

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Assessing teachers' knowledge and application of the scaffolding model for teaching reading comprehension: The case of new Juaben South Municipality

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**Abstract**

This study seeks to assess teachers' level of knowledge and application of the scaffolding model in teaching reading comprehension lessons at basic six within the new Juaben South Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana. Forty (40) public primary school teachers in the Oguia Circuit were purposively sampled for the study. The mixed methods sequential explanatory design was used to assess the knowledge and techniques of the usage of the scaffolding model in reading comprehension lessons. The quantitative data was gathered via a questionnaire while the qualitative data was done using observation and interview techniques. The study finds, among other things that teachers' knowledge and application of scaffolding model to reading comprehension lessons, significantly influences learners' attitude towards reading comprehension, though teachers still face some other difficulties while implementing the scaffolding concept. It is recommended that continuous Professional Development (PD) conferences, seminars, and workshops to acquaint teachers' the more on the application of the model is imperative. Also, intensification of use of

resources in engaging the model and increase allotted time for reading comprehension lessons in the classroom will enhance sustainability in reading among learners.

Introduction

Whereas learning to read is an important skill every child must develop to be successful in school (Alan 2011), reading comprehension is the essential skill that enables students to acquire knowledge and paves way for any good education. If readers read without comprehension, the aim of reading is not fulfilled. Reading is fruitful not only for career, study, and pleasure, but also for language acquisition because it provides opportunities to study vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation. Knowledge in reading comprehension will enable learners to translate that knowledge in enhancing their education as well as advancing the development of learners' reading experience in other disciplines. Thus, linking reading comprehension to other disciplines will assist learners to demonstrate the way to construct sentences, paragraphs, and whole texts thereby providing a good model for English writing (Harmer 2007). Reading comprehension is a key focus of the primary school English Language Curriculum in Ghana (NaCCA, 2019).

The aim of studying English language at the primary level is "to help learners acquire the basic skills that will help them decode any text, read age-level texts easily, fluently and with comprehension and cultivate the habit of reading widely for pleasure and information" (NaCCA, 2019, p. vii). To be able to achieve this, there is the need for learners to comprehend text they read and should be able to construct ideas in creative ways that will contribute to their life-long learning and also meet global standards. However, many students are not ready for this role which, in turn, makes learning more challenging (Suherdi, 2008).

For learners to overcome any language barriers, grasp new information and prepare for life, they must acquire the skills to construct knowledge through comprehension before entering the final face of their basic education. Dawoud (2013) observes that some students who have the edge to read sometimes struggle because they lack the basic reading skills. This indicates that low performance on reading comprehension tasks, lessons, and tests, requires reconsideration and adoption of new strategies that depend on support, assistance, and explicit instruction to guide learners.

Literature Review

Recent and emerging instructional approaches emphasize learning by engaging learners in knowledge construction. For instance, Bell (1999) asserts that empirical evidence has proven that many child-centered teaching methods enable learners to interact and construct their own meaning of concepts. These methods are determined by such factors as the availability

of resources, the topic being covered, the caliber of learners, and the teachers' expertise in using a particular method.

The following child-centered methods and strategies to teaching and learning in classrooms have been suggested: brainstorming, group work, debates, using ICT, case studies, discussions, guided discovery, questioning, laboratory teaching, and facilitation (Bell 1999; McInnis 2000; Burdett 2003; Erickson 2007; & Thornburg 2005). It is expected that if learners receive the necessary support and assistance, they will successfully perform simple reading tasks and move to more complex ones (Reiser, 2004; Olson & Land, 2007). Vacca (2008) suggests that when learners are guided, supported, and provided with the necessary Teaching and Learning Resources (TLRs) they will become more responsible for their learning, more motivated, and more successful. The supportive skills from the teachers will also assist learners from the very beginning to help them move toward new skills, concepts, and or levels of understanding. Teachers are responsible for initiating each new step of learning and building on what students are currently able to do on their own. It is therefore imperative for English language teachers to adopt child-centered strategies in their classes to improve students' reading comprehension skills and general reading achievements.

Theoretical Framework - Lev Vygotsky's Scaffolding Model

The theory that guided the study was the Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (SCT). Constructivists believe learners create meaning by building upon previous experiences. The acquisition of knowledge is a learner-centered, hands-on process where students construct new ideas/concepts and integrate those ideas and concepts into their existing knowledge (Schuh & Barab, 2008). Johnson et al. (2005) similarly argue that construction of knowledge takes place during play, exploration, manipulation of objects and materials, and imitation. Hands-on exploration of the learning environment and its materials through problem solving as well as opportunities for creative expression are keys to learning (Bodrova & Leong, 2005).

There has been a move from behaviourism to constructivism in educational psychology. Constructivists posit that the learner constructs knowledge rather than passively absorb them (Katz, 1996). Vygotsky's theory represents a transition from classical to non-classical psychology (Robbins & Stetsenko, 2002). Vygotsky criticized the behaviourist approach as being too narrow, specialized, isolated and intrapersonal. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (SCT) views on language learning provide a psycholinguistic explanation of the sociocultural circumstances and processes through which pedagogy can foster learning that leads to language development (Nassaji & Cumming, 2000). The basic theme of the Vygotskian theory is that learning takes place in social settings. Vygotsky was more interested in the learning potential that a child might have and what the child might accomplish with the guidance of adults or older peers (Vygotsky, 1978). In Vygotsky's work and the neo-Vygotskians such as Cole (1996), Lantolf and Appel (1994), and Wertsch (1998, 1991, 1985),

one finds a theoretical perspective in which language is understood as mediating and derives its mediating cognitive functions from social activities, that is to say, not in isolated individual activities. In the Vygotskian perspective, knowledge is not individually constructed, but co-constructed between two people under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Learners move from one lower level to a higher level. This guidance or collaboration is named later "scaffolding".

According to Walqui; Burch; and Mahmoud (2006, 2015), the main tenet of Vygotsky's learning theory can be summarized in five points: Learning precedes development, Language is the main vehicle (tool) of thought, Mediation is central to learning, Social interaction and internalization, The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Scaffolding As A Child-Centered Approach To Teaching English Comprehension

An emerging and well-recommended trend in child-centered strategies in teaching English comprehension, according to Mahmoud (2015), is the scaffolding model. Scaffolding is a strategy used to facilitate learners' transition from assisted to independent performance (Cooper, 2000; Gibbons, 2002). The philosophy underpinning this approach is substantially explained in the writing of Bruner built from the works of Vygotsky (Pinter, 2006). Scaffolding is used to bridge students' independent and supported operational levels. Scaffolding is temporarily provided and gradually removed as the learners become more competent and independent (Collins in Yu, 2004; Cameron, 2001). The concept underlying learning in scaffolds, is mostly linked to the constructivist Lev Vygotsky's 1978 idea of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). Although relatively old, it is the discrepancy between what a child can do independently and what he/she can do under adult guidance or in collaboration with the teacher or more capable peers (Fisher & Frey 2013).

Vygotsky argued that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and then within the individual; "...through others, we become ourselves" (Rieber, 1998, p. 29). This makes valid Mahmoud's (2015) assertion that guidance and collaboration with a more knowledgeable person enhances learners learning and understanding of concepts well. In Vygotsky's claim, the zone of proximal development awakens a variety of internal developmental processes only when the child is interacting with people in his/her environment. Vygotsky's process relates to the notion of scaffolding though the term did not originate from him. The term scaffold, as applied to learning situations, is generally attributed to Wood and Bruner (1978), who described it as a "...process that enables a child or a novice to efforts" (p. 90). It is the process of temporarily providing support to a learner within a social context and then gradually withdraw this support as the learner gains independence in performing tasks. The concept of scaffolding serves as a bridge used to build upon what students already know to arrive at something they do not know. If scaffolding is properly administered, it will act as an enabler, not as a disabler (Benson, 1997). Once students master the task, scaffolding is gradually removed and the responsibility of learning shifts from the facilitator to the learner.

Several key characteristics of scaffolding can be identified: the interaction must be collaborative within the learner's zone of proximal development (Beed, Hawkins & Roller, 1991; Wood & Wood, 1996); the "scaffolder" must access the learner's level of comprehension and then work slightly beyond that level, drawing the learning into new areas of exploration as the learner becomes more competent (Rogoff, 1995; Palincsar, 1998).

Research Gaps

Many studies have contributed to instructional scaffolding methods and techniques. Palincsar (1998) identifies modeling, questioning and explanation which can be used to make the task requirements explicit. Billett (1993) suggests initial knowledge building, demonstration, initial practice, guided practice, independent practice, and assessment as the process of scaffolding.

Hogan and Pressley (1997) list eight essential elements of scaffolded instruction: pre-engagement; establishing a shared goal; actively diagnosing the understandings and needs of the learners; providing tailored assistance; maintaining pursuit of the goal; giving feedback; controlling for frustration and risk; and assisting internalization, independence, and generalization to other contexts. Also, Walqui (2006) looks at these six scaffolding instructional types in teaching English: modeling, bridging, contextualization, schema building, re-presenting text and developing meta-cognition. In this regard, Larkin (2003) provides simple steps scaffolded instruction can be done: first, the facilitator does it; second, the class does it; third, the group does it; and fourth, the individual does it. Doing this, differentiated planning must be included in the scaffolding activities in order to cater for all learners with diverse needs. In view of that, Alibali (2006) suggests a variety of scaffolds to accommodate students with different levels of knowledge: using advance organizers, cue cards, concept and mind mapping. Also, providing examples, explanations, handouts, hints, prompts, question cards, question stems, stories, and visual scaffolds. Based on these strategies and insights of scaffolding, the need to carry out this study is recognized to assess teacher's knowledge and use of Vygotsky's Scaffolding model as a tool for English Language reading comprehension lessons in New Juaben South Municipality.

To resolve the poor performance of learners in English Language, the government of Ghana has embarked on several educational reforms. There have also been several workshops organized at the Regional, District and Circuit levels to train English language teachers to become abreast with the demands of the new curriculum. However, it is apparent that the challenge of poor communication, poor reading and poor comprehension ability is still visible amongst learners in primary schools in Ghana, the New Juaben South Municipality specifically (Buabeng, et al 2020). Learners' inability to meet the expectations of the English Language Curriculum at this level affects their progression to higher level of education since English Language is a key (core) subject at the Junior/Senior High School levels in Ghana's Education. Since reading comprehension is a foundational skill in English Language learning, learners' lack of this skill will hamper their ability to perform well in all other subject areas.

The following extract from the Examinations Officer for the New Juaben South Education Directorate's report on English Language Examination organized in 2019 for all primary six pupils in the Municipality buttresses the afore-mentioned challenge:

"Most learners from all indications seem unable to read the comprehension passage to enable them respond to the questions on it. The answers many of the learners provided were quite different from what was contained in the passage assigned to them. Some primary six learners also just copied the test items as answers to the questions on the passage" (NJSED, 2019).

The report from NJSED (2019) shows that students' performance in the exam is not up to expectation. It is in view of this result that, this research seeks to assess teacher's knowledge and use of scaffolding strategy, an emerging child-centered approach to ascertain the level of knowledge and application of this strategy in the teaching and learning of reading comprehension lessons in Basic six.

Effectiveness of Implementing Scaffolding Instructions

Arora et al., (2024) explore the effectiveness of implementing scaffolding instruction for university level EFL/ESL students in improving their language learning skills, namely critical reading, and study skills for reading. A sample of 36 foundation year students was involved in two cycles of intervention. Triangulation of data collection was done after each cycle through student survey (SS), language learning assessment (LLA) tasks and an observation checklist to measure the impact of the proposed practice on the improvement in the participants' learning.

The scaffolding techniques used were soft versus hard (support provided only till needed), chunking (breaking down information), modelling (giving clear examples), bridging (using prior knowledge) and contextualizing (making connections). Both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that scaffolding instruction significantly improved the participants' language learning skills. For sustainable education, the findings emphasize the importance of conducting scaffolding instruction in small groups, assigning pre-planned and well-structured tasks with clear instructions, and providing scaffolding 'as and when needed' especially in a mixed ability group of EFL/ESL students.

Scaffolding in English Classroom

Fajrin, et.al., (2024) conducted a study aimed to find out (1) How the teacher perceives the scaffolding strategy and (2) how the teacher applies scaffolding in teaching English. The

study used a qualitative descriptive method and collected data through observation and interview. The observation process was carried out in two meetings in class VIII.6 SMPN 7 Makassar and the interview process was conducted with a teacher. The findings showed that scaffolding strategies are beneficial in the learning process, namely to build confidence, identify student knowledge, and create student independence. This is very important to achieve learning goals and increase the best potential of each student.

Makassar uses scaffolding strategy methods in teaching. Researchers found six types of scaffolding strategies used by the teacher in teaching, namely modelling, questioning, giving feedback, breaking down tasks, direct assistance, and providing learning resources. Teacher explains the material to be learned in a structured and systematic manner that can be easily understood by students.

Teachers' Strategies in Providing Scaffolding in teaching English Language

Arlinda (2019) aims at scrutinizing the extent to which teachers provide scaffolding as well as exploring learners' language proficiency and its influence in providing scaffolding in the classroom. Employing a descriptive qualitative study, two English teachers with a high level of proficiency were invited to become the participants.

Through classroom observation followed by teacher interviews, it was found that teachers employed several types of scaffolding such as modeling, bridging, and contextualizing. Furthermore, language proficiency can help teachers in providing scaffolding to young learners in terms of providing good language models, maintaining the use of English in the classroom, giving explanations and instructions in English, and providing examples of words and grammatical structures.

Scaffolding Effectiveness: Instructors'/teachers' perceptions and attitudes.

Awadelkarim, A. (2021), examines the effectiveness of scaffolding in the context of Majmaah University EFL. He does so by exploring the attitudes and perceptions of a randomly selected group of (30) EFL instructors of various backgrounds and degrees. Theoretically, the study was informed by a medley of relevant theories and approaches such as Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning, Bakhtin's Dialogism and Habermas' Communicative Rationality.

Methodologically, a combination of a questionnaire (23 participants) and focus group discussions (FGD) (7 participants) were employed to collect the data and then analyze it using a pertinent tool for each instrument. The three questions the paper set out to answer were: 1) what are the perceptions and attitudes of Majmaah University EFL teachers towards scaffolding? 2) To what extent are they aware of scaffolding in teaching? 3). What is their

attitude for practicing scaffolding in pedagogical contexts? Even though the analysis largely revealed that the participants practiced scaffolding in some way or the other and that their attitudes and perceptions regarding practical pedagogical scaffolding were exceedingly positive, there were, nonetheless, interesting complexities unveiled all along. Contrary to the seemingly participants' perception of a strong belief of their knowledge of the principles and approaches underlying scaffolding, profound analysis suggests that they, in fact, lack adequate relevant knowledge/competence.

The participants appeared less confident of their beliefs when it comes to practical and pedagogical scaffolding. The major contribution of this paper lies in the apparent gap it fills with its narrow focus on the instructors' attitudes and perceptions alongside its innovative employment of focus group discussion (FGD) as an effective research tool.

Methods

The mixed methods sequential explanatory design was used to assess the knowledge and techniques of the use of scaffolding model in teaching reading comprehension lessons. Thus, the quantitative and qualitative research methodology were used where quantitative data was collected and analysed firsthand then followed by the collection of the qualitative data and the results interpreted. The mixed method was used because it is a procedure for collecting and analyzing and mixing or integrating both quantitative and qualitative data at the same stage of the research process within a single study for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the research problem (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998, Creswell 2005). The rationale for mixing both kinds of data within one study is grounded in the fact that neither the quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient, by themselves, to capture the trends details of a situation.

Questionnaires were used to gather the quantitative data while interviews were used to gather the qualitative data from the participants. Questionnaires are doubtless one of the primary sources of obtaining data in any research endeavour. According Zohrabi (2013) closed-ended questionnaires provide the inquirer with clear quantitative or numerical data; in view of that the study focused on closed-ended questions. This was done by ensuring validity, and reliability as well as avoiding unambiguity (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 438).

Merriam, (1998, p. 71) indicates that it is important for researchers "to obtain a special kind of information" that is, to get firsthand information directly from the knowledgeable informants and investigates for themselves what is going on in the respondents' mind. And this can be done through the use of interview (Zohrabi, 2013); to understand what and how people perceive and "interpret the world around them" Flick (2006, p. 160). Thus, the researchers engaged the participants to find out their views on the existing knowledge relating to the use of scaffolding in in teaching reading comprehension.

“Face validity is the idea that a test should appear superficially to test what it is supposed to test; and Content validity is the notion that a test should sample the range of behaviours represented by the theoretical concept being tested”. These were checked by language experts to establish both face and content validity. A pilot assessment was done to ascertain the validity of the instruments using ten (10) primary six English Language teachers in the Adweso Circuit of the New Juaben South Municipality of the Eastern Region.

A reliability analyses of the piloted questionnaires using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient with the aid of the IBM SPSS statistics 20 was done and the result was $\alpha = 0.75$. Creswell (2007) opines that Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Coefficient values of 0.70 and above are considered reliable.

The study was carried out in the New Juaben South Municipality of the Eastern Region. It was restricted to Basic six teachers in the Forty (40) public primary schools in the Ogua Circuit. Forty (40) primary six teachers out of 144 primary school teachers in Ogua circuit were purposively sampled/ selected for the study because the problem of the study originated specifically from there. Taherdoost (2016) opines that the researcher includes cases or participants in the sample because they deserve inclusion. Therefore, all the forty (40) basic six (6) teachers who teach English Language, merited and accepted to be part of the study as well as their learners were included in the study for data collection for both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically while the quantitative data was analyzed by employing descriptive statistics analysis Tables and Figures.

Results

This section presents results and findings of the study on assessing teachers’ knowledge and use of Vygotsky’s scaffolding model as a tool for Reading Comprehension lessons in the New Juaben South Municipality.

Table 1: Teacher’s Knowledge and application of Scaffolding Model for Teaching Reading Comprehension Lessons

Statement/ Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	MN	SDV
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %		
Knowledge:							
I know scaffolding as a child-centered teaching strategy.	4 (10)	4 (10)	0 (0)	20 (50)	12 (30)	3.6	1.3
I have knowledge on scaffolding strategy as a tool for teaching	0 (0)	8 (20)	12 (30)	12 (30)	8 (20)	3.5	1.08

reading comprehension

In scaffolding, learners receive support and assistance, successfully perform certain tasks and move to more complex ones.	0 (0)	4 (10)	0 (0)	24 (60)	12 (30)	4.1	0.87
Scaffolding plays a role in ensuring that the child learns what he couldn't learn by him/herself.	0 (0)	4 (10)	4 (10)	28 (70)	4 (10)	3.8	0.37

Application:

I ask questions during lessons to check for understanding of learners.	0 (0)	4 (10)	0 (0)	8 (20)	28 (70)	4.5	0.97
I model using verbal explanations and body language to elaborate and demonstrate the new material (concept, word etc).	4 (10)	4 (10)	4 (10)	16 (40)	12 (30)	3.7	1.34
I contextualize concepts, expressions, new vocabulary using audio visuals, demonstrations, examples etc.	0 (0)	0 (0)	20 (50)	4 (10)	16 (40)	3.9	0.99
I represent text with pictures etc. and encourage students to start the appropriation (use) of new language;	0 (0)	4 (10)	16 (40)	12 (30)	8 (20)	3.6	1.10

Source: Field Data (2021). **Key:** **F**= Frequency, **%**= Percentage, **SD**= Strongly Disagree,

D= Disagree, **N**= Neutral, **A**= Agree, **SA**= Strongly Agree, **MN**= Mean, **SDV**= Standard Deviation.

Table 1 represents the responses to an eight-item Likert scale questionnaire. The data analysis from the table indicates that, all the forty (40) primary six English Language teachers responded to the statements in each of the sections on the questionnaires. This gives a hundred percentage (100%) response rate.

From Table 1 and with regard to the statements on Knowledge: "I know scaffolding as a child-centered teaching strategy", 4 (10%) strongly disagreed, 4 (10%) disagreed. However, 20 (50%) agreed and 12 (30) strongly agreed. In general terms, 8 (20%) of the teachers did not agree to the statement but, 32 (80%) of them agreed to the statement. This translates into a mean of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 1.30. This proves that the teachers in the Oguaa Circuit of the New Juaben South Municipality know scaffolding as a child-centered teaching strategy.

For the statement "I have knowledge on scaffolding strategy as a tool for teaching reading comprehension", 8 (20%) of the teachers disagreed, 12 (30%) were neutral in agreement to the statement. Twelve (12) representing (30%) of them and Eight (8) representing (20%) agreed and strongly agreed to the statement respectively. This gives a mean of 3.5 and a standard deviation of 1.08. In sum, 8 (20%) disagreed, 12 (30%) were undecided and 20 (50%) agreed to the statement. This suggests that half of the number have knowledge on scaffolding as a strategy for teaching reading comprehension, but half of them lack knowledge or are not sure of scaffolding as a strategy for teaching reading comprehension.

With respect to the statement "In scaffolding, learners receive support and assistance, successfully perform certain tasks and move to more complex ones", 1(10%) of the teachers disagreed; but 6 (60%) of them agreed while 3(30%) strongly agreed to the statement. In summary, 1(10%) disagreed but 9 (90%) of the teachers generally agreed to the statement leading to a mean 4.1 and a standard deviation of 0.87. This demonstrates that virtually all the teachers have knowledge on scaffolding as a means of learners receiving support and assistance to successfully perform certain tasks and move to more complex ones.

Regarding the statement "Scaffolding plays a role in ensuring that the child learns what he couldn't learn by him/herself", 4 (10%) of the teachers showed their disagreement to the statement; also 4(10%) were indifferent (partly agree/ disagree) to the statement. Nonetheless, 28 (70%) of them agreed and 4 (10%) strongly agreed to the statement. In sum, 32 teachers who represents (80%) confirmed their knowledge on the statement. This resulted in a mean of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 0.37. This in effect, implies that majority of the teachers have knowledge on the role scaffolding plays in helping learners learn what they couldn't learn on their own.

Again, from Table 1 with reference to the statements on application: "I ask questions during lessons to check for understanding of learners", none of the teachers strongly disagreed; 4 (10%) disagreed with none of them being neutral, 8 (20%) of them agreed while 28 (70%) of the teachers also strongly agreed to the statement. Overall, only 4 (10%) teacher was against the statement but a whopping 34 (90%) of them supported the statement resulting in a mean of 4.5 and a standard deviation of 0.97. From the afore-mentioned analysis, it can be concluded that almost all the teachers employ asking questions to check for learners understanding during lessons as a scaffolding technique. With the statement "I model using verbal explanations and body language to elaborate and demonstrate the new material (concept, word etc), then the class does it, groups do it and individual pupils do it", 4 (10%) of the teachers strongly disagreed; 4 (10%) disagreed; 4 (10%) remained neutral. Sixteen (16) representing (40%) of the teachers agreed while 12 (30%) strongly agreed to the statement. Cumulatively, only 8 (20%) disagreed, however, on the other hand, 28 (70%) of the teachers affirmed the statement, giving a mean of 3.7 and a standard deviation of 1.34. This confirms the fact that majority of the teachers per their responses model using various methods to

enable the class, groups and individuals to appreciate new material (such as concepts, words etc.) as scaffolding technique during reading comprehension lessons.

For the statement "I contextualize concepts, expressions, new vocabulary using audio visuals, demonstrations, examples etc", none of the teachers strongly disagreed nor disagreed to the statement; however, 20 (50%) of them were neutral to the statement; 4 (10%) agreed with 14 (40%) of them strongly agreeing to the statement. In all, none of them disagreed to the statement while 20 (50%) of them agreed to the statement with a resultant mean and standard deviation of 3.9 and 0.99 respectively. This clearly shows that some of the teachers do not employ the scaffolding technique of conceptualizing concepts, expressions, new vocabulary using audio visuals, demonstrations etc. but others also do during reading comprehension in English Language.

With reference to the final statement "I represent text with pictures, etc. and encourage students to start the appropriation (use) of new language; 4 (10%) of the teachers disagreed, 16 (40%) remained neutral, 12 (30%) of them agreed with 8 (20%) strongly agreeing. In total, 20 (50%) showed clear disagreement to the statement; while 20 (50%) of them agreed to it, resulting in a mean of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 1.10. This basically leads to a conclusion that, some of the teachers duly represent texts with pictures and encourage learners to start the appropriation of the new language while a good number of them too do not employ this scaffolding technique during reading comprehension lessons.

Responses from Interviews

The interview served as a basis for triangulating some of the responses from the questionnaire and these are discussed under the emerging themes as follows:

What In Your View Does Scaffolding As A Teaching Strategy Mean?

The interview responses of the teachers were in line with the following sub-themes: building of concept, teacher serving as guide, and a teaching technique that helps the children to progress in learning. Some of the responses from the respondents are transcribed as follows:

"Scaffolding strategy is a teaching strategy which means building a concept in a lesson bit by bit." (ELT 1)

"When you talk about scaffolding it is a method of teaching whereby a teacher serves as a guide to guide a learner in order to accomplish a particular task." (ELT 3)

These responses show that teachers have knowledge on the concept of scaffolding since they are able to give explanations to it.

Which Principles of Scaffolding Strategy Do You Usually Use To Teach Your Children Well?

Respondents' views were solicited on principles of scaffolding strategy that is usually used to teach learners well. Some of them had to say:

"The principle is you build the children from known to unknown. That is, you base on what they know already then you leave them to discover what they don't know." (ELT 5)

It is indicative that the principles guiding the use of scaffolding didn't come out clearly, however, they were able to express their thought on it.

What Role Do You Play As A Teacher In The Scaffolding Strategy During Lessons?

Teachers' responses were identified in the sub-theme 'what role do you play as a teacher in the scaffolding strategy during lessons as a facilitator and a guide. Some of their responses are presented below:

"My role is that I facilitate. I guide them to achieve their goal or the goal (of the lesson)" (ELT 5)

"Mmmmmm you (the teacher) are just the guide. So, you guide the children through the techniques." (ELT 8)

"I generally play a role of a facilitator during reading comprehension lessons. I read and then guide the learners also to read." (ELT 1)

"The role I play is basically as a facilitator. I edge the children to bring out the ideas themselves that is relevant or associated with the topic you are dealing with." (ELT 2). (Interview Data, 2021)

The responses respondents provided on the role of the teacher during the use of scaffolding approach indicate that they are cognizant of their roles in using this model.

What Do You Think Are Some Of The Processes Of Scaffolding Strategy That Help Students To Learn During Reading Comprehension?

Teachers' responses were captured under the following themes: Review of relevant knowledge, Exploration of meaning and application of new words, modelling of reading,

breaking reading tasks into smaller units in groups, and asking questions on passages to check understanding. Some excerpts of their responses are transcribed as follows:

"So as a teacher using the scaffolding (strategy), I base on the learner knowledge from the known to the unknown then I use to build on their previous knowledge in order to build the new skills for the new lesson so I serve as a guide up to the time the learner will gain maximum knowledge about the topic, then I will leave him or her in order to practice it on her own." (ELT 8).

"I first discuss and explain the topic with the pupils. Then we come to the key words in it with the help of a dictionary to bring out the meanings of the words and also form sentences with them for them to have a fair view of the words that they found the meaning of. During the reading itself, I the teacher read first and ask the pupils to also read before we orally answer questions on them" (ELT 4)

What are the scaffolding techniques you apply to ensure that your pupils understand the lesson and are able to do the reading comprehension exercise?

Responses of the teachers fell in line with the following sub-themes: Modelling, Exploration, Use of Audio-Visual Materials, Oral Questions and answers, guiding from known to unknown by increasing task difficulty, linking of concept to everyday life situations. The responses are transcribed as follows:

"I guide them that is I guide them from what they know to the unknown. After that I can give them a task higher than what they have done already to reach the unknown. After that I relate it to everyday experience." (ELT 5)

"With this question, pinpointing specific techniques will honestly be difficult for me because I don't have knowledge on them but what I can say to it is first help the children to bring out the meaning of the words themselves through the pages of the dictionary so this one they explore the dictionary, then I also find how they understand the word so we use them in sentences. From that time, we begin the reading itself where reading makes easier because most of the key words have been dealt with." (ELT 1)

"First, it is errr questions and answers orally. I have to introduce them to the questions and answers orally so that you make sure they understand what you are arriving at before they do the written exercise." (ELT 4)

"So,in case may be the pronunciation of the words, I will pronounce the words then the learners will pronounce it for me. Then the pictures in the book, I will ask the learner

what he/ she can observe from the picture so out that I will be able to come out with the topic for the lesson, I will introduce it to them. For the first time, I will read the passage for them to listen after that I will invite some of the learners those who cannot read and those who can. I do random picking then out of that they read.”(ELT 3). (Interview Data, 2021)

The Influence of the use of the Scaffolding model on learners’ attitude toward the Learning of English Language and challenges encountered with the use of scaffolding model for reading comprehension lessons.

Statement/ Item	SD F %	D F %	N F %	A F %	SA F %	MN	SDV
<i>Influence of Scaffolding:</i>							
Learners (students) show great interest during lessons when they are allowed to contribute during lessons.	0 (0)	4 (10)	0 (0)	0 (0)	36 (90)	4.7	0.95
Students find tasks easy and are able to perform them when I offer them assistance at initial stages and it translates into good performance in exercises.	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	24 (60)	16 (40)	4.4	0.52
The use of different approaches and TLMS such as modelling, questioning, audio-visuals, cues, assists students to participate and understand new concepts well.	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (10)	12 (30)	24 (60)	4.5	0.71
Students show interest and fully participate in English language reading comprehension lessons when they are put in mixed ability groups to share ideas with their peers and present group works.	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (10)	12 (30)	24 (60)	4.5	0.71
<i>Challenges of the use of Scaffolding:</i>							
Planning and implementing scaffolds optimize learning for all students but it is a very demanding instructional strategy.	0 (0)	4 (10)	4 (10)	28 (70)	4 (10)	3.8	0.79
Teaching learners with different learning abilities makes using the scaffolding strategy difficult and time consuming.	0(0)	4 (10)	12 (30)	24 (60)	0 (0)	3.5	0.71
Lack of regular in-service education and training on the use of scaffolding in teaching comprehension makes teachers handicapped.	0 (0)	8 (20)	12 (30)	12 (30)	8 (20)	3.5	1.08

From Table 2 above, on the statements on influence: "Learners (students) show great interest during lessons when they are allowed to contribute", No teacher strongly disagreed to it; 4 (10%) of them disagreed and none of them remained neutral. However, as none also agreed, an overwhelming number of 36 (90%) of the teachers strongly agreed to the statement. Generally, 4 (10%) of the teachers did not agree that learners show great interest during lessons when they are allowed to contribute to the lesson while 36 of them representing 90% affirmed the statement. This resulted in a mean of 4.7 and a standard deviation of 0.95. This implies that an overwhelming majority of the class six English language teachers in the Oguaa circuit of the New Juaben South Municipal believe that learners demonstrate a great deal of interest during lessons when they are allowed to contribute.

The second statement was "Students find tasks easy and are able to perform them when I offer them assistance at initial stages and it translates into good performance in exercises". Out of the total number of teachers, none, of them strongly disagreed, disagreed and also remained neutral as far as the statement was concerned. On the other hand, 24 (60%) of them agreed and 16 (40%) also strongly agreed. In total, all the 40 (100%) primary six teachers in the Oguaa circuit of the New Juaben South Municipality agreed to the statement. This gives a mean of 4.4 and standard deviation of 0.52. This is indicative of the fact that, all the teachers in the Oguaa circuit conclude that when learners are offered assistance by the teacher at the initial stages of task will have good performance in exercises.

The next statement on the table was "The use of different approaches and TLMS such as modeling, questioning, audio-visuals, cues, assists students to participate and understand new concepts well." Similar to the earlier statement, none of the teachers strongly disagreed and also disagreed though 4(10%) remained neutral. However, 12 (30%) of them agreed and 24 (60%) strongly agreed to the statement. Therefore, in all, 36 of the teachers representing 90% responded in the affirmative to the statement with only 4 (10%) being neutral. This resulted in a mean of 4.5 and standard deviation of 0.71. It can therefore be stated that majority of the primary six English Language teachers in the circuit admit that the use of different approaches and TLMS as contained in the statement, enables learners to participate during lesson and understand new concepts well.

The statement "Students show interest and fully participate in English language reading comprehension lessons when they are put in mixed ability groups to share ideas with their peers and present group works", surprisingly saw same response as the previous one. None of the teachers strongly disagreed and also disagreed, even though 4 (10%) remained neutral to the statement. Nonetheless, 12 (30%) of them agreed and 24 (60%) of the teachers also strongly agreed to the statement. Therefore, in all, 36 of the teachers representing 90% agreed to the statement with only 4 (10%) being neutral. This also therefore garnered a mean of 4.5 and standard deviation of 0.71. It implies that, virtually all the primary six English Language teachers in the circuit accept that learners show interest

and fully participate in lessons when they are grouped based to mixed abilities criterion during reading comprehension lessons.

From Table 2 again, with regard to the statements on challenges: "Planning and implementing scaffolds optimize learning for all students but it is a very demanding instructional strategy", none of the teachers strongly disagreed, 4 (10%) disagreed, 4 (10%) remained neutral; 28 (70%) of them agreed and 4 (10%) strongly agreed to the statement. This means that only 4 (10%) of the teachers disagreed to statement, with an equal number of teachers, 4 (10%) also remaining neutral. A whopping 32 (80%) of them affirmed the statement leading to a mean and a standard deviation of 3.8 and 0.79 respectively. This suggests that, to a large extent, few of the teachers in the Oguua circuit of the New Juaben South Municipality disagreed and remained neutral, as majority of them ascertained that planning and implementing scaffolds optimize learning for all learners but it is a very demanding instructional strategy.

With respect to the statement "Teaching learners with different learning abilities makes using the scaffolding strategy difficult and time consuming", none of the teachers strongly disagreed; 4 (10%) of them disagreed and 12 (30%) of them were undecided. However, 24 (60%) of them agreed with none of them strongly agreeing to the statement. Basically, only 1 (10%) of the teachers disagreed to the statement; while 12 (30%) of them remained neutral, though 24 (60%) of them affirmed the statement which culminated into a mean of 3.5 and a standard deviation of 0.71. In concluding, it can be said that while only one person disagreed and few of them remained indecisive, a good majority of the teachers in the Oguua Circuit of the New Juaben South Municipality do believe that it is quite difficult and time consuming to use scaffolding to teach learners with different abilities.

"Lack of regular in-service education and training on the use of scaffolding in teaching comprehension makes teachers handicapped". With this statement, none of the teachers strongly disagreed; 8 (20%) of them disagreed; 12 (30%) of them neither agreed nor disagreed. Further, 12 (30%) and 8 (20%) of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively. This indicates that while 8 (20%) of the teachers were not in support of the statement, 12 (30%) of them neither disagreed nor agreed; but 20 (50%) of them affirmed the statement. This gives a mean of 3.5 and a standard deviation of 1.08. This ultimately explains that about half of the teachers either disagree or are not sure that lack of regular in-service education and training on the use of scaffolding in teaching comprehension makes teachers handicapped, but an equally good number of them also believe or agree to the statement.

How do your pupils feel when you scaffold (when you guide them at the initial stages of) classroom work and when you allow them to contribute during reading comprehension lessons?

The teachers' interview responses were centered on the following sub-themes: excitement, understanding of the lesson, eagerness to contribute to lesson, motivation to be part of lesson, boost of confidence of pupils. Some the responses of the teachers as transcribed are presented below:

"They feel that their views are respected and then their contributions are also accepted so they feel okay. They feel part of the lesson, yes, they are not left out and that excites them." (ELT 5)

"I think they feel great. Because each of them was eager to contribute because they have been engaged and they are bringing out the ideas. So, they feel great taking part in the lesson because they are at the centre of it." (ELT 1)

How do your pupils feel when you use different TLMs and approaches, put them into mixed ability groups and provide detailed instructions during reading comprehension lessons?

The teachers' response from the interview comprised the following sub-themes: comfort, excitement, ability to assist others, enlightenment, motivation, discipline. Some of the responses of the teachers as captured from the afore-mentioned sub-themes are presented below after transcription:

"Bringing TLMs and allowing them to touch the TLMs, it boosts their confidence and also, they feel the reality of the things they are learning. So, giving them the necessary guidelines, it helps them to be discipline and also helps them to finish on time." (ELT 3)

"It really helps them to understand what I'm teaching so they feel happy. They are excited and they show interest. They pair their answers to see whether are correct or not." (ELT 2)

"Using the picture brings the pictorial aspects of the lesson to the pupils. And interacting with them too makes them feel comfortable to share their views with their colleagues. At certain times they might feel an anxiety that may be somebody might laugh at their answers. But when they share it within their peers, they are okay with it that is working in groups and since they're in groups they are able to come out with their abilities." (ELT 5). (Interview Data, 2021)

What are the challenges you face as teacher whenever you use scaffolding strategy in teaching reading comprehension lessons?

The teachers' interview responses centred on the following sub-themes: Time constraints, preparation for scaffolding lesson, availability of right teaching resources, boredom, difficulty

is helping weak students, intelligent learners overshadowing others in group works, disturbances, laborious work, class size, attending the needs of all learners. Some of the teachers' responses from the interviews are presented below.

"The challenge I face is though scaffolding strategy is good but it is time consuming. In finding teaching learning materials, the one that is suitable for the lesson, that is where the problem is. Sometimes you may be tempted to forgo using TLMs and use other teaching techniques or methods." (ELT 1)

"I can say getting TLMs to teach reading comprehension is sometimes difficult to come by. I am not able to attend to all the needs of all pupils during lesson also because of time factor so reading like this not all are able to read." (ELT 8)

Discussion

From the table 1, it was noted that the Mean of Means from the items from the questionnaire is 3.9 and the average of the Standard Deviations is 1.0. Four (4) out of eight (8) of the Mean scores are equal or greater than the Mean of Mean with four (4) Mean score below the Mean of Means of the items. Those four (4) are still above the Mean of the scale used, i.e., 3. Based on the afore-mentioned statistics, the level of knowledge and application of Primary Six English Language teachers use of Scaffolding model as a tool for teaching reading comprehension lessons is above average.

This finding contradicts that of Rahman, Abdurrahman, Kadaryanto, & Rusminto (2015) who opine that it may surprise readers in developed countries that teachers' competence in scaffolding content knowledge is such a big issue in developing countries. It supports Walqui (2006) assertion, that states that modelling is one of the key scaffolding instruction techniques applied with others in teaching English Language (reading comprehension). Here, the teacher uses verbal explanations and body language to elaborates and demonstrates new ideas.

From Table 2, it was noted that the Mean of Means of the items from the questionnaire is 4.1 and the average of the Standard Deviations is 0.78. Four (4) out of seven (7) of the Mean scores are equal or greater than the Mean of Mean with three (3) Mean score below the Mean of Means of the items. Those three (3) are still above the Mean of the scale used, i.e., 3. Based on the afore-mentioned statistics, the positive influence of scaffolding model on Primary Six learners' attitude during reading comprehension lesson is high. This re-emphasizes the position of Pishghadam and Ghadiri (2011) who conclude that most of the respondents (learners) are highly motivated to cooperate with more competent students during scaffolded lessons since they believe that their presence will enhance their progress.

Again, challenges in using scaffolding model such as lack of resources, time consuming, inadequate training are very prevalent when employed to teach reading comprehension lessons. This finding reinforces Pressley's (1996) and Stufy, (2002) findings where they allude to the fact that although scaffolding can be used to optimize learning for all students, it is a very time consuming and demanding form of instruction.

However, during the interview session, teachers could only allude to basic application in terms of the processes, roles, and principles of scaffolding model. The findings agree with the analogy Bruner (1978) cites for teacher's role in scaffolding model. His use of the term 'scaffolding' seemingly describes what mothers often do to enable and make more manageable children's learning of language: thus, the mother's support includes helping the child focus his or her attention to pertinent aspects of the task and modeling her expectations of the child (Bruner, 1978; Stewart, 2002). The findings also agree with Silver's (2011) assertion that as a principle, teachers must assess the learner's current knowledge and experience, relate content to what learners already understand or can do and break a task into small, more manageable tasks with feedback to help them understand the concepts in lessons. Again, teachers were able to articulate the influence of the model on learners' attitude as well as the challenges faced in using the scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension which are in tandem with the findings above.

Conclusions

It can therefore be concluded based on the responses of teachers from the questionnaire and the interview that, the teachers generally have average level of knowledge about the scaffolding model, its application as a tool for teaching reading comprehension. This will therefore offer an opportunity for them to use scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension well if their knowledge and application skills are further enhanced through seminars and INSETS at the district and circuit levels since they need that assistance to improve upon it and also to sharpen their skills in using the scaffolding model. Aside from that, it is imperative that teachers are engaged in continuous professional learning community training to learn from their peers and also improve on their abilities in the use of the model for effective learning and teaching of reading comprehension in Basic six. The results further show that teachers are aware of the positive influence scaffolding model has on learners' attitude to learning reading comprehensions as well as enormous challenges faced in implementing this model in the classroom. Teachers in the district therefore need supports and provision of resources to help its implementation during lessons. Challenges such as lack of adequate skill to implement scaffolding instructions to the maximum benefit of learners, lack of appropriate teaching and learning materials, laborious preparation needed for scaffolding lessons, and insufficient time need to be addressed.

Recommendations

It is recommended that, to improve teachers' content knowledge and application of the scaffolding model as a tool for reading comprehension lesson in the Municipality, School Improvement Support Officers (SISO) and head teachers should organize periodic workshops, seminars and In-service Education and Training (INSET) on the scaffolding model for all primary school teachers in the district.

Again, Primary School head teachers and SISOs should encourage Primary Six teachers to use the scaffolding model by providing support system through regular supervision of English Language Reading Comprehension lessons for teachers or draw their attention to their strengths and weaknesses as they employ the scaffolding model to help them improve their subsequent lessons. This will help in facilitating the positive influence the model has on learners' attitude during reading comprehension lessons. Again, it is recommended that all educational institutions earmarked to train teachers, most importantly, the Colleges of Education and Universities, highlighting the essentiality of scaffolding model as a major child-centred approach in the English Language Methodology course. It is also recommended that major stakeholders: The Municipal Assembly, PTA/SMC of schools, Churches, Corporate organizations in the municipal should assist with the supply of the necessary logistics such as supplementary readers, Teaching Learning Materials (including audio visual resources) to augment what government provides through The Ghana Education Service in the municipal. Ghana Education Service at the District level in collaboration with the Head teachers, and SISOs should redesign the primary School Time Table to increase the period allotted for the teaching of English Language Reading Comprehension lessons especially at Primary Six, to enable teachers have ample periods to apply scaffolding model to help learners improve their reading comprehension abilities and prepare them adequately for the next level in education.

Further Research

Despite the adequate information provided by the respondents, the study requires many other areas that would need further investigations in the future. To begin with, the study was restricted to only 40 Public Primary Six English Language teachers in the Oguuaa Circuit of the New Juaben South Municipality, as a result, the findings may lack generalizations to other parts of schools in the country until a wider study have been carried out across. On the other hand, though participants in the study were assured of protection of privacy and confidentiality, the teachers' knowledge of the presence of the researchers during lesson observation may have motivated them to present the lessons in a more convincing way than a normal reading comprehension lessons. This may have led to subjectivity in the responses they provided as well as the results obtained. Further quantitative research may be carried out on this for universal generalizations.

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