.090		
Total	**774.183**	**59**			

The results showed that there is not any significant difference among the three groups regarding their performance on pretest ($F = 1.07$, $p > .05$). After the treatment sessions, the participants received IELTS as posttest. The raters' mean of the participants' scores are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

The mean scores of the participants' performance on posttest

		N (Subjects)	Speaking
Posttest (motivational-based)	Rater 1	30	7.33
	Rater 2	30	6.41
Posttest (metacognitive-based)	Rater 1	30	6.21
	Rater 2	30	4.38
Posttest (control)	Rater 1	30	5.18
	Rater 2	30	5.05

The inter-rater reliability of motivational-based scaffolding group's performance on posttest was calculated by means of Pearson correlation. The results of statistical analysis are provided in Table 7.

Table 7

Inter-rater reliability of the motivational-based scaffolding group on posttest

		motivational-based (Rater 1)	motivational-based (Rater 2)
motivational-based (Rater 1)	Pearson Correlation	1	.974**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The Pearson correlation results confirmed a strong and significant inter-rater reliability (r = .97, p < .05) among the posttest of the motivational-based scaffolding group participants. The inter-rater reliability of the metacognitive-based scaffolding group's scores is shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Inter-rater reliability of the metacognitive-based scaffolding group on posttest

		metacognitive-based (Rater 1)	metacognitive-based (Rater 2)
metacognitive-based (Rater 1)	Pearson Correlation	1	.940**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The results suggested that there is a substantial and significant (r = .94, p < .05) correlation between two raters' scores on posttest of the metacognitive-based group. Finally, the inter-rater reliability of the control group's scores are demonstrated in Table 9.

Table 9

Inter-rater reliability of the control group on posttest

		control (Rater 1)	control (Rater 2)
control (Rater 1)	Pearson Correlation	1	.913**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results showed that there is a significant ($r = .91$, $p < .05$) correlation between two raters' scores and the inter-rater reliability is significantly high.

In order to verify the first research question of the study in finding to what extent metacognitive-based scaffolding could affect Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability, a paired sample t-test was performed between the scores of metacognitive-based group on pretest and posttest. The results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Paired sample test between the pretest and posttest scorers of metacognitive-based scaffolding group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Posttest - Pretest (metacognitive-based)	22.9666	6.12222	1.11776	20.68059	25.25274	20.54	29	.000

The results of paired samples t-test indicated that there is a significant difference ($t = -20.54$, $p < .05$) between the participants of the speaking group's performance on pretest and posttest. In other words, metacognitive-based scaffolding caused progress in the learners' speaking ability and therefore, the first research question of the study was verified.

To verify the second research question of the study in finding to what extent motivational-based scaffolding could affect Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability, a paired sample t-test was performed between the scores of motivational-based group on pretest and posttest. The results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Paired sample test between the pretest and posttest scorers of motivational-based scaffolding group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Posttest - Pretest (motivational-based)	-4.22	1.992	.269	-4.775	-3.682	15.71	29	.000

The results of paired samples t-test indicated that there is a significant difference (t = 15.71, p < .05) between the participants of the motivational-based group's performance on pretest and posttest. In other words, the motivational-based scaffolding tasks caused learners' progress in speaking ability and therefore, the second research question of the study was verified.

To investigate the third question of the study in determining which type of scaffolding has a more significant effect on improving Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability, a one-way ANOVA was conducted between the scores of metacognitive, motivational and control groups on posttest. The results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

ANOVA on posttest

Posttest					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	556.133	2	278.067	4.392	.000
Within Groups	3608.850	87	63.313		
Total	4164.983	89			

Scheffe posthoc test was performed in order to find the location of differences. The results showed a significant difference (F = 4.39, p < 05) among the posttest scores of the three groups of the study. It shows there are significant differences among the groups in their speaking ability. The results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Scheffe Posthoc test on posttest

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Posttest						
Scheffe						
(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
motivational-based	metacognitive-based	2.180*	.327	.000	1.47	3.10
	control	2.900*	.327	.000	4.07	5.70
metacognitive-based	motivational-based	-2.180*	.327	.000	-3.10	-1.47
	control	2.560*	.327	.000	1.79	3.41
control	motivational-based	-2.900*	.327	.000	-5.70	-4.07
	metacognitive-based	-2.560*	.327	.000	-3.41	-1.79
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

As the findings indicated, motivational-based scaffolding group outperformed the other groups regarding their performance on speaking posttest. Therefore, the third research question of the study was verified.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The present study was designed to examine the effectiveness of metacognitive, motivational scaffolding tasks on Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability. The significant findings of the study, based on the research questions, are listed as follow:

1.The paired sample t-test showed that the Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability in English language was developed as a result of receiving instruction on motivational-based scaffolding instruction.

2.The paired sample t-test indicated that the English language speaking ability of Iranian EFL learners was also developed because of receiving metacognitive-based scaffolding instruction.

3.Finally, the results of one-way ANOVA demonstrated that motivational-based scaffolding enhanced the performance of EFL learners' speaking ability.

Scaffolding provided conditions for learners to engage in listening and reading activities highly. Engagement is emerged in scaffolding as suggested by Raphael, Pressley, and Mohan (2003) who state that high student engagement consists of various examples and peer collaboration. In this study, some scaffolded listening and reading activities such as activating prior knowledge, diagram, graphic organizers that include sentence starters, marking the text (chunking), teacher models, visualization, small-group work, and whole-class instruction were designed for learners to engage learners in a caring and positive environment.

This finding was approved by Chi (2007) who studied the use of scaffolding strategies in teaching process of two EFL teachers and found that utilizing effective scaffolding strategy in the process of instruction enhanced the students' reading comprehension.

Scaffolding enabled the learners to go beyond what has been learned. Providing information was the key to learners' success in doing their activities. In this way, the students could help one another in their learning community. The findings of this study are also more consistent with an empirical study conducted by Tam (2014), who found that teachers' scaffolding instructions facilitate learners' academic language development and enable them to learn content subjects. The findings of this study support those of McKenzie (2011), who found the significant effect of scaffolding in language learners' reading performance. The results of this study acknowledge those of Yuanhua and Guocai (2016), who used scaffolding in oral English teaching and enhanced learners' speaking ability in English.

As a result, the findings of this study suggest that in order for scaffolding instruction to be effective, language teachers should provide meaningful content for speaking comprehension materials that are reinforced by providing a variety of scaffolded strategies. This could guide students through the zone of proximal development (Walqui, 2006). Since language and thought are socially constructed (Vysgotsky, 1987), EFL learners must have numerous opportunities to experiment with speaking in meaningful ways.

Contribution to new knowledge

The findings of the present study can be beneficial for language teachers to eliminate or minimize the counterproductive effects of conventional techniques and strategies on EFL learners' behaviour and their learning. Utilizing motivational and metacognitive scaffolding, teachers can train more cooperative learners who can be more efficient and successful social members.

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