Scaffolding in Mentor Interactions

Electronic Village Online

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Defining Scaffolding

- Breaking tasks into parts based on students' likely prior knowledge
- Brainstorming, mind maps
- Model what you seek students to achieve.
- Work in pairs
- Help each student separately
- Initial and diagnostic assessment
- Putting the target language on the board for students to reference
- Knowing the objective of the topic
- Used in mixed-level classes to help basic students participate with more advanced students
- Modeling chunks of language
- Input+1
- Guided learning

Scaffolding 1

- "The process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his [*sic*] unassisted efforts"

  (Wood et al., 1976: 90)

Scaffolding = ZPD?

- To Swain et al. (2011) the metaphor is flawed in two ways.
  - the tutoring action described by Wood et al. is a unidirectional act dominated by the mediator,
  - Fading: "the support sometimes falls apart rather suddenly and at inopportune times" (Swain et al., 2011: 26).

- "when taken out of its theoretical context, scaffolding tends to be interpreted as a varier of direct instruction, which invalidates the Vygotskian idea of teaching as co-construction of knowledge…" (Verenikina, 2004: 11).

- "the teachers or tutors providing the scaffold do not intend to help learners develop new cognitive functions …; instead, learners are given any support that is needed to complete the current task" (Poehner, op.cit.: 81).

- "find other terms (e.g. assisted instruction, scaffolding) to refer to practices such as teaching a specific subject matter concept, skill, and so forth" (Chaiklin, 2003: 59).

Bruner and Sherwood

- "It is to [the child's] initiatives that the mother often responds ... as if to control the child's activation. This part of the game is characteristically 'non-rule bound' and seems to be an instance, rather, of the mother providing a scaffold for the child" (Bruner and Sherwood, 1976: 280)

Intentionality/Reciprocity

- Shrum and Glisan (2010: 26) explain, "… the teacher's role is (1) to recognize that assistance is contingent on what the novice is doing, not on what the expert thinks should be done, and (2) to know when to turn the task over to the novice for solo performance".

- "through this process, the student becomes a co-participant in the construction of a broader and more systematic codification of ideas and subject-specific discourse" (Hammond and Gibbons, 2005:22).

Transcendence

- Holton and Clarke (2006:127) explain how one of the objects of teachers' activity is the creation of the "epistemic student (that is, the student as constructor of knowledge)".

- scaffolding "is not an act of closure" (Holton and Clarke, 2006: 131).

- Transcendence, then, is both a requirement for and a consequence of scaffolding. It is only when interactional moves allow for the designed-in structure to be affected in a dialectical way by the teacher handing over and the student taking over control over the activity that a ZPD can surface. (Diaz Maggioli, 2012)
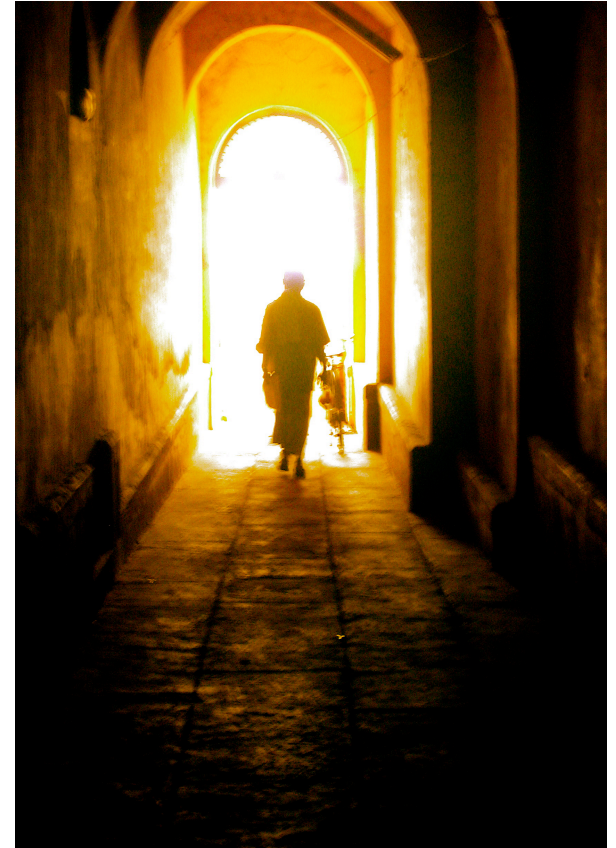
Meaningfulness

- Meaning is not only an *a priori* condition but also an ongoing process of negotiation in which mother and child actively search for mutual clues in order to bridge a gap between comprehension and production. (Diaz Maggioli, forthcoming)

- "in order for a new skill to be acquired it must be comprehensible, even though it has not yet been produced" (Bliss, et al., op.cit: 39). The required simplification, if any, is not in the task but in the role the learner plays in the task.

- *"increasing the prospectiveness"* (Hammond and Gibbons, op.cit: 24), that is, opening up the discourse, thus affording learners more interactional opportunities to engage in longer, more productive meaning-making.

Contingent Multimodality

- *Contingent multimodality* refers to the use of alternative semiotic tools in order to mediate understanding. (Diaz Maggioli, forthcoming)
- "the way an adult judges the need and quality of assistance required by the learner on the basis of moment-to-moment understanding" (Gibbons, 2003: 267).

Social-to-Individual Orientation

- Curriculum plans provide a socially determined structure for the interaction. What these plans determine is the knowledge, skills and dispositions expected of members of that society.

- Next, comes the *sine qua non* requirement to involve learners in the task/s.

- Control over one's metacognitive awareness can help fill gaps in knowledge. As Holton and Clarke (2006: 142) conclude "...the student who cannot make a contribution of content can certainly be encouraged to make one of heuristics and teachers should encourage such contributions".

  Diaz Maggioli (forthcoming)

An alternative definition

- "scaffolding, even when principled, is a highly situated and contextually constrained activity and, as such, only bears the *potential* to result in learning gains for the learner. It takes a teacher who becomes truly engrossed in dialectical interactions with the learner to be able, through trial and error, intention and contingency, to provide effective scaffolding" (Diaz Maggioli, forthcoming).

Mentoring Interactions

How does learning happen?

- Genesis in historically-situated social practices.
- Movement from social regulation to self-regulation.
- Self-regulation via tools.
- Learning possible through MLE.
- Learning precedes development.
- Social interaction basis for learning and development.
- Context is of outmost importance.

What needs to be done?

- Familiarize mentees with the professional lore.
- Show, demonstrate, model…
- Use scripts.
- Monitor for elements of MLE.
- Spot gaps in mentee's knowledge.
- Foster dialog across roles.
- Do not mentor "on the fly."

Modeling

- See and hear.
- Clear examples.
- Showing thinking in action.
- Professionalism.

Bridging

- New understandings need to be firmly built upon previous understandings.
  - Cognitive
  - Metacognitive

Contextualizing

- Making connections explicit between naïve understandings and scientific understandings.
  - Analogies
  - Metaphors

Schema building

- Capitalizing on mentee's existing understandings.
  - Socratic questioning.
  - Advanced organizers.
  - Explicit summaries.
  - Prediction and preview.

Re-presenting

- Alternating among genres:
  - What is happening? (drama or dialog)
  - What happened? (narrative, report)
  - What may happen? (tautologic transformations)

Developing Metacognition

1. Consciously apply knowledge while engaging in activity.

2. Monitoring, assessing and adjusting performance.

3. Planning for future performance

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