Scaffolding in the Classroom: Identifying and Utilizing Scaffolding Techniques to Effectively Teach Independent Learning

Anthony Torchia

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Topic Focus

Scaffolding has largely been shown to be an ambiguous concept. Scaffolding itself was first defined by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) when they described it as a "metaphor to capture the nature of support and guidance in learning".

Scaffolding is seen as a fluid, interpersonal process in which both participants are active participants. Both participants actively build common understanding or intersubjectivity through communicative exchanges in which the student learns from the perspective of the more knowledgeable other.

Within the Washington State University PDEFE and TPEP, Scaffolding fits well into multiple Standards, notably 2. Differentiation, and 3. Instructional Strategies. However for the purpose of this project I intend to focus on instructional strategies as effective teaching practices are critical for helping students effectively meet their learning goals. More specifically, scaffolding is critical for allowing students to engage in critical thinking, creativity and collaborative problem solving.

The Gradual Release Model

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY

FOCUS LESSON Modeled Instruction — I do it (you watch)

Shared Instruction — We do it (together)

Guided Practice / COLLABORATIVE — You do it (I watch/guide)

Independent Practice / INDEPENDENT — You do it alone (Reflect)

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

Figure 1. The Gradual Release Model
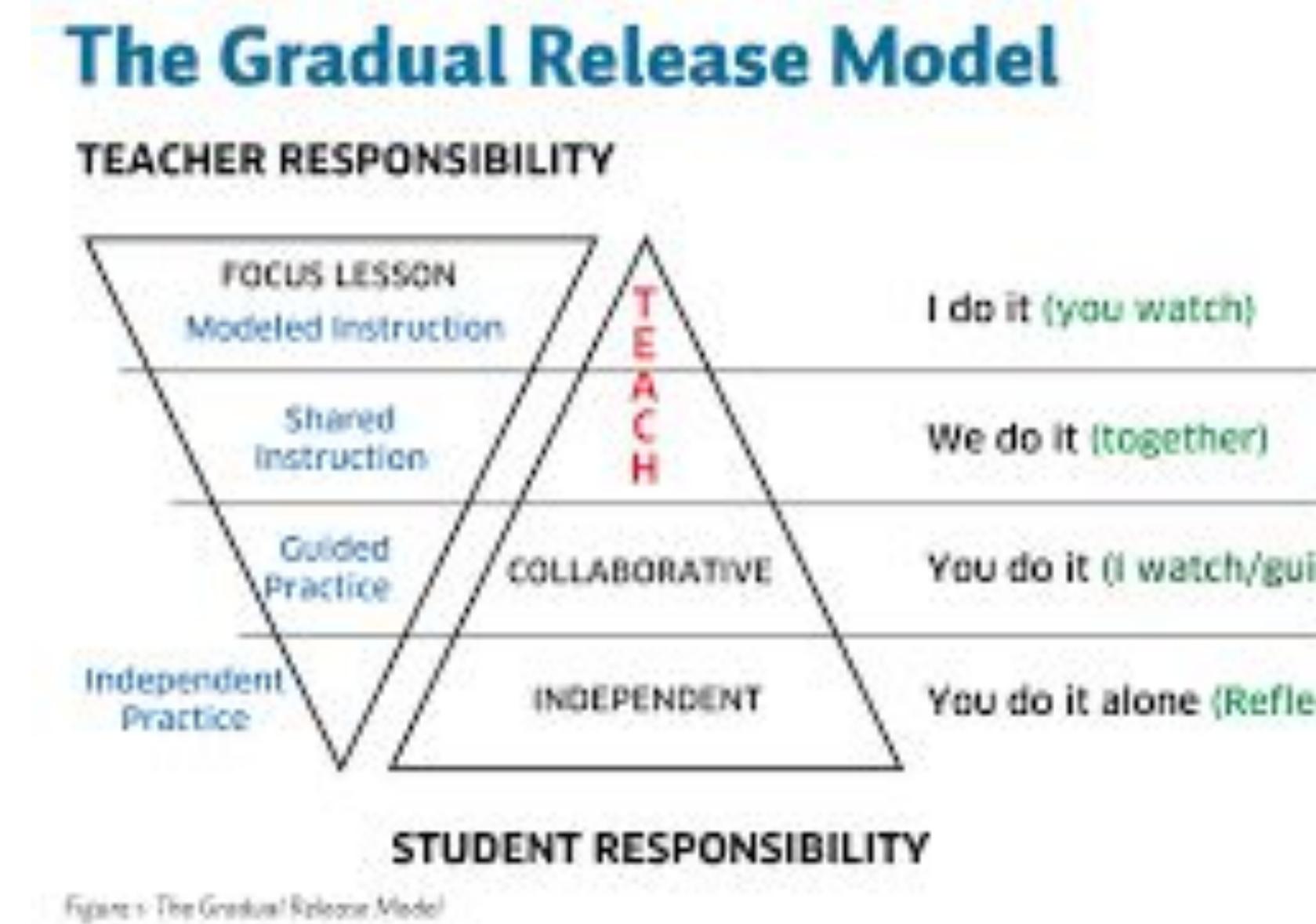
Rationale

A\So far, scaffolding has been shown to help students develop self-regulated learning skills. It also has been shown as a method to build prosocial motivation among students, which in turn improves persistence in completion of tasks (Ivcevic, p.4-5). Scaffolding prosocial motivations and feelings into a lesson has been shown to have a positive relationship with both time and effort that students use when completing activities (Ivcevic, p.4). In other words, research has shown that the more reasoning that students are provided with to care about the meaning of an activity or lesson, the more care students put into their learning. The question that I seek to discover with further research into the function of scaffolding in the classroom is to find the optimal setting in which to introduce scaffolds into student learning, and find the optimal method or type of scaffold to apply based on the task at hand.

Research

Research has determined that in helping students to develop deep knowledge (integration of new learning, facts and feelings with previous experience and knowledge), Hammond identifies two different categories of scaffolding that work best: 'designed-in' scaffolding and 'point-of-need' scaffolding (32). As the name of the former reveals, designed-in scaffolding is placed into learning activities as they are being designed and planned. This can occur at multiple points in the teaching-learning sequence, whether in creating physical materials for instruction or providing instruction itself.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development
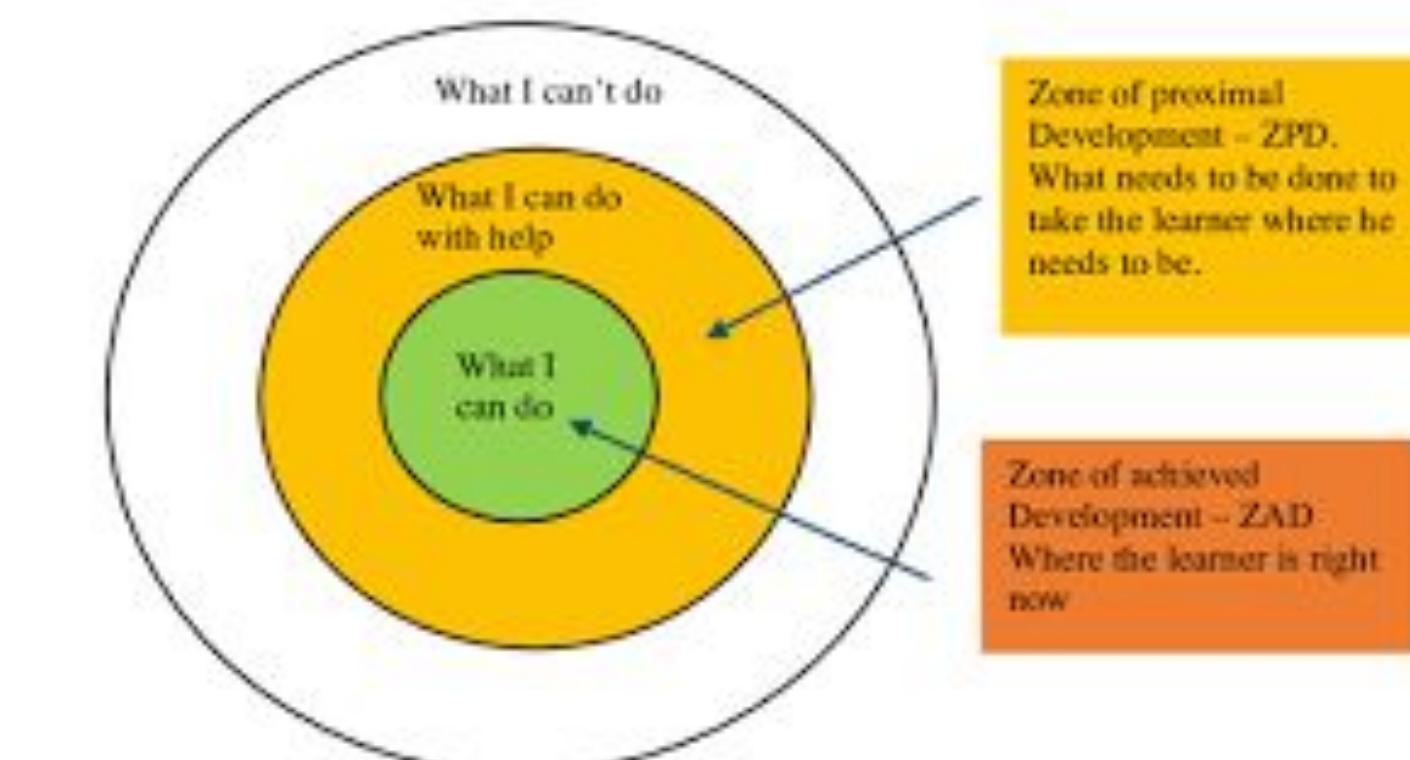
The second main category of scaffolding noted by Hammond occurs throughout the teaching of a lesson; point-of-need scaffolding is implemented by teachers to take students along a particular line of thinking/reasoning whenever the need arises. Point-of-need scaffolding includes improvisational or on-the-move actions such as setting up questions that cue specific responses, elaborating and redefining terms for students, repeating and recasting student remarks, and appropriation to transform information offered by students into new


Photo caption here.
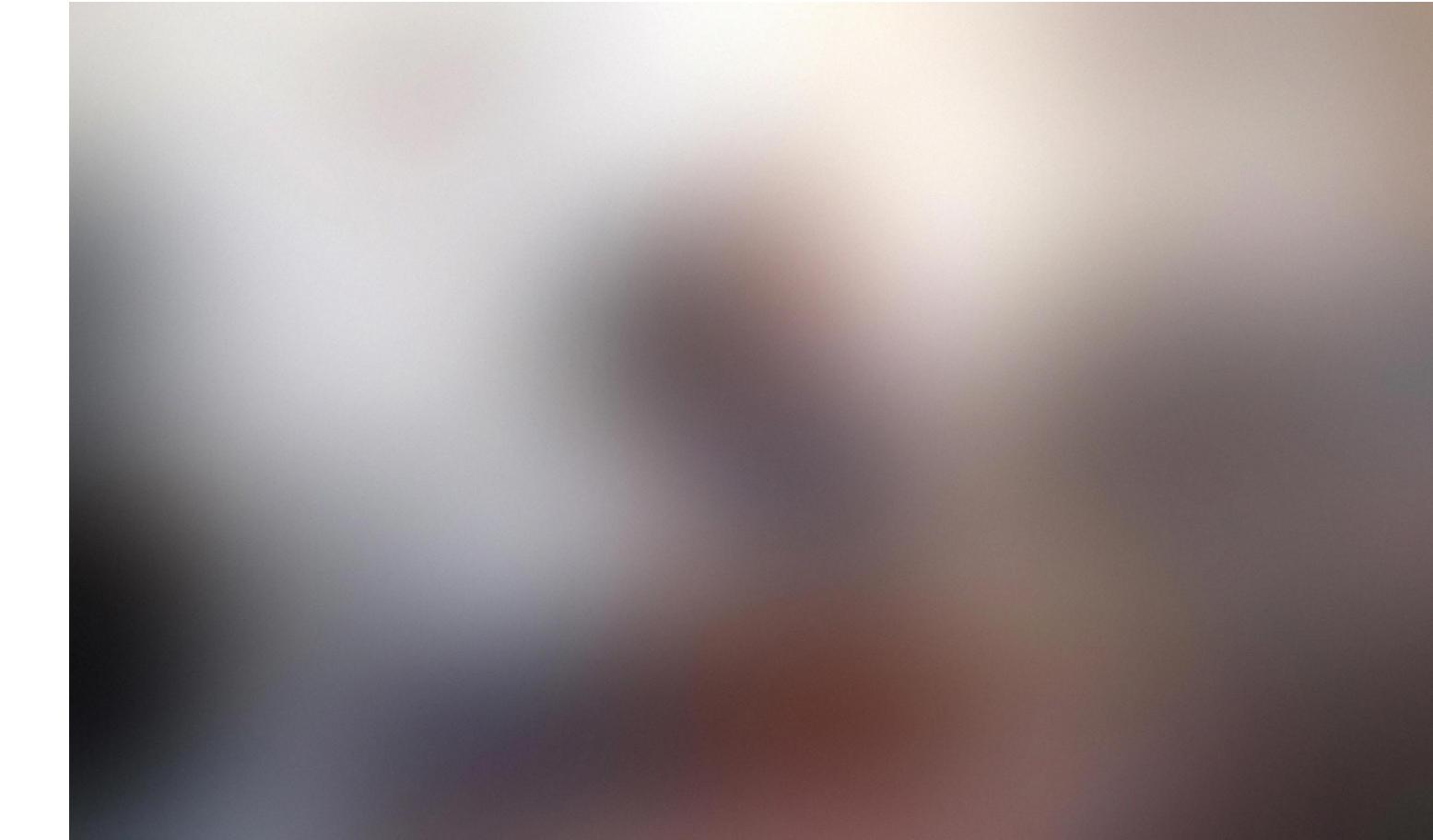
How will this Impact My Teaching?

- Good potential for reading activities

- Phonetic sounding for different words

- Word banks for reading — preparing and reviewing technical terms

-

- Vestibulum auctor in arcu.