Attaching Reflected Experience on TOEFL Learning Through Scaffolding Teaching

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the impact of positive psychology, experiential learning (EL), and scaffolding on classroom engagement and motivation, focusing on enhancing teaching and learning effectiveness. It was conducted with 44 students and two instructors who implemented scaffolding guidance in shared experience sessions. The research design involved pre and post-tests to assess changes in students' classroom engagement and motivation levels, resulting from the application of scaffolding teaching and experiential learning (EL) methods. Analysis of pre and post-test results suggests that scaffolding teaching and EL methodologies significantly impact students' classroom engagement and motivation. The study found these methods to enhance the quality of teaching and learning by emphasizing the development of abilities and experiences. This study underscores the value of integrating scaffolding and EL into educational practices to bolster students' engagement and motivation in the classroom setting. The exploration of various tips and strategies drawn from shared experiences revealed their effectiveness in improving test scores and overall learning outcomes. In conclusion, this study advocates for the broader application of these methodologies to foster improved educational achievements and learner experiences.

***Keywords**: classroom engagement; experiential learning; shared experience; scaffolding teaching; self-managing learning; students' motivation; teaching and learning*

INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that a key factor in student success in higher education is their level of engagement (Wang et al., 2021). Students who are more engaged tend to achieve better outcomes than those who are not. It is also agreed that students who actively participate in the learning process and show interest in their education are more likely to excel. As a result, higher education institutions should encourage students to make the most of their abilities and available learning opportunities. (Broido, 2014; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Schools should have a clear vision for using technology and allow teachers to become skilled at using it in the classroom (Cahyaningtyas et al., 2024) so that teachers can attract low motivated students with it. Low student engagement can lead to frustration, boredom, negative experiences, and even dropping out (Derakhshan, 2021). Research shows that engagement is linked to intelligence, interest, motivation, and enjoyment of learning across many academic fields (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Engagement is shaped by the complex interactions of thoughts, feelings, and motivation, similar to self-determination theory in motivation studies. Motivation plays a significant role in promoting learning, and the more motivated students are, the more likely they are to succeed in higher education (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Also, the student's motivation is an important influence in nurturing learning and therefore strengthen the worth of higher education because the more the learners are motivated, the more likely they can achieve greater success in their learning (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Halif et al., 2020).

Considering that instead of focusing on academic cooperation, cooperative learning promotes competition, and its benefits for improving student learning in higher education have been extensively researched (Salamah et al., 2024). Moreover, from a psychological perspectives, motivating learners and engaging them in the classroom are closely related (Han & Wang, 2021); however, motivation involves features that are psychological and problematic to detect, while engagement involves activities that can be experiential, can be detected by others that it is not unpretentious to notice and estimate learners' motivation (Ratten & Ferreira, 2017). In other words, teachers cannot concretely comprehend the contentment of their learners' core mental necessities and enthusiasm for learning (Ratten & Ferreira, 2017). However, Ratten & Ferreira (2017), proclaimed that in contrast to motivation, learners' engagement by all accounts is a phenomenon that is distinctive and can nearly be noticed. In general, teachers can evenhandedly ponder whether a specific learner is engaged in the class exercises, such as problem-solving.

From research to practice, the phenomenon is even more difficult to witness. Most scholars have argued that student engagement positively predicts academic achievement, but some have challenged this view (Lei et al., 2018). In several previous studies, researchers have, indeed, considered that the relationship between student engagement and academic achievement might be influenced by various factors related to the method of reporting student engagement and other individual factors. Knowing so, learner's engagement is a crucial pinpoint, yet, teachers have difficulties on cultivating and maintaining learners' engagement in some other ways Baker et al. (2001), since some

students learn and forget. Teachers sometimes get devastated on creating ways so that knowledge they have gained do not impoverish soon.

Student experiences, student forgets. What they have experienced is something to be easily forgotten. What the teacher decide to give to the students are sometimes without many considerations. Teacher lack of creativity and sincerity are most likely the main factor of this chaos. Stated clearly that teaching is expensively all about deciding what best experiences the students can ever get. In the other words, student engagement is a critical factor in academic success in higher education, with strong links to motivation, interest, and active participation. Research shows that when students are actively involved in the learning process, they are more likely to achieve higher levels of academic accomplishment. This engagement is not only a product of students' intelligence or academic skills, but also their emotional and motivational connection to their studies. According to self-determination theory, the interaction of a student's perceptions, feelings, and motivations shapes their engagement, leading to more meaningful and sustained learning.

Higher education institutions play a vital role in fostering this engagement by creating environments that maximize student potential. By providing accessible learning opportunities and integrating technology effectively, schools can further enhance student involvement. The more students feel motivated and supported in their academic pursuits, the more likely they are to experience positive outcomes. Conversely, a lack of engagement can lead to negative experiences such as boredom, frustration, and even dropping out. Arranging thoughtful activities during teaching i.e. the flows, contingency, inter subjectivity and all cover in scaffolding teaching, is a significant mandate for the teachers. Teacher should significantly collect the data about his students; what age, what learning styles, what characteristics and alike. This action will lead to careful decision on what contents and ways should be deliberated to the students and in turn what kind of competencies teachers want them to acquire.

Experience, for students, should be put into emphasis. Students should treat experiences crucially whether it is good or bad. What they did wrong or right will enriched them into learning culture and understanding. If they did right, they should share them to others so the benefits are doubled: they can strengthen their own stances, they can even get benefits from their sharing to others, as others will treat them the same. The atmosphere of sharing, needing, understanding will be gradually established. What they did wrong is even more beneficial; they will be continuously reminded for not repeating the same action. And this valuable self-concern can also be significantly shared to others so that others will not trace the same path. Students will share valuable thoughts, perceptions, data-based assumptions, emotions, laughs and cries. This, is the most valuable and important core of scaffolding and experiential learning. The research investigates the process of this two theories combined: how two researchers as instructors guide students' sharing experience through the focus group discussions 'garnished' with dialogue scaffolding and clickbait-question.

METHOD

Referring to the aim of this research, namely discussing the concepts of experiential learning and scaffolding in the form of teacher instructions to students in the form of paraphrasing, recasting and appropriation which are based on the experiences of each student which are reflected and form new knowledge that makes students independent, it was decided to use a mixed method studies where the qualitative component plays a more dominant role (Brannen, 2005). Creswell & Poth (2007), states that qualitative research requires a naturalistic approach to what will be researched and requires a variety of sources of information. Sources of information in this research are UPI students, the lecturer, documents, classroom interactions; all of which were qualitatively framed by relevant theories and coded to be further analyzed. Having performed this step, 7 students were selected to have deep SEL teaching in isolated locus and ongoing SEL treatments were applied. So this research can be considered as case study because it will specifically describe an entity: it includes what and how the entity acts (its processes and products). The instruments used were student interviews, student questionnaires, and teacher observation formats of students as well as document analysis (student work portfolios, lecturer RPS and test questions).

Respondents
A case study requires a natural setting and a purposive sample (Creswell & Poth, 2007; Maxwell, 2008; Miles, 1994). The main aim of this research is to explore and describe scaffolding interactions within an experiential learning framework in English language learning at UPI Sumedang Campus, so the natural setting is also conditioned in this research and the sample chosen is also purposeful, not just random. Five classes were selected who had contracted general English courses to prepare for TOEFL skills at the end of the semester as a prerequisite for them to take part in the thesis hearing with the conditions required by the campus, with which requires a minimum score of 450. Students consist of 43-45 people per class with backgrounds not from the language department, but a variety of background experiences, which of course will be an obstacle in itself. The classes were chosen as they contracted the subject earlier (General English) and different background of the students will strengthen and vary the experiences colliding in SEL method (Ayob et al., 2012). Students were treated simultaneously with respective treatments differently depend on the results of focused discussions on the condition of students' achievement of TOEFL scores. The initial and final scores were taken as a comparison of the increase in achievement resulting from the treatment. Other scrutinized objects were lesson plans made by lecturers, portfolios of student work and other important documents that will represent the lecturer's performance in preparing SEL and developing students' knowledge and skills. Students and lecturers will be actively involved in preparing contextual SEL formulations for PGSD Sumedang students as research partners in discussions. Input in the field while they are studying will be a significant source of data for framing with scaffolding theory.

Instruments

The research were carried out for 6 months starting from April to October. The data collection process were carried out for 2 months, followed by field verification (classroom trials) for 1 month, then 1 month for preparing the SEL formulation. The process of collecting data by several instruments will be explained below along with its processing. The frequency of data collection for each instrument is not determined at the beginning, but is decided based on the level of sufficiency, which of course will be different for each object studied. Observations were carried once for each class in English lessons, and the emphasis is in the SEL data from the research subjects that are visible and subject to analyze. Teacher and student interviews were carried out at the beginning and end of the lesson, with a frequency appropriate to data completeness requirements. The duration of the observation is 2 hours (2x35 minutes) for each teacher and the length of the interview for teachers and student samples is approximately 10 minutes, depending on the breadth of the participant's answers.

Procedures
Data were collected using questionnaire instruments, interviews, and observations. For the first research question, "What are the steps for the SEL approach in TOEFL learning?", the main principles of Experiential Learning were applied, including concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualization, and actual implementation. These were carried out in a cycle that began with analyzing each student's unique experiences, requiring personalized treatment (contingency). At this stage, students were interviewed and given questionnaires designed around the SEL approach.

To answer the second question, "How can a learning approach with the SEL concept improve students' TOEFL scores?", observation formats were used at each stage, and the final outcomes were reflected upon to generate data for a focused discussion with the research team. For the third question, "How significantly does this concept improve learning outcomes in terms of fostering reflective thinking and independent learning abilities?", students were given a questionnaire and in-depth interviews based on the results of the focused discussion. Data were collected through classroom observations, field notes, and student interviews. These data were then continuously triangulated, with guidance provided by an appropriate format for each instrument. Interviews were conducted using an open structure, with the main content predetermined but allowing flexibility for other topics to be elaborated.

Data Analysis
The steps of SEL teaching (recasting, paraphrasing and appropriation) were used as tools for leading students collecting their experience. The data were recorded from class observation and were then framed by theories to answer the first research questions. Students were then put into deep discussion after being elaborated by questionnaires on how they felt having taught TOEFL using the SEL steps. It forms theories on the second research question, how SEL teaching improve their TOEFL understanding. Most of the students reveal their reflections on their own learning which exactly is, the aim of the research. Interviews were then conducted in elaborating the indicators of independent learning and

reflective thinking that have been depicted in the questionnaires aforementioned. All data were analyzed by codifying each data according to the source of the instrument applied and grouping each finding according to the research question and then framing it with the theory underlying this research.

Data validation in research is important to test the degree of trustworthiness or degree of truth of the research. Forms of data validation according to Hopkins' opinion (Wiriaatmadja, 2014) consist of 'member check, triangulation, saturation, competing explanations (negative cases), audit trail, expert opinion, and key respondent review'. The validation techniques used in this research refer to Hopkins' opinion (Wiriaatmadja, 2014), which include several methods. First, member check is a technique where the researcher re-checks all information obtained through observation or interviews with participants. This process involves confirming findings with students and partners through collaborative reflective activities at the end of each session, aiming to gather responses, corrections, and more valid information, ensuring the data has a high level of validity. Second, triangulation is conducted by comparing the researcher's analysis with the perspectives of others who were also present during the research, such as partners or colleagues. This method enhances the confidence level in the findings through collaborative reflection with lecturers, students, and other related parties. Third, audit trail involves a validation activity where colleagues with similar knowledge and expertise review the research process to ensure its accuracy. Lastly, expert opinion is sought by consulting experts on the issues encountered during the research. These experts review all research stages and offer guidance on the problems raised, helping to strengthen the validity of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Steps in Conducting SEL
In this research, which involved 165 students across 5 classes, the principles of scaffolding and experiential learning (SEL) were implemented through several key steps. First, Scaffolding Teaching and Classroom Leading was conducted by researchers and teams in various settings, including classrooms and outdoor locations to facilitate focus group discussions. In scaffolding teaching, students were encouraged to share their valuable experiences and discuss challenges, such as those encountered during listening sections of TOEFL. The process involved organizing and prioritizing problems, followed by teachers helping students rephrase and categorize issues, such as different accents or text difficulty, and finally, students and teachers collected relevant theories to explore solutions. Next, students engaged in Reflecting Experience, where they reflected on what they had done right or wrong. This phase applied scaffolding intersubjectivity through questionnaires and dialogue scaffolding in focus group discussions, with questions tailored to individual student needs. Both positive and negative experiences were equally valued as they contributed to shaping the students' growth. In the Sharing Experience phase, students participated in group discussions, reflecting on their learning and discussing tips and tricks for sections of the TOEFL test. These discussions aimed to consolidate their experiences into new knowledge. Following this, a TOEFL Retesting was conducted with 44 students, selected based on the strength of their reflections during group

discussions. These students were retested to gauge the impact of the scaffolding teaching, helping to refine the instruments used in the SEL approach. Finally, in the SEL Formulation from Shared Experience phase, further elaboration of active, independent, and reflective learning indicators was needed. This phase involved deeper discussions among participants, with 7 students volunteering to collaboratively develop theories from their shared experiences.

Table 1. Number of students retake the TOEFL test

Class	Responses	Percentage
3D	1	2.3%
3A	8	18.2%
3B	12	27.3%
3C	7	15.9%
3D	2	4.5%
3E	11	25%
3E PGSD	2	4.5%
3c	1	2.3%

Table 2. Students from various ranks

Class	Responses	Percentage
3.63	1	2.3%
3.75	2	4.5%
3.76	3	6.8%
3.79	4	9.1%
3.81	3	6.8%
3.84	2	4.6
3.86	3	6.8
3.88	3	6.8
3.91	1	2.3

As it is seen from the table that the participants were selected randomly at the first phase, and purposively at the second phase in order to test the effectiveness of the model in a purposive way. Only 7 person willingly join the fifth phase of SEL, namely **SEL formulation theory**. Self-devotion on what kind of activities they are likely to join, is a vital thing to establish in order to maintain the 'sharing experience' phase be more genuine and without any intimidation from all related parties. Fake response will make the results chaotic. This is not about the quantity of the respondents, but the quality of a strong willingness to devote to any of the SEL phase, that becomes the concern on this research. Genuine response will resulted in strong tips and tricks for each other, and this creates the real REFLECTIVE THINKING and INDEPENDENT LEARNING.

Shared Experience Accelerates the Score

Two tests were taken by 7 students, treated as pre and post test. The pre-test and post–test of the TOEFL were the same (not using different test type) and hereby the result.
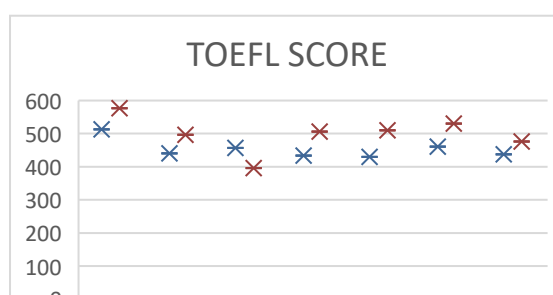

TOEFL SCORE

Figure 1. The Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test

From all seven participants, only Rm's score is decreasing. The others were elevating. An interview was then conducted with Rm and he gave reason that amazingly proved the magic of Experiential Learning. Rm did not pay attention to other's experiences since he thought that it would not accelerate any of the sections. Another unexpected finding also arose, that three persons had never taken TOEFL test before, and one of them got the highest score. Her reason was quite heartwarming: this was the very first time she participated in TOEFL test so she did not have much burden to carry. She easily absorbed her friends' experiences and she formulated them into her own tricks and tips. The finding shows vividly that experience is something that cannot be ignored as it values learning. Experience determines the level of anxiety, emotional stances, thoughtfulness, and belief. In doing the test, participants need more than only knowledgeable but also faith in doing what they are not sure about it. Experience creates knowledge. Knowledge is created through learners' finding and participating and occurs simultaneously (reflecting, sharing, active testing) (Paavola et al., 2023).

Scaffolding and Experiential Learning Enforce Reflective Thinking

As a response to the traditional teaching approach that is teacher-centric (Che et al., 2021) and following the proclivity to intensifying interest in a more unique, participative learning atmosphere. Educational organizations such as UPI are orienting toward learning approaches that cultivate students' involvement, interest, and dynamic participation. The ones that reflects from this research. EL is an efficacious teaching method enabling active learning through providing real-world experiences in which learners interact and critically evaluate course material and become involved with a topic being taught (Boggu & Sundarsingh, 2019). Based on the teaching theory of Socrates, this model relies on research-based strategies which allow learners to apply their classroom knowledge to real-life situations to foster active learning, which consequently brings about a better retrieval (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). Indeed, engaging in daily activities, such as going to classes, completing schoolwork, and paying attention to the educator, is all indicators of classroom engagement (Woods et al., 2019). Additionally, by participating in EL classes paired with relevant academic activities, learners increase their innate motivation to learn

(Helle et al., 2007). They have the opportunity to choose multiple paths to solve problems throughout the learning process by having choices and being autonomous (Svinicki & WJ 2014). EL is regarded as learning by action whereby information is built by the student during the renovation of changes (Ayob et al., 2012). Within EL, people become remarkably more liable for their learning which regulates a stronger connection between the learning involvement, practices, and reality (Salas et al., 2009) that are key roles in learning motivation.

To make sure that the learners gain the required knowledge and get the factual training, teachers should find and choose the right strategies to help children learn (Novita et al., 2024), it is equally important to give them time to develop their ability to use their knowledge and apply those skills in real-world situations to resolve problems that are relevant to their careers (Huang & Jiang, 2021). So, it seems that they would like more hands-on training and skills development, but awkwardly, in reality, they generally just receive theoretical and academic education (Green et al., 2017). In addition, as in today's modern world, where shrewd and high-performing people are required, motivation and engagement should be prioritized in educational institutions as they are required features in the learning setting while they are often overlooked in classrooms (Afzali & Izadpanah, 2021). Even though studies on motivation, engagement, and EL have been conducted so far; however, based on the researcher's knowledge, just some have currently carried out systematic reviews about the issue and these studies have not been all taken together to date; therefore, concerning this gap, the current mini-review tries to take their roles into account in education.

CONCLUSION
To conclude all the work, SEL teaching steps are strongly urged in establishing active learning that leads to independent learning and reflective thinking. Students should be recasted, rephrased and appropriated by dialogue scaffolding. Students should be treated differently by intersubjectivity type of teaching. By doing that SEL action of teaching, students reflectively and independently form tips and tricks that they have formulated from their reflective experience. In each of TOEFL sections, students have found their own distinctive strategies based on their reflective experiences that have been dug down in detail by several times of tests and deep discussion. They are happy since their self confidence increased having exercised ongoing with significant feedback of the lecturer.

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