

## SCAFFOLDING AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN INFANTS AND ADOLESCENTS

By

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### **Abstract**

*Language development is the phenomenon of child language acquisition. The objectives of this study are to find out the benefits and challenges of using scaffolding to help children's language development. Descriptive survey was employed and stratified random sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents from pre-primary, primary, secondary school teachers and parents of pre-primary pupils. Ten (10) likert scale type instrument was validated and Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.88 was yielded. The study attempted to answer two research questions using descriptive statistics. The results indicated that scaffolding provides children with the opportunity to learn new words, bolster children's language skills, help a child move from simple language to more complicated language, helps provide children with correct language usage repetitively and aid in capturing the infant's attention and maintaining communication. The findings of the study also showed that the challenges of using scaffolding to help children's language development include inadequately modelling of the desired behaviours, strategies or activities because the teacher has not fully considered the individual student's needs, predilections, interests and abilities, full benefits not seen unless the instructor are properly trained, selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of learners, knowing when to remove the scaffold so that the learner does not rely on the support and not knowing the learner well enough to provide the appropriate scaffold. However, the study concludes that what the child is able to do with assistance today he will be able to do independently tomorrow and recommended among others that language teachers should be exposed to sensitization programmes like seminars, workshops and conferences to broaden their intellectual horizon on the importance of scaffolding in language development.*

**Keywords:** languages, language development, scaffolding, effective scaffolding

### **Introduction**

Language is a means of communication by which human beings interact and exchange their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Language also is a means of communication by which a social group interacts or co-operates with one another, using all forms of internal and external representations like conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures or marks having understandable meaning (Asuoha, 2016). Development on the other hand denotes advancement, change and improvement in all aspects of human living standards

(Owuamanam, 2016). Hence, language development refers to the phenomenon of child language acquisition (that is, how infant's acquire language). Language development in this paper is examined in relation to the language development in children. Language development in humans is a process starting early in life. Infants start without knowing a language yet by 10 months, babies

can distinguish speech sounds and engage in babbling (Wikipedia, 2020). According to Chomsky (1965, p.25), “all children have what is called an innate language acquisition device (LAD) which provides children with the ability to make sense of knowledge and construct novel sentences with minimal external input and little experience”. However, language development in children can be obtained through general brain processes, interactive and communicative context, imitation of stimuli and reinforcement of correct responses and individual’s social interaction and growth (Flevaris, 2015, Poll, 2011, Roedizer, 2004 & Ramscar & Yarlett, 2007).

Development of language abilities in children has become a difficult tasks in spite of the above views. This could mean that children need additional help for them to develop language. The use of scaffolding strategies could support children’s learning of language. Scaffolding has the power to cater for children’s language proficiency and aspiration. Scaffolding is a process of temporarily providing support to a learner within a social context and then gradually withdrawing this support as the learner becomes capable of independence in performing task (wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). Similarly, scaffolding is support provided initially and subsequently faded in a continuous cycle as knowledge and understanding develop. The amount and frequency of scaffoldings vary with the individual learner, problems encountered and the needs or demands of a specific context (Sharma & Hannafin, 2007).

Ideally, scaffolding works to maintain the child’s potential level of development in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The zone of proximal development is the field between what a learner can do by himself (expert stage) and the most that can be achieved with the support of knowledgeable peer or instructor (pedagogical stage) (Ellis & Worthington, 1994). An essential element to the ZPD and scaffolding is the acquisition of language.

According to Vygotsky (1987, p.39), language (and in particular, speech) is fundamental to children’s cognitive growth because language provides purpose and intention so that behaviour can be better understood. Through the use of speech, children are able to communicate to and learn from others through dialogue which is an important strategy of scaffolding. In a dialogue, a spontaneous concept is met with the more systematic, logical and rational concepts of the skilled helper (Dyson, 1991).

However, there are some challenges militating against the use of scaffolding to help children’s language development. These challenges include selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of students, knowing when to remove the scaffold so that the children do not rely on the support and not knowing the students well enough (their cognitive and effective abilities) to provide the appropriate scaffold. In spite of the above challenges, providing language support at the right level for a child can really make a difference to their talking and understanding. Thus, the thrust of this paper lies on the benefits of using scaffolding to help children’s language development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Development of language abilities in children has become a difficult task irrespective of the fact that children have an innate language acquisition device (LAD) which provides them with the ability to make sense of knowledge and construct novel sentences with minimal external input and

little experiences, general brain processes enough for language acquisition, can learn language in the interactive and communication context, by imitation of stimuli and reinforcement of correct responses and social interaction and growth. This could mean that children still need additional help for them to develop language effectively.

### **The Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To ascertain the benefits of using scaffolding to help children's language development.
2. To ascertain the challenges of using scaffolding to help children's language development.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the benefits of using scaffolding to help children's language development?
2. What are the challenges of using scaffolding to help children's language development?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical base of this study stems from three approaches namely- the Nativist theory, the empiricist theory and the theory of scaffolding. Chomsky's (1965, p.25) Nativist Theory of Language Development postulates that language is a unique human accomplishment and can be attributed to neither "millions of years of evolution" or to "principles of neural organization that may be even more deeply grounded in physical law". Chomsky says that all children have what is called an innate language acquisition device (LAD). The LAD is an area of the brain that has a set of universal syntactic rules for all languages. This device provides children with the ability to make sense of knowledge and construct novel sentences with minimal external input and little experiences. Chomsky's claim is based upon the view that what children hear-their linguistic input-is insufficient to explain how they come to learn language.

Chomsky (1965, p.25) argues that linguistic input from the environment is limited and full of errors. The assumption of the theory is that it is impossible for children to learn linguistic information solely from their environment (Davies, 2017). However, because children possess this LAD, they are in fact able to learn language despite incomplete information from their environment. The Empiricist Theory of Language Development suggests that there is enough information in the linguistic input children receive and therefore, there is no need to assume an innate language acquisition device exists. Empiricists believe that general brain processes are sufficient enough for language acquisition. During this process, it is necessary for the child to actively engage with their environment (Flevaries, 2015). For a child to learn language, the parent or caregiver adopts a particular way of appropriately communicating with the child, this is known as child-directed speech (CDS). CDS is used so that children are given the necessary linguistic information needed for their language (Poll, 2011).

Scaffolding Theory was first introduced in the late 1950s by Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist. He used the term to describe young children oral language acquisition. Helped by their parents when they first start learning to speak, young children are provided with informal instructional formats within which their learning is facilitated. A scaffolding format investigated by Bruner and his postdoctoral student Anat Ninio whose scaffolding processes are described in

detail is joint picture-book reading (Ninio & Bruner, 1978). By contrast, bedtime stories and read aloud are examples of book-centered parenting events without scaffolding interaction. Scaffolding is inspired by Vygotsky (1987)'s concept of an expert assisting a novice or an apprentice.

Scaffolding is changing the level of support to suit the cognitive potential of the child. Over the course of a teaching session, one can adjust the amount of guidance to fit the child's potential level of performance. More support is offered when a child is having difficulty with a particular task and overtime, less support is provided as the child makes gains on the task. Ideally, scaffolding works to maintain the child's potential level of development in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The zone of proximal development is the field between what a learner can do by himself (expert stage) and the most that can be achieved with the support of a knowledge peer or instructor (pedagogical state) (Ellis & Worthington, 1994).

The present study is related to the above theories in that an essential element to the ZPD and scaffolding is the acquisition of language. According to Vygotsky (1987, p.39), language (and in particular, speech) is fundamental to children's cognitive growth because language provides purpose and intention so that behaviours can be better understood". Through the use of speech, children are able to communicate to and learn from others through dialogue which is an important strategy of scaffolding. In a dialogue, a child's unsystematic, disorganized and spontaneous concepts are met with the more systematic, logical and rational concepts of the skilled helper (Dyson, 1991).

### **Language Development**

Language development in humans is a process starting early in life. Infants start without knowing a language yet by 10 months, babies can distinguish speech sounds and engage in babbling. Some research has shown that the earliest learning begins in utero when the fetus starts to recognize the sounds and speech patterns of its mother's voice and differentiate them from sounds after birth (Graven & Browne, 2008).

Typically, children develop receptive language abilities before their verbal or expressive language develops. Receptive language is the internal processing and understanding of language. As receptive language continues to increase, expressive language begins to slowly develop (Guess, 1969). The stage of language development is in hierarchical order.

#### **1. Stages 0-1 year of age:**

An infant mainly uses non-verbal communication (mostly gestures) to communicate. For a newborn, crying is the only means of communication. Infants 1-5 months old have different tones of crying that indicate their emotions. Infants also begin laughing at this stage. At 6-7 months old, infants begin to respond to their own name, yell and squeal and distinguish emotions based on the tone of voices of the mother and father. Between 7 and 10 months the infant starts putting words together, for example, "mama" and "dada" but these words lack meaning and significance. Verbal communication begins at approximately 10-12 months and the child starts to imitate any sounds they hear, for example, animal sounds. The non-verbal communication of infants includes the use of gaze, head orientation and body positioning. Gestures are also widely used as an act of communication. Non-verbal communication begins with the comprehension of parents and how

they use it effectively in conversation. Infants are able to breakdown what adults and others are saying to them and use their comprehension of this communication to produce their own (Ateah, Kyle & Scott, 2008).

## **2. Stages 1-2 years of Age**

Verbal and non-verbal communications are both used at this stage of development. At 12 months, children start to repeat the word they hear. Adults, especially parents are used as a point of reference for children in terms of the sound of words and what they mean in context of the conversation. Children learn much of their verbal communication through repetition and observing others. If parents do not speak to their children at this age it can become quite difficult for them to learn the essentials of conversation. The vocabulary of 1-2 years old should consist of 50 words and can be up to 500. Gestures that were used earlier on in development begin to be replaced by words and eventually are only used when needed. Verbal communication is choosing over non-verbal as development progresses (Crais, 2009).

## **3. Stages 2-3 years of Age**

Children aged 2-3 communicate best in a turn-taking style. This creates a conversational structure that makes it easier for verbal communication to develop. It also teaches patience, kindness and respect as they learn from the direction of elders that one person should speak at a time. This creates interactional synchrony during their preverbal routines that shapes their interpersonal communication skills early on in their development. Children during this stage in their life also go through a recognition and continuity phase. Children start to see that shared awareness is a factor in communication along with their development of symbolic direction of language. This especially affects the relationship between the child and the caregiver. It is a crucial part of self-discovery for the child when they begin to take ownership over their own actions in a continuous manner (Haslett & Samter, 1997).

## **4. Stages 3-5 years of Age**

In this age group, children are still learning how to form abstract thoughts and are still communicating concretely. Children begin to be fluent in connecting sounds, syllables and linking words that make sense together in one thought. They begin to participate in short conversations with others. Stuttering can develop generally resulting in slowed-down speech with a few letter enunciation errors (f,v,s,z). At the beginning of this stage toddlers tend to be missing function words and misunderstand how to use verb tenses. Over time they start including functional words, pronouns and auxiliary verbs. This is the emotional cues of the tone of adults' conversation. If negative feedbacks are distinguished by the child, this ends with fear and avoidance of the associated verbal and non verbal cues. Toddlers develop the skills to listen and partially understand what another person is saying and can develop an appropriate response (Conti-Ramsden, 2012).

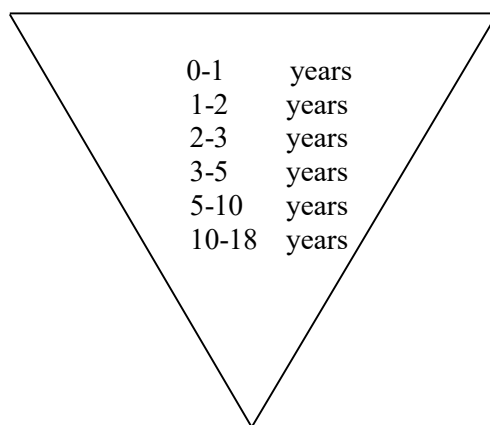
## **5. Stages 5-10 years of Age**

Much language development during this period takes place in a school setting. At the beginning of the school age, a child's vocabulary expands through exposure to reading which also helps children to learn more difficult grammatical forms including plurals and pronouns. They also begin to develop metalinguistic awareness which allows them to reflect and more clearly understand the language they use. They therefore start to understand jokes and riddles. Reading is a gateway for

learning new vernacular and having confidence in complex word choices while talking with adults. This is an important developmental stage socially and physiologically for the child. As children continue to learn communication, they realize the difference between forms of intentions and understand that there are numerous different ways to express the same intent with different meaning (Haslett & Samter, 1997).

#### 6. **Stages 10-18 years of Age**

By the age of 10, the child's cognitive potential has matured and they can participate fully and understand the purpose of their conversations. During this time, the sophistication and effectiveness of communication skills increase and understanding of vocabulary and grammar increases as a result of education. Adolescents go through changes in social interactions and cognitive development that influence the way they communicate. They often use colloquial speech (slang), however, which can increase confusion and misunderstandings. An individual's style of interpersonal communication depends on who they are communicating with. During this period, adolescents tend to communicate less with their parents and more with their friends. When discussions are initiated in different channels of communication, attitude and predispositions are key factors that drive the individual to discuss their feelings. This also shows that respect in communication is a trait in interpersonal communication that is built on throughout development. The end of this adolescent stage is the basis for communication in the adult stage (Strom, Bernard & Strom, 1987).



Relationship between interpersonal communication and the stages of development. The greatest development of language occurs in the stage of infancy. As the child matures, the rate of language development decreases.

#### **Scaffolding**

Scaffolding is the support given to a student by an instructor throughout the learning process. According to Wood, Bruner & Ross (1976, P.89), scaffolding is the “process of temporarily providing support to a learner within a social context and then gradually withdrawing this support as the learner becomes capable of independence in performing tasks”. Scaffolding can be thought of as the strategies that a teacher uses to help learners bridge a cognitive gap or progress in their learning to a level they were previously unable to accomplish (Yelland Master, 2007). These strategies evolve as the teachers evaluate the learners initial level of ability and then through

continued feedback throughout the progression of the task. In classrooms, scaffolding may include modelling behaviours, coaching and prompting, thinking out loud, dialogue with questions and answers, planned and spontaneous discussion as well as other interactive planning or structural assistance to help the learner bridge a cognitive gap.

Similarly, scaffolding is support provided initially and subsequently faded in a continuous cycle as knowledge and understanding develop. The amount and frequency of scaffolding vary with the individual learner, problems encountered and the needs or demands of a specific context (Sharma & Hannafin, 2007). According to Vygotsky (1987, P.39) scaffolding is referred to as “Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Skills too difficult for a child to master on his own, but can be done with guidance and encouragement from a more knowledgeable person”. More knowledgeable person is also known as More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). The “MKO” is a person who has a higher understanding of an idea or concept and can bridge a cognitive gap. This includes teachers, parents and peers. MKOs are central part of the process of learning in the ZPD.

Scaffolding involves presenting learners with proper guidance that moves them towards their learning goals. Providing guidance is a method of moderating the cognitive load of a learner. In scaffolding, learners can only be moved toward their learning goals if cognitive load is held in check by properly administered support. Research has demonstrated that higher level of guidance has a greater effect on scaffolding learning but is not a guarantee of more learning (Luria, 1983). The efficacy of higher amount of guidance is dependent on the level of detail and guidance applicability. Having multiple types of guidance (i.e., worked examples, feedback) can cause them to interact and reinforce each other. Multiple conditions do not guarantee greater learning as certain types of guidance can be extraneous to the learning goals or the modality of learning. With this, more guidance (if not appropriate to the learning) can negatively impact performance as it gives the learner overwhelming levels of information. However, appropriately designed high levels of guidance, which properly interact with the learning is more beneficial to learning than low levels of guidance (Lajoie, 2005).

Ideally, scaffolding works to maintain the child’s potential level of development in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). An essential element to the ZPD and scaffolding is the acquisition of language. Language (and in particular, speech) is fundamental to children’ cognitive growth because language provides purpose and intention so that behaviours can be better understood (Dyson, 1983). Through the use of speech, children are able to communicate to and learn from others through dialogue which is an important strategy of scaffolding. In a dialogue, a child’s unsystematic, disorganized and spontaneous concepts are met with the more systematic, logical and rational concepts of the skilled helper (Dyson, 1991). Dialogue may range from casual talk to deliberate explanations of features of written language. The talk embedded in the actions of the literacy event shapes the child’s learning as the teacher regulates his or her language to conform to the child’s degrees of understanding.

In written instruction, support is typically presented in verbal form (discourse). The writing teacher engages the learner’s attention, calibrates the tasks, motivates the student, identifies relevant task features, controls for frustration and demonstrates as needed (Rodger, 2004). Through joint activities, the teacher scaffolds conversation to maximize the development of a child’s

intrapyschological functioning. In this process, the adult control's the elements of the task that are beyond the child's ability, all the while increasing the expectations of what the child is able to do. Clay (2005) shows that what may seem like casual conversational exchanges between tutor and student actually offer many opportunities for fostering cognitive development, language learning, story composition for writing and reading comprehension. Conversations facilitate generative, constructive, experimental and developmental speech and writing in the development of new ideas (Smagorinsky, 2007).

According to Vygotsky (1987, P.211), "what a child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow". Some ingredients of scaffolding are predictability, playfulness, focus on meaning, role reversal, modelling, nomenclature, generalization, reasoning, co-participating, reducing choices, eliciting and encouragement.

Teachers and other adults modify their language to match the language level of learners. This type of modification is called "scaffolding". All learner (including adults) learn better when the teacher scaffolds or adjust their instruction to the level of the learner. Effective communication occurs when an adult speaks in language a child can understand yet still challenges learning. The goal is to speak slightly above the child's level so he can learn and grow. Scaffolding can involve making language and vocabulary simpler (Classroominterprinting, 2020).

### **Effective Scaffolding**

For scaffolding to be effective,6 teachers need to pay attention to the following:

- The selection of the learning task. The task should ensure that learners use the developing skills that need to be mastered. The task should also be engaging and interesting to keep learners involved. This task should be neither too difficult nor too easy for the learner.
- The anticipation of error: After choosing the task, the teacher needs to anticipate errors the learners are likely to commit when working on the task. Anticipation of errors enable the scaffolder to properly guide the learners away from ineffective directions.
- The application of scaffolds during the learning task: Scaffolds could be organized in "simple skill acquisition or they may be dynamic and generative.
- The consideration of emotional issues: Scaffolding is not limited to a cognitive skill and can also support emotional responses (affect). For example, during a task the scaffolder (expert) might need to manage and control for frustration and loss of interest that could be experienced by the learner. Encouragement is also an important scaffolding component (Cazden, 1983 & Clay, 2005).

### **Benefits of Using Scaffolding to help Children's Language Development**

Scaffolding is a way to support children's learning of language. It helps a child move from simple language to more complicate language. It means helping a child learn a new skill by building on skills that they already have. Adults give support by talking to children in different ways. As a child learns the new skill, the adults can reduce the amount of support they give. What a child can do with assistance toady she will be able to do by herself tomorrow (Vygotsky, 1987).

Scaffolding can be used by all the adults talking to a child, including parents. Providing language support at the right level for a child can really make a difference to their talking and understanding



speech by adults to children help provide the child with correct language usage respectively. According to Paul & Elwood (1991, P.983), adult scaffolding of the child's attempts to master linguistic communication is an important factor in the development process.

For instance, child-directed speech (also known as baby talk or motherese) plays an important role in developing language. Child directed speech is language spoken in a higher pitch than normal with simple words and sentences. Child-directed speech may aid in capturing the infant's attention and maintaining communication (Mani & Plunkett, 2010). When children begin to communicate with adults, this motherese speech allows the child the ability to discern the patterns in language and to experiment with language. Throughout existing research, it is concluded that children exposed to extensive vocabulary and complex grammatical structure more quickly develop and also have a more accurate syntax than children raised in environments without complex grammar exposed to them (Hoff, 2006). With motherese, the mother talks to the child and responds back to the child whether it be a babble the child made or a short sentence. While doing this, the adult prompts the child to continue communicating, which may help a child develop language sooner than children raised in environments where communication is not fostered (Nathanson & Rasmussen, 2011).

Child-directed speech concentrates on small core vocabulary, here and now topics, exaggerated facial expressions and gestures, frequent questioning, para-linguistic changes and verbal rituals. An infant is least likely to produce vocalizations when changed, fed or rocked. The infant is more likely to produce vocalizations in response to a nonverbal behaviour such as touching or smiling (Hoff, 2006). Child-directed speech also catches the child's attentions and in situations where words for new objects are being expressed to the child, this form of speech may help the child recognize the speech cues and the new information provided (Nathanson & Rasmussen, 2011). Continuously hearing complicated sentences throughout language development increases the child's ability to understand these sentences and then to use complicated sentences as they develop.

In writing instruction, support is typically presented in verbal form (discourse). The writing tutor engages the learner's attention, calibrates the task, motivates the student, identifies relevant task features, controls for frustration and demonstrates as needed (Rodgers, 2004). Through joint activities, the teacher scaffolds conversation to maximize the development of a child's intrapsychological functioning. In this process, the adult controls the elements of the task that are beyond the child's ability, all the while increasing the expectations of what the child is able to do.

From a Vygotskian perspective, talk and action work together with the sociocultural fabric of the writing event to shape a child's construction of awareness and performance (Dorn, 1996). Dialogue may range from casual talk to deliberate explanations of features of written language. The talk embedded in the actions of the literacy event shapes the child's learning as the tutor regulates his or her language to conform to the child's degrees of understanding (Dorn, 1996). Clay (2005) shows that what may seem like casual conversational exchanges between tutor and student actually offer many opportunities for fostering cognitive development, language learning, story composition for writing and reading comprehension. Conversations facilitate generative, constructive, experimental and developmental speech and writing in the development of new ideas (Smagorinsky, 2007).

The aim of using scaffolding is to make language accessible to children and help them move to the next stage. Adults using scaffolding can help to reduce anxiety about talking for children they are working with. Successful scaffolding relies on the person knowing the language level of the child he is working with.

### **Guidelines for Using Scaffolding to Help Children’s Language Development**

Guidelines for using scaffolding to help children’s language development are as follows:

1. Firstly, remember to think about your own language:
  - Does it match the language level of the child you are talking to?
  - Does the child now and understand the words (vocabulary) you are using?
  - Use straight forward sentences with simple grammar; perhaps break up information into short segments, for example”... so you finished colouring. Now cut. Then stick it on the paper”.
  - How fast are you speaking? Think about reducing the speed at which you talk and always try to include pauses. This helps understanding and allows time for information to be processed.
  - Are you using open question (Ones that don’t rely on one word answers) to help communication?
2. Also, you will need to think about:
  - The age of the child you are working with,
  - What skills you would like them to learn,
  - The environment you are working in,
  - What opportunities there will be to practice/develop their new skills (Justice & McGinity, 2009).

### **Examples of using Scaffolding**

Here are some examples of the most common scaffolding techniques used in helping children’s language development.

<b>Scaffolding Techniques</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Recasting	This is rephrasing something the child has said, perhaps turning it into a question or restating the child’s immature utterance in the form of a fully grammatical sentence	A child saying “Cookie now” A parent may respond with “would you like a cookie now?”
Expanding	This is restating in a linguistically sophisticated form what a child has said	A child may say “car move road”. The parent may respond “A car drives on the road”.
Labelling	This is identifying the names of objects. It can also be characterized as referencing	If a child points to an object such as a couch, the mother may say “couch” in response.
Repetition	This is repeating what the child says the correct way	A child may say “milk gone”, the mother may say “yes, milk is finished.
Repeat and extend	This means saying it again and extend it. This helps children learn to speak in longer sentences.	The mother may say “yes, milk has all gone. You’ve drunk it all”.

Repeat in a different way	This is repeating what the child says in a different way. This helps children learn new words.	The mother say “yes, milk has all gone. You’ve drunk it all”
Pre-teaching vocabulary	It is important to think about your choice of words. For younger children, these will probably be concrete words linked to what you can see or what you are doing and useful for early conversation. With older children you might choose words which are useful in school or linked to their topic	
Sentence starters	These can be used to scaffold conversations and for starting thinking about topics. Start a sentence and leave a gap for a child to finish. Sentence starts can also be great for encouraging quieter children to join in	a. “One thing I enjoyed about our school trip was ....” b. “Simple Simon says, touch your ...”
Questions	Ask questions especially ones that have no right or wrong answer.	“What would happen if ...?”
Co-participating	Prompts children to produce a correct answer to a task through their completion of the task with another person – the teacher or a peer	This is the first word I read on this page. Let’s point to the word together.
Reducing Choices	Prompts children to complete a task by reducing the number of choices of correct answers.	Is this tool called a hammer or a wrench?
Eliciting or modelling	Prompts children to produce a correct answer to a task by providing an exact model of the ideal response	The word ‘cat’ rhymes with ‘hat’. Jose, what word rhymes with ‘hat’?
Generalizing	Prompts children to extend the lesson content beyond the lesson itself- to past or future personal experience	Do you know someone whose name starts with the letter “L” ?
Reasoning	Prompts children to explain why something happened or will happen or to explain why something is the way it is.	The next day the snowman melted. Why do you think that happened?
Predicting	Prompts children to describe what might happen next or to hypothesize the outcome of an event.	Where do you think they will go next? What shall we do next? (Justice & Mc Ginty,2009)

### Challenges in Using Scaffolding to Help Children’s Language Development

The challenge in using scaffolding to help children’s language development are as follows:

- Planning for and implementing scaffolds is time consuming and demanding.
- Selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of learners.
- Knowing when to remove the scaffold so that the student does not rely on the support.
- Lack of sufficient personnel
- Inadequately modeling the desired behaviours, strategies or activities because the teacher has not fully considered the individual learners needs, predilections, interest and abilities.

- Full benefits not seen unless the instruction are properly trained (Halls, Bonner & Batista, 2008).
- Potential for misjudging the zone of proximal development; success hinges on identifying the areas that is just beyond but not too far beyond learner abilities.

### Methodology

The research is a descriptive survey. It is a descriptive survey because the study described a sample of the benefit and challenges of using scaffolding to help children's language development. The population comprises the entire teachers in Obingwa Local Government Area of Abia State who teach in public pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. The Primary and secondary school were stratified along principals of schools. A total of 50,50 and 50 teachers from pre-primary, primary and secondary school respectively were randomly selected from each stratum given a sample size of 150. The instrument was a structured likert type questionnaire. It consists of a ten closed ended items that targeted the benefits and challenges of using scaffolding to help children's language development. The first part of the questionnaire elicited information on the demographic data while the second part was on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) as response format. The items in the questionnaire were weighted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA)-4 points, Agree (A)-3 points, Disagree (D)-2points and Strongly Disagree (SD)-1 point. The criterion mean was



2.50 Respondents were required to tick ( ) against the desired opinion. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.88. The value was adjudge suitable for use of the instrument for the study. Oral interview was also adopted. The oral interview was to gather information from 50 parents of pre-primary pupils concerning the benefits and challenges of using scaffolding to help children's language development. A total of 150 copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved. The data was analyzed using mean scores. Any item with a rating of 2.50 and above was accepted value while item with a mean rating below 2.50 was rejected.

### Research Question One

What are the benefits of using scaffolding to help children's language development?

**Table 1:** Mean Ratings of Teachers on the Benefits of Using Scaffolding to Help Children's Language Development.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	REMARK
		4	3	2	1		
1	Scaffolding provides children with the opportunity to learn new words.	400	75	30	10	3.4	Agree
2.	Scaffolding has the potential to bolster children's language skills.	480	45	20	05	3.6	Agree
3.	Scaffolding helps a child move from simple language to more complicated language.	400	75	30	10	3.4	Agree
4.	Speech by adults to children helps provide the child with correct language usage repetitively.	500	75	0	0	3.8	Agree

5.	Child-directed speech (motherese) aid in capturing the infants's attention and maintaining communication.	500	75	0	0	3.8	Agree
Grand mean		3.6					

Data presented above in table 1 shows that all these items are the benefits of using scaffolding to help children's language development. All the items have mean score above 2.50 which is the criterion mean of acceptance. The grand mean is 3.6.

### Research Question Two

What are the challenges of using scaffolding to help children's language development?

**Table 2:** Mean Ratings of Teachers on the Challenges of Using Scaffolding to Help Children's Language Development.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	REMARK
6.	Inadequately modelling the desired behaviours, strategies or activities because the teacher has not fully considered the individual student's needs, predilections, interests, and abilities.	400	75	30	10	3.4	Agree
7.	Full benefits not seen unless the instructor is properly trained.	480	45	20	05	3.6	Agree
8	Selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of learners	400	75	30	10	3.4	Agree
9	Knowing when to remove the scaffold so that the learner does not rely on the support.	500	60	10	0	3.8	
10	Not knowing the learner well enough to provide the appropriate scaffold.	480	30	30	0.5	3.6	
Grand mean		3.56					

Table 2 revealed that all respondents agreed that all the above are the challenges of using scaffolding to help children's language development, hence the grand mean of 3.56 is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50.

### Discussion

The findings of this study on the benefits of using scaffolding to help children's language development showed that scaffolding provides children with the opportunity learn new words, has the potential to bolster children's language skills, helps a child move from simple language to more complicated language, helps provide the child with correct language usage repetitively and aids in capturing the infant attention and maintaining communication. The benefits of using scaffolding to help children's language development was articulated by Luria (1979), thus, speech, a critical tool to scaffold thinking and responding, plays a crucial role in the development of higher psychological processes because it enables thinking to be more abstract, flexible and independent. Similarly, Clay

(2005) shows that what may seem like casual conversational exchanges between tutor and student actually offers many opportunities for fostering cognitive development, language learning, story composition for writing and reading comprehension. However, Smagorinsky (2007) stipulates that conversations facilitate generative, constructive, experimental and development speech and writing in the development of new ideas. The findings of the study also revealed the challenges encountered in the provision of using scaffolding to help children's language development. The problems include inadequately modelling the desired behaviours, strategies or activities because the teacher has not fully considered the individual student's needs, predilections, interests and abilities, full benefits not seen unless the instructors are properly trained, selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of learners and not knowing the learner well enough to provide the appropriate scaffold.

Based on the above findings, it can be inferred that the use of scaffolding to help children's language development has been affected by these challenges. In support of the above view, Gibbons (2006) asserts that applying scaffolding correctly and consistently can be difficult when the classroom is large and learners have various needs. Scaffolding can be applied to a majority of the learners but the teacher is left with the responsibility to identify the need for additional scaffolding. Furthermore, Halls et al. (2008) reiterated that full benefits of using scaffolding in learning cannot be seen unless the instructor are properly trained and that planning for and implementing scaffolds is time consuming and demanding.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the benefits of using scaffolding to help children's language development. The study revealed that scaffolding provides children with the opportunity to learn new words, has the potential to bolster children's language skills, helps a child move from simple language to more complicated language, helps provide the child with correct language usage repetitively and aids in capturing the infant's attention and maintaining communication. The study also revealed some challenges in using scaffolding to help children's language development. These include inadequately modelling the desired behaviours, strategies or activities because the teacher has not fully considered the individual learner's needs, predilections, interest and abilities, full benefits not seen unless the instructors are properly trained, selecting appropriate scaffolds and knowing when to remove the scaffold so that the learner does not rely on the support. Finally, the study concludes that "what the child is able to do with assistance today he will be able to do independently tomorrow".

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers of languages at all levels need to be adequately motivated and efforts need to be intensified to ensure proper professionalization of teaching. If so much is expected of them, then so much also should be given to them. Efforts must be made to ensure that best language learning materials go into the profession.
2. Language teachers should be exposed to sensitization programmes like seminars, workshops and conferences to broaden their intellectual horizon on the importance of scaffolding in language development.

3. Any modifications of the teacher's language and vocabulary should be discussed and approved by the educational team. The deaf educator and speech pathologist can provide the interpreter with information about what types of language and vocabulary may be difficult for the learner. The educational team should monitor these modifications to ensure that the classroom language is not made too simple.
4. The government and other stakeholders in language education should provide adequate instructional materials for language education from pre-primary to tertiary levels.
5. Language teachers should use scaffolding techniques to make their teaching learner-centered and activity-based.

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