



The Effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching as Scaffolding in Enhancing Reading Comprehension

Hary Soedarto Harjono^(✉) and Sri Wachyunni

Faculty of Teaching and Education, Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

hary.soedarto@unja.ac.id

Abstract. The aim of this paper is to study the effectiveness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) as scaffolding in improving reading comprehension skills in English as Foreign Language context. An experimental design was applied in this study. Participants of this study are 48 university students of English study program at one university in Jambi province. In this study, 24 students were assigned in the experimental group and 24 students were in the control group. They read the same English texts in the same duration of time. In the experimental group, students were given worksheet consisting of tasks as scaffolding to help students focusing their activity to comprehend meaning of the texts. In the control group students had no tasks as scaffolding. They read text individually in a conservative way. A pretest and posttest were administered to measure students' comprehension before and after reading classes in both of the groups. Statistical analyses using t-test were conducted to compare mean scores of the experimental group and the control group. The result revealed that TBLT provides a significant effect in improving students' comprehension skill in an EFL classroom. This suggests that teaching English by doing tasks in worksheet can be used effectively as scaffolding to uphold students' reading skills.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension · Skills Scaffolding · Task-Based Language Teaching · TBLT

1 Introduction

To mastery reading skills for academic purposes is the main goal in the Reading for Academic Purposes lecture for undergraduate students of English Language Education at FKIP Jambi University. This goal is in line with the ideas of [1] who suggest that students' ability to understand text is the key to success in academic achievement. This implies that almost all academic activities in higher education require the ability to read comprehension, for example in reading textbooks, teaching materials, journal articles. The ability to read comprehension in this context consists of finding the main ideas of the text, drawing conclusions, predicting the meaning of the text, making a summary [2, 3].

In connection with that, learning that can improve the ability and skills of learners in understanding reading in English needs to be applied and studied further in order to improve the process and results of reading comprehension learning. Experimental research in the context of reading learning by using the scaffolding strategy that has been done a lot. From experimental studies conducted by [4]–[7], for example, it can be shown that there is a significant effect of the scaffolding strategy on improving the ability and skills of learners to understand reading in English. The empirical findings suggest that scaffolding is effective to be used in reading comprehension learning. Therefore, learning the class-based language teaching (TBLT) that emphasizes the assignment of scaffolding in reading activities needs to be studied more deeply in its effectiveness to help students improve their abilities. in reading comprehension in English. Thus, the main problem in the study is: Is TBLT effectively used as a scaffolding to improve the understanding of undergraduate program students in reading learning?

2 Theoretical Review

2.1 Task-Based Language Teaching

TBLT is a task-based reading learning given by the teacher through a series of activities that guide students to achieve a better understanding of the English texts they read [8]. Through structured tasks, the teacher designs a worksheet in which there are text and questions that can be used as scaffolding in understanding parts of the text.

Through tasks that can be done individually or collaboratively, students can improve their ability to understand reading texts in English. In principle, in the context of this study TBLT emphasizes on improving reading skills for academic purposes. Therefore, tasks that contained in a worksheet can help students find key ideas in parts of the text, summarize, and draw conclusions.

2.2 TBLT as Scaffolding in Reading Comprehension

In the context of education, scaffolding means a process of providing assistance that allows beginner learners to be able to do certain tasks, solve problems, or achieve certain goals that cannot be done alone without the help of others. More specifically, scaffolding in the learning environment can be interpreted as support provided by the instructor to the learner in completing certain tasks needed by the learner because the task cannot be solved by itself. Support is essentially intended to improve abilities, skills, and knowledge / understanding to achieve a higher level [9]. After learners can master it, the assistance is gradually eliminated and responsibility is then delegated to learners [5].

Essentially, in the context of learning there are three aspects included in scaffolding, namely (1) temporary assistance or support; (2) efforts to improve abilities, knowledge and skills; and (3) transfer of responsibility to learners if certain abilities, knowledge, and skills have been mastered by learners. Thus, scaffolding in the context of this research is a teaching process or activity which is temporarily aimed at helping learners in an effort to improve their abilities and skills in understanding reading. After the learner has mastered the ability and skill in understanding reading with the help of questions in the worksheet, learners can gradually do it independently.

In the context of reading comprehension, [10] classify scaffolding in three types, namely “verbal scaffolding moment-to-moment”, “instructional frameworks that foster content learning”, and “instructional procedures for teaching reading comprehension strategies”. In the first type, the instructor provides appropriate support / assistance for each learner, asks questions, and elaborates on the learner’s responses in the reading process. In its application, scaffolding in this context can be in the form of transfer of knowledge and experience from the instructor to assist the occurrence of a more meaningful learning process in the classroom so that the learning objectives can be achieved. Essentially, the teacher must be able to intensify the involvement of learners and help develop their skills and knowledge.

The second type of scaffolding emphasizes the teaching framework aimed at improving learning in understanding the content of the text individually. Therefore, the teacher can design the learning that he does by combining verbal scaffolding moment to moment to improve the understanding of the contents of the text.

Furthermore, the third type emphasizes scaffolding in the form of teaching procedures to help learners to use appropriate reading strategies. The main purpose is to help learners be able to become independent readers by using certain strategies to understand various types of text. Operationally, the teacher can explain directly the strategies that can be used by individual readers in understanding various text type. In this context, the teacher explains the strategies of individual understanding in an explicit manner. Propose five procedures that can be implemented in reading comprehension learning, namely describing strategies, giving examples, using strategies collaboratively, providing guidance for practice, and using strategies independently.

In addition, referring to can also be applied strategies that emphasize the role of the teacher in asking questions, directing the learner to summarize the main ideas contained in the text, clarifying the meaning of certain text parts, and guessing the meanings contained in the text. The main objective of learning by using scaffolding in this context is to create a collaborative learning process between instructors and learners by discussing texts in small groups. The teaching role in the discussion is to facilitate and help learners when needed by each group and direct the discussion so that it does not deviate from the main purpose of the discussion. For this reason, before learning takes place, the teacher can explain in detail the strategies that will be applied in reading and conducting the initial test to measure the learner’s ability so that the right type of assistance can be determined to facilitate the learners according to their level of ability. This strategy helps learners to understand the purpose of reading, activates prior knowledge (prior knowledge), focuses attention on the important parts of the contents of the reading, evaluates critically the text, monitors understanding, concludes, and evaluates conclusions that have been made relating to the contents of the text.

Thus, the various types of scaffolding strategies mentioned above can be used as alternatives to help learners in understanding various types of reading. To be able to have a strong effect on the quality of teaching processes and outcomes, the teacher needs to focus on providing assistance by utilizing key elements in understanding the content of the reading. Therefore, in this study the scaffolding presented in the form of a worksheet was used as a strategy to strengthen the understanding of the contents of the reading.

Researches on scaffolding that are relevant to learning English as a foreign language generally accentuate the effectiveness of scaffolding in improving learners' understanding of the texts they read. In this connection, examined the effectiveness of scaffolding in reading comprehension learning from the perspective of constructivism by using various types of texts in English. In experiments conducted on 80 learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) who have different proficiency levels, it can be concluded that scaffolding, proficiency level, and type of text are essential in the effectiveness of reading comprehension learning in the EFL context. By taking into account the type of text and the level of proficiency in English, scaffolding has proven to be very effective in reading reading comprehension in the narrative text genre, especially for students with average proficiency levels.

In line with the findings of [4] found that scaffolding also proved effective in increasing learner achievement in reading comprehension. In the context of this research they compare scaffolding strategies that are applied collaboratively between learners who have different levels of ability and learners who have the same level of ability. Although in both situations, the effectiveness of scaffolding can be shown, but the application of this strategy is more effective in classes that have different levels of ability.

In line with [4] found that effective scaffolding helps learners to improve achievement in reading comprehension. By using quasi-experimental design and multivariate analysis they find that the ability to find key ideas, draw conclusions, think critically, and vocabulary can be improved.

In an experimental study conducted by [5], it was also found similar results that scaffolding had a positive effect on improving the ability to read understanding in 130 EFL learners in Iran. Specifically, effective scaffolding strategies can improve reading skills, vocabulary, and English proficiency in general. The scaffolding strategy that is applied emphasizes the task-based reading strategy, especially in skimming and scanning texts. More specifically, also found that the scaffolding strategy, both cooperatively and individually, was effectively used in reading comprehension learning in the environment of English students at Jambi University. Furthermore, this strategy is very effective to be used to help learners who lack the ability to read.

Thus, the previous relevant studies that have been put forward suggest that the scaffolding strategy is effective to be used as a tool to improve learners' ability to understand reading. Therefore, the experiments to be carried out in this study are intended to test the effectiveness of these strategies in a similar context so that empirical verification or falsification can be carried out by using more recent data.

3 Method

3.1 Research Design

In this study an experimental research design was used. Two classes in the Reading for Academic Purposes lecture on English language study programs at Jambi University were randomly used as the experimental class and the control class. In the experimental class applied a reading strategy of understanding with scaffolding, using a worksheet containing questions to find the main idea, understanding certain parts of the text, and drawing conclusions.

Tabel 1. The Experiment Design

Time	Activities	Experiment group	Control group
Week 1	Pretest	Reading comprehension test	Reading comprehension test
Week 2	Intervention 1	Worksheet TBLT 1 + Tes 1	Conventional strategy + Tes 1
Week 3	Intervention 2	Worksheet TBLT 2 + Tes 2	Conventional strategy + Tes 2
Week 4	Intervention 3	Worksheet TBLT 3 + Tes 3	Conventional strategy + Tes 3
Week 5	Intervention 4	Worksheet TBLT 4 + Tes 4	Conventional strategy + Tes 4
Week 6	Intervention 5	Worksheet TBLT 5 + Tes 5	Conventional strategy + Tes 5
Week 7	Intervention 6	Worksheet TBLT 6 + Tes 6	Conventional strategy + Tes 6
Week 8	Posttest	Reading comprehension test	Reading comprehension test

In the control class, students did reading activity without using scaffolding. In this class conventional learning strategies are used which are commonly used by lecturers at the university. Both the experimental class and the control class used the same reading material, were taught by the same teacher, and allocated the same learning time.

To test the effectiveness of TBLT as scaffolding, t-Test statistical analysis was used to measure the significance of the mean differences between the experimental class and the control class. Furthermore, experimental design in this study is presented in Table 1.

3.2 Participant

Participants of this study were undergraduate (S1) English Language Education students at the Jambi University Teacher Training and Education Faculty (FKIP). A total of 50 students from 2 classes in the Reading for Academic Purposes lecture in the 2017/2018 academic year were used as samples participating in this study. The experimental class and control class each consist of 25 participant students in the age range of 18 to 20 years. Participants were assumed to have the same level of reading ability because they had passed the Reading I course in the previous semester. Statistical test to compare mean score of pretest showed that there is no significant different of the two groups.

At Reading I, this course focuses on mastering basic competencies in reading texts, recognizing text structure, understanding certain parts of the text, mastering the techniques of scanning and skimming, mastering vocabulary and grammar for the basic level. In Reading II, the purpose of this lecture was to emphasize the ability to guess the meaning of the context contained in the text, recognize the structure of various types of text, understand details, master the scanning and skimming techniques, master and develop vocabulary and grammar for low levels intermediate.

3.3 Research Variable

Reading learning with TBLT and conventional strategies are independent variables that will be tested for effectiveness in reading learning. Understanding reading scores are treated as the dependent variable in this study.

3.4 Material

The text used as material in this study was adapted from TOEFL, which is a standard test to measure the ability of English as a foreign language. For this reason, six English-language texts are used as reading comprehension learning materials in this study.

The TBLT worksheet in the form of worksheets containing reading text, understanding questions, and answer keys were used as scaffolding used in the experimental class in this study. Essentially, this worksheet is a learning tool which contains questions that guide the reader to understand the text gradually. Through the activity of answering the questions contained in the worksheet, the reader is helped to activate previously possessed knowledge related to the topics contained in the text, enrich and deepen the knowledge of the vocabulary that is owned, find the main ideas in parts of the text, and draw conclusions from the contents of the text.

3.5 Research Instrument

The comprehension reading test device used in this study was adapted from a reading test in the TOEFL. This test device was developed by a team of experts through careful, tested procedures, and had high validity and reliability. The reading comprehension test using the multiple choice format was used in this study. In the reading comprehension test there were texts and 10 questions followed by 4 choices of answers for each question. The test was intended to measure the reader's ability to find the main ideas, understand the important parts from certain parts of the text, and draw conclusions. These aspects are key indicators in reading comprehension. In tests that will be conducted for 40 min, participants in this study choose one of the correct answers from the 4 available answer choices. Individual reading comprehension tests are carried out at the beginning, before intervention (pretest) and after the intervention is done (posttest).

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed statistically using the SPSS version 22 program. In the statistical analysis used the level of trust based on alpha values $< .05$, which is the default value of the SPSS program. To test the effectiveness of TBLT used in reading comprehension learning, a t-test (t-test) was used to test the significance of differences in mean (mean) from the experimental class and control class. If the test results there were significant differences between the experimental group and the group control, it can be said that the class that has a higher average value has a better level of effectiveness than the others. Thus, TBLT can be said to be effective for understanding reading learning if based on the results of the t-Test it shows significant differences between the average value of the experimental class and the control class: the average score of the class that applies the scaffolding strategy is higher than the class using conventional strategies.

Table 2. Descriptive statistic of the experiment and control group

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	Experiment	24	58.13	16.004	3.267
	Control	24	44.17	10.286	2.100
Posttest	Experiment	24	78.75	13.613	2.779
	Control	24	51.46	11.828	2.414
Gain	Experiment	24	20.6250	18.72643	3.822
	Control	24	7.2917	10.92058	2.229

4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 The Findings

The main problems in this study are: Is TBLT effectively used as a scaffolding to improve the understanding of undergraduate students in reading learning? To answer this research question, statistical tests were carried out through the t-test. This test is intended to measure the effectiveness of TBLT as a scaffolding in the experimental class by comparing the average score of students' achievements with the control class that applies the conventional learning strategy.

As a preliminary analysis, descriptive data for statistical testing is presented in Table 2.

A preliminary analysis using Levene's test revealed that the assumption of equality of variance of the experiment and the control group was violated as indicated by $F(1, 46) = 7.540$, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the results of the analysis through the t-test are interpreted with this assumption. Furthermore, a summary of the results of the t-test analysis is presented in Table 3.

The results of the Independent Sample t-test showed a difference in the achievement of reading comprehension scores which was statistically significant between the experimental group and the control group. In other words, there were significant differences in the achievement of scores between TBLT learning as scaffolding ($M = 20.62$, $SE = 3.82$) and conventional learning in the control class ($M = 7.30$, $SE = 2.22$); $t(46) = 3.013$, $p = 0.05$. These results indicate that learning using TBLT as scaffolding is more effective than conventional strategies in achieving comprehension reading scores.

4.2 Discussion

The results of the analysis in this study support previous studies which showed a significant effect of the application of TBLT in the form of worksheets, as a scaffolding for students to improve their comprehension as indicated from the improvement of score achievement in reading comprehension. This implied that TBLT may help students to understand text better. This implies that questions relating to the meaning of certain parts of the text, finding the main ideas in the paragraph, drawing conclusions, and questions

Table 3. Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.001	13.96	3.88
	Equal variances not assumed	.001	13.96	3.88
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	.000	27.29	3.68
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	27.29	3.68
gain1	Equal variances assumed	.004	13.33	4.43
	Equal variances not assumed	.005	13.33	4.43

that lead to the reading summary can be used as scaffolding that is very essential to improve students’ understanding in reading activities.

Research findings of [5] also show the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in improving the achievement of reading comprehension scores. Furthermore, skills in reading English language comprehension and ability in general also increased as the instructional impact of applying scaffolding strategies in reading learning. In other words, important findings from this study confirm previous studies that showed the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in strengthening reading skills and English language skills in general in the context of EFL.

These results confirm the results of previous studies which revealed the scaffolding strategy applied in the context of cooperative learning turned out to provide many benefits to low-group students. In other words, the scaffolding strategy in cooperative learning situations is more effective in increasing student achievement scores with low reading comprehension. For high-ability students the application of scaffolding strategies in cooperative learning conditions does not have a significant effect. This implies that in cooperative learning conditions, the scaffolding strategy is effective for improving the skills of low group students in understanding the reading indicated by an increase in achievement of reading comprehension scores.

The next question is why does this strategy not have a significant effect on high group students? The application of this strategy in cooperative learning positions high-ability students not to freely carry out the exploration and elaboration process of the meaning of the text optimally due to limited time to help low-group students. The time to understand the reading that is owned by high group students is more spent on explaining the meaning of difficult words and the meaning of parts and the whole text that is not understood by low group students. As a result, high group students have very limited time and cannot

understand the text as a whole so that their understanding becomes no better than the understanding of low group students.

5 Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis it can be concluded as follows. First, understanding English texts is more effective by students with TBLT's support as scaffolding in Reading learning. Worksheets that are used as structured tasks in this study can help students to understand the text more directed. In other words, the questions related to the meaning of certain parts of the text, finding the main ideas in the paragraph, drawing conclusions, and questions that lead to the reading summary can function as scaffolding which is essential to improve students' skills and understanding in reading texts in English language.

5.2 Recommendation

From the conclusions of this study it can be recommended that learning academic English in higher education needs to consider the use of TBLT in the learning process. Therefore, the use of TBLT can be used as an alternative for strengthening learning English as a foreign language.

In the context of this study, to provide huge instructional impact in utilizing TBLT, teachers need to manage their lectures systematically so that all students are involved in learning activities to master lecture material better and more pleasantly. For this reason, the teacher needs to act as a learning facilitator by designing tasks that support the strengthening of learning processes and outcomes.

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