UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

EFFECTS OF
INSTRUCTIONAL SCAFFOLDING ON
THE READING ABILITY
OF ESL STUDENTS

JOSEPHINE MAUNG

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
**Master of Education in Teaching of English as a
Second Language (TESL)**

Faculty of Education

April 2009

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This topic has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any other degree or qualification.

In the event that my thesis be found to violate the conditions mentioned above, I voluntarily waive the right of conferment of my degree and agree to be subjected to the disciplinary rules and regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA.

Name of Candidate	: Josephine Maung @ Faridah Abdullah
Candidate's ID No	: 2006885460
Programme	: ED 720 Master in Education (TESL)
Faculty	: Education
Thesis Title	: Effects of instructional scaffolding on the reading ability of ESL students.

Signature of Candidate	:
Date	:

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. Sueb Ibrahim for providing invaluable advice and support in ensuring that this thesis is in its present form. I would like to thank all my lecturers for their contributions in one way or another. My gratitude also goes to my family for their support and assistance throughout the course of my study.

Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the effects of instructional scaffolding on the students' reading ability. The study involved a group of Sixth Form students at SM Sunny Hill Sarawak. A quasi-experimental research design was employed which engaged an experimental group (32 students) and a control group (29 students). The experimental group went through reading sessions via instructional scaffolding for a period of 30 hours, where the students were provided with support and guidance to comprehend reading texts. The teacher's implementation of instructional scaffolding was observed by two observers using a self-constructed structured observation scheme. The students' perception of the usefulness of instructional scaffolding was determined using a 25-item likert-type questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted on the teacher in the experimental group to determine the extent to which instructional scaffolding was a useful tool. The quantitative data collected was analysed using SPSS 16.0 for descriptive statistics whereas the qualitative interview data was analysed inductively and deductively before any final conclusions were made. The two groups were also given a pre-test and a post-test to investigate their reading comprehension performance. The test scores were analysed using Pearson correlation test for significant difference. The non-parametric Pearson test results on the pre and post tests indicated that there was a significant increase in mean scores of both the experimental and control groups. The fact that the experimental group indicated significant improvement in their pre-test-post-test performance seems to suggest that instructional scaffolding is an effective teaching approach to help enhance students' reading ability.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Reading in general is a difficult task for the students. Most of the times, the students find it difficult to understand an academic text. This is because the students may find making interpretations of the content difficult as they may lack the necessary language ability to understand unfamiliar words, phrases and structures in the texts (Davies, 1995). More often than not, the students need assistance from the teacher to make meaning from the reading text. One possible way in which the teacher can assist the students to make meaning from the reading text is through instructional scaffolding (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). Instructional scaffolding is relevant to the Malaysian ESL reading context because generally Malaysian learners tend to be passive and lack participation in the class. Malaysian learners choose to silence their voices when it comes to participating openly in classroom discussions (if ever there are discussions) because of that fear of making mistakes and hence running the risk of losing face, only to be laughed at by their peers as being "ignorant". They prefer the security of keeping silent and not risk losing face as being unintelligent (Koo Yew Lie, 2003). It has become too common a complaint by Malaysian ESL teachers as they relate their experiences of the "silence" that characterises their classrooms. One research study addressing the issue of "silence" in the Malaysian ESL context was Bahiyah Abdul Hamid's (1992) study at UKM, where she reported:

> "...ESL learners seldom volunteer to answer questions, seldom give their opinions and seldom initiate communication. When called on, these learners hesitate, give short answers, or do not answer at all. In most cases, these learners shun eye contact, preferring to stare at the floor, ceiling or out the window." (pg.97).

1