CHAPTER 5

Scaffolding Reading Experiences for Multilingual Classrooms

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Each year, hundreds of thousands of teachers in the United States and many other countries enter multilingual classrooms and begin teaching students with diverse language backgrounds, diverse language skills, and diverse reading proficiency. Although teaching in multilingual classrooms is by no means a recent phenomenon, it is an experience new to many teachers; and while it presents teachers with significant opportunities, such as examining diverse perspectives and preparing students to live in a diverse world, it also presents significant challenges. One of those challenges is, of course, that of teaching reading to students whose proficiency in reading—often in both their native language and the language of instruction—differs markedly. Meeting these challenges requires powerful, multifaceted approaches—approaches that involve many facets of the classroom, extend beyond individual classrooms into the school as a whole, and extend beyond the school into children's homes and neighborhoods.

The approach described here addresses only one aspect of reading instruction; it is by no means meant to be a comprehensive reading program. However, we believe that it is an important part of a comprehensive reading program. With all the approaches used and wherever children learn and practice their reading skills, one factor is crucial to their becoming able and avid readers. We must do everything possible to make children's reading experiences *successful*. It is extremely important that children understand what they read, enjoy the experience of reading, learn from what they read, and realize that they *have* learned from and understood what they read.

In this chapter, we discuss one approach to assisting students in multilingual classrooms to read, understand, learn from, and enjoy—and feel successful about reading—the texts they read in the classroom: the scaffolded reading experience (SRE) (Fitzgerald & Graves, in press; Graves & Graves, 2003; Tierney & Readence, 2000). We first describe some central concepts underlying the SRE; we next describe the SRE framework, explaining what an SRE is and reviewing in some detail the characteristic components of an SRE. We then present examples of SREs that might be used in multilingual classrooms, and we conclude the chapter with a reminder of what SREs are and a note on what they are not—along with some consideration of how often to construct SREs in multilingual classrooms and how much scaffolding to provide.

Concepts Underlying the Scaffolded Reading Experience

Not surprisingly, the central concept underlying the scaffolded reading experience is that of scaffolding. The term *scaffolding* was first used in its educational sense by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), who used it to characterize mothers' verbal interaction when reading to their young children. For example, in sharing a picture book with a child and attempting to assist the child in reading the words that identify the pictures, a mother might at first simply page through the book, familiarizing the child with the pictures and the general content of the book. Then she might focus on a single picture and ask the child what it is. After this, she might point to the word below the picture, tell the child that the word names the picture, ask the child what the word is, and provide him or her with feedback on the correctness of the answer. The important point is that the mother has neither simply told the child the word nor simply asked him or her to say it. Instead, she has built an instructional structure, a scaffold, that assists the student in learning.

Scaffolding, as Wood and his colleagues (1976) aptly put it, is "a process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would be beyond his [or her] unassisted efforts" (p. 90). Or, to use Anderson's (1989) words, a scaffold is "a temporary and adjustable support that enables the accomplishment of a task that would be impossible without the scaffold's support" (p. 106). As applied to the thinking behind SREs, we would extend Anderson's definition and say that scaffolding enables students to accomplish a task that would be impossible without the scaffold or enables them to accomplish a task more fully or more easily than they could without the scaffold. Thus, for example, without a scaffold a child might laboriously read a text and gain a rudimentary understanding of it, while with a scaffold he or she might be able to more readily read it and gain a fuller understanding of it.

Since its introduction 25 years ago, the concept of instructional scaffolding has been investigated, elaborated, related to other instructional concepts, and strongly endorsed by a host of educators. Among those supporting scaffolding are Anderson (1989), Anderson and Armbruster (1990), Applebee and Langer (1983), Brown and Palincsar (1989), Cazden (1992), Pearson (1996), Pressley (1998), Raphael (2000), Routman (2000), Snow (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), and Taylor (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). Moreover, studies have shown that scaffolding students' reading can be a powerful instructional technique in classrooms (Cooke, 2002; Fournier & Graves, in press; Graves & Liang, in press; Taylor et al., 2000; Warton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998), small groups (Brown & Palincsar, 1989; Palincsar, 1986), and one-to-one tutoring sessions (Beed, Hawkins, & Roller, 1991).

Although different authors define scaffolding slightly differently, three closely related features are essential attributes of effective scaffolding. First, there is the scaffold itself, the temporary and supportive structure that helps a student or group of students accomplish a task they could not accomplish—or could not accomplish as well or as readily—without the scaffold.

Second, the scaffold must place the learner in what Vygotsky (1978) has termed the Zone of Proximal Development. As explained by Vygotsky, at any particular point in time, children have a circumscribed zone of development, a range within which they can learn. At one end of this range are learning tasks that children can complete independently; at the other end are learning tasks that they cannot complete, even with assistance. Between these two extremes is the zone most productive for learning, the range of tasks children can succeed at if they are assisted by some more knowledgeable or more competent other.

And third, over time, the teacher must gradually dismantle the scaffold and transfer the responsibility for completing tasks to students. As Pearson and Gallagher (1983) have explained, effective instruction often follows a progression in which teachers gradually do less of the work and students gradually assume increased responsibility for their learning. It is through this process of gradually assuming more and more responsibility for their learning that students become competent, independent learners.

These concepts and a number of others that we have discussed elsewhere (Fitzgerald & Graves, in press; Graves & Graves, 2003) underlie the SRE framework, which we now describe.

The Scaffolded Reading Experience Framework

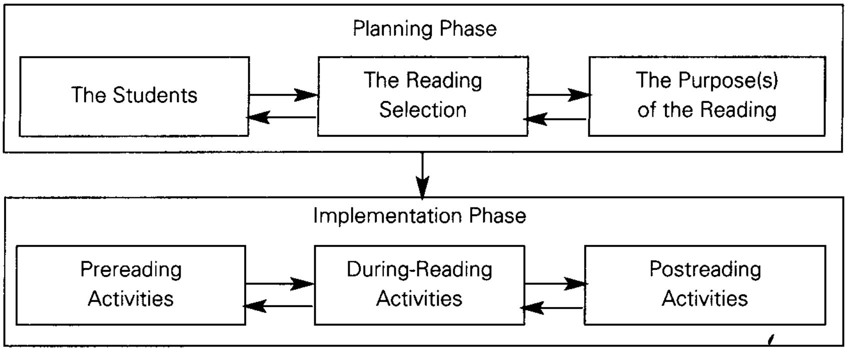
A scaffolded reading experience is a set of prereading, during-reading, and postreading activities specifically designed to assist a particular group of students in successfully reading, understanding, learning from, and enjoying a particular selection. As such, an SRE is somewhat similar to traditional instructional plans such as Betts's Directed Reading Activity (1946) and Stauffer's Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (1969), and to more recent plans such as Fountas and Pinnell's Guided Reading (1996). Tierney and Readence (2000) classify all these plans as "lesson frameworks," and this is an appropriate classification for the SRE.

However, the SRE framework differs markedly from these other instructional frameworks in that an SRE is not a preset plan for dealing with whatever reading situation you face. Instead, an SRE is a flexible plan that you tailor to a specific situation. The SRE framework is derived from the powerful insights Jenkins (1976) captured in his tetrahedral model of reading and is consistent with the model of comprehension adopted by the RAND Reading Study Group (2002). As Jenkins explained, the outcome of any learning situation will be influenced by at least four different factors: characteristics of the learner, the nature of the materials, the learning activities, and the criterial tasks. The SRE framework shows teachers in multilingual classrooms ways to manipulate these factors so that students get the most they can out of each and every reading experience. The framework, which is shown in Figure 5.1, has two parts or phases.

The first phase of the SRE is the planning phase, during which you plan and create the entire experience. The second phase is the implementation phase, comprising the activities you and your students engage in as a result of your planning. This two-phase process is a vital feature of the SRE approach, in that the planning phase allows you to tailor each SRE you create to the specific situation you face in that particular reading experience. Different situations call for different SREs.

Planning takes into account the students, the reading selection, and the reading purpose. Suppose you are working with sixth graders in a multilingual classroom that includes five students whose native language is Spanish and two students whose native language is Korean. Assume also that the seven English language learners in your class read English reasonably well but are not as proficient in reading English as most of your other students. Finally, assume that you want all students in the class to develop a fairly deep

FIGURE 5.1 Two phases of a scaffolded reading experience for English language learners



From Graves & Graves (2003)

understanding about the migration of whales and that the text you have chosen is fairly demanding.

Or consider a very different situation. Suppose you are working with these same sixth graders, your purpose is to have them read a humorous short story for the pure enjoyment of it, and you have chosen a fairly easy reading selection.

In both these situations, your planning leads to the creation of the SRE itself and to your implementing it; but the SRE for the whale migration text will be quite different than that for the short story. As shown in the lower half of Figure 5.1, the components of the implementation phase are prereading, during-reading, and postreading activities. With the whale migration text, we have already suggested that you want students to develop some fairly deep knowledge and to retain much of what they learn. This means that your SRE for the whale migration text is likely to be a substantial one, with prereading activities that thoroughly prepare students to read the difficult text, during-reading activities that lead them to interact and grapple with the text in ways that help them understand and learn from it, and postreading activities that give them opportunities to check their understanding of the text and solidify their learning. Consequently, the class might spend four or five days reading the chapter and completing the learning activities you have assembled. Your English language learners, however, are likely to need more scaffolding with this text than your other students. You might begin working with them on the migration text a day or two before you begin working with the class as a whole, perhaps previewing the text for them, going over the major concepts, and letting them get a head start on reading it.

As we just noted, your SRE for the humorous short study is likely to be quite different. Given a fairly easy short story and the major goal of students' simply enjoying the reading experience, your SRE is likely to be minimal. Prereading might consist of a brief motivational activity; students might read the story silently to themselves; and postreading might consist of an optional discussion. Moreover, because the reading presents few problems and because it is generally desirable to have your English language learners engage in the same reading experiences as your other students so long as they can do so successfully, you would not expect to have any separate activities for them. All in all, the class might spend only a day or so reading and responding to the short story.

In addition to recognizing that the SRE framework results in very different SREs for different situations, it is important to recognize that the components of each phase of the SRE are interrelated. Consider the three components of the planning phase—the students, the text, and your purposes. Once you decide which students you are going to work with, there are only some texts you can use and only some purposes you can expect to accomplish. Once you decide which text you are going to use, there are only some students who will be able to read it and only some purposes you can achieve with it. And once you decide what your purposes are, there are only some texts you can use to accomplish those purposes and only some students who will be able to achieve them. The same sort of interdependency holds with respect to the three components of the implementation phase. For example, if you decide you are going to have some very challenging postreading tasks, you will want to include prereading activities and during-reading activities that thoroughly prepare students to accomplish those challenging tasks.

The possible prereading, during-reading, and postreading components of an SRE are listed in Figure 5.2. As you can see, the list includes ten types of prereading activities, five types of during-reading activities, and eight types of postreading activities. On the following pages, we say a few words about prereading, during-reading, and postreading activities generally and then describe each of the types of activities that you might use before students read, as they are reading, and after they read.

Several issues are important to keep in mind as you consider the SRE framework and the component activities. First, the framework presents a list of options. No single SRE will contain all of these activities. Second, the purpose of the list is to suggest a wide variety of activities. It is certainly not the only

FIGURE 5.2 Possible components of a scaffolded reading experience for English language learners

Prereading Activities
- Motivating
- Activating or building background knowledge
- Providing text-specific knowledge
- Relating the reading to students' lives
- Preteaching vocabulary
- Preteaching concepts
- Prequestioning, predicting, and direction setting
- Using students' native language
- Engaging students and community people as resources
- Suggesting strategies

During-Reading Activities
- Silent reading
- Reading to students
- Guided reading
- Oral reading by students
- Modifying the text

Postreading Activities
- Questioning
- Discussion
- Building connections
- Writing
- Drama
- Artistic, graphic, and nonverbal activities
- Application and outreach activities
- Reteaching

way to classify activities, and it is not intended to limit the activities you might use or to suggest that you need to rigidly classify activities into one category or another. Moreover, activities listed in one part of the framework can sometimes be useful in other parts. For example, Relating the Reading to Students' Lives (activity names have been capitalized) could be something you do after students read a selection as well as before they read it. Similarly, although we list Writing as a postreading activity, it can also be used as a prereading or during-reading activity—as, for example, when students write a list of what they know about a topic *before* reading, or take notes *while* reading. Additionally, two of the activities listed as prereading activities—Using Students' Native Language and Engaging Students and Community People as

Resources—are every bit as appropriate when used as during-reading or postreading activities. We do not list them again in those sections simply to avoid redundancy.

Prereading Activities

Prereading activities prepare students to read the upcoming selection. They can serve a number of functions, including getting students interested in reading the selection, reminding students of things they already know that will help them understand and enjoy the selection, and preteaching aspects of the selection that may be difficult. Prereading activities are important for all students, but they are particularly important for many English language learners, both because these children are often not experienced with typical topics in texts used in United States schools and because the vocabulary and idioms in the materials they encounter may be new to them. Providing adequate preparation is the best way to ensure English learners the most enjoyable, rewarding, and successful reading experience possible.

Prereading activities are recommended widely (see, for example, Aebersold & Field, 1997; Ciborowski, 1992; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Readence, Moore, & Rickelman, 2000; Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999; Yopp & Yopp, 1992), and a number of different types of prereading activities have been suggested. In creating a list of possible prereading activities for SREs, we have attempted to propose a relatively small set of categories that suggest a large number of useful activities in which teachers and students can engage.

By Motivating we refer to any activity designed to interest students in a selection and entice them to read it. For example, in order to motivate students in an eighth-grade civics class about to read a section of a chapter titled something like "The Media and the Road to the Presidency," a teacher might make statements and pose questions such as these:

> One of the most important things people in the United States do is elect a president, because the president of the United States plays a huge role in what happens in the country and that affects all of us. As you know, each adult in the United States gets a vote, and so it is important for anyone running for president to get the message he or she wants voters to hear out to everyone. Suppose you were running for president. What are some ways that you would try to get your message out to all the people? Jot some of these down before you read.

Then the teacher might ask students to read the selection to find out how the approaches they suggested compare with those discussed in the chapter.

In many cases, motivational materials can accomplish some other purpose besides motivating students. As in the above example, questions may serve both to motivate students and to focus their attention as they read. We list Motivating as a separate activity, however, because we believe that motivating should be a very frequent part of an SRE. Motivating activities are particularly important when introducing material to English language learners because English learners frequently have to devote so much attention to understanding new concepts and vocabulary, as well as to general language processing, that a learning and reading activity can seem daunting to them. By using motivational activities teachers can spark interest in students, and this interest can sustain them when the reading is challenging.

Activating or Building Background Knowledge is often necessary for students to get the most from what they read. When you *activate* background knowledge, you prompt students to bring to consciousness already known information that will help them in understanding a text. For example, let's say a group of your sixth graders is researching the plight of migrant workers. Before these students read a story you have recommended from *The Circuit: Stories From the Life of a Migrant Child* (1999), Francisco Jimenez's award-winning collection of stories based on his own experiences as a child migrant worker in California, you might encourage them to discuss what they have already learned about migrant workers from their previous reading or experience.

In addition to activating background knowledge, it is sometimes necessary to *build* background knowledge—knowledge that the author, usually tacitly, has presupposed that readers already possess. For example, in reading the stories in *The Circuit*, you might find that Jimenez presupposes some specific knowledge of California geography, knowledge that you are pretty sure your English language learners lack. In this case, supplying the information would make good sense.

In contrast to activities that activate or build background knowledge, activities such as Providing Text-Specific Knowledge give students information that is contained in the reading selection. Providing students with advance information on aspects of the content of a selection is certainly justified if the selection is difficult or densely packed with information. For many English language learners, even materials that you might normally consider reader friendly may present many unfamiliar concepts. For these children, providing the concepts orally or visually in advance of the reading is not only justified; it may be imperative.