

# **ANUPI Conference, 2007**

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Applying concepts of scaffolding to  
the teaching of reading

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# **What is scaffolding?**

How familiar are you with the term?

What does it mean to you?

# Scaffolding

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) developed the term *scaffolding* as a metaphor for the role played in learning through talk between learners and skilled others.

Skilled others have a role in the learning process by:

- making learners interested in the task
- simplifying the task, often breaking it into smaller steps
- keeping learners on track by reminding them of their goal

- pointing out what is important or showing learners other ways of doing parts of the task
- controlling learner frustration during the task
- demonstrating an idealised version of the task

*Too often human learning has been depicted as a paradigm of a lone organism pitted against nature – whether in the model of the behaviourists’ organisms shaping up responses to fit the geometrics and probabilities of the world of stimuli, or in the Piagetian model where a lone child struggles single handedly to strike some equilibrium between assimilating the world to himself or himself to the world. (Bruner, 1985: 25)*

# Theoretical Concepts and Principles

## Vygotsky

Zone of proximal development (ZPD):

*...the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (1978: 86)*

Key principles drawn from Vygotskyan theory:

- Individual learning takes place through interaction with others in social contexts.

- Language is fundamental to cognitive development as it is a tool for thinking and doing.
- Learning is mediated by skilled others who support learners in the tasks they undertake.
- Learners can achieve more learning with the support of skilled others than they can achieve alone.
- Learners move towards greater independence as their knowledge and skills increase.
- Teachers can gradually withdraw support as learners achieve success.

# Theoretical concepts and principles

## Bruner

Key principles drawn from Brunerian theory:

- Effective scaffolding is tuned to the needs of learners and constantly adjusted in response to what they are able to do.
- Support is gradually reduced as skills and knowledge are acquired.
- Learners are more likely to be successful when tasks are broken down into achievable parts.

- Demonstration and modelling are important aspects of scaffolding learning.
- Focusing continually towards the whole task and the goals to be achieved is central to effective scaffolding.
- Learners gain success with new tasks when they are located within formats and routines that are already familiar.



# Designed-in scaffolding (pre-planned)

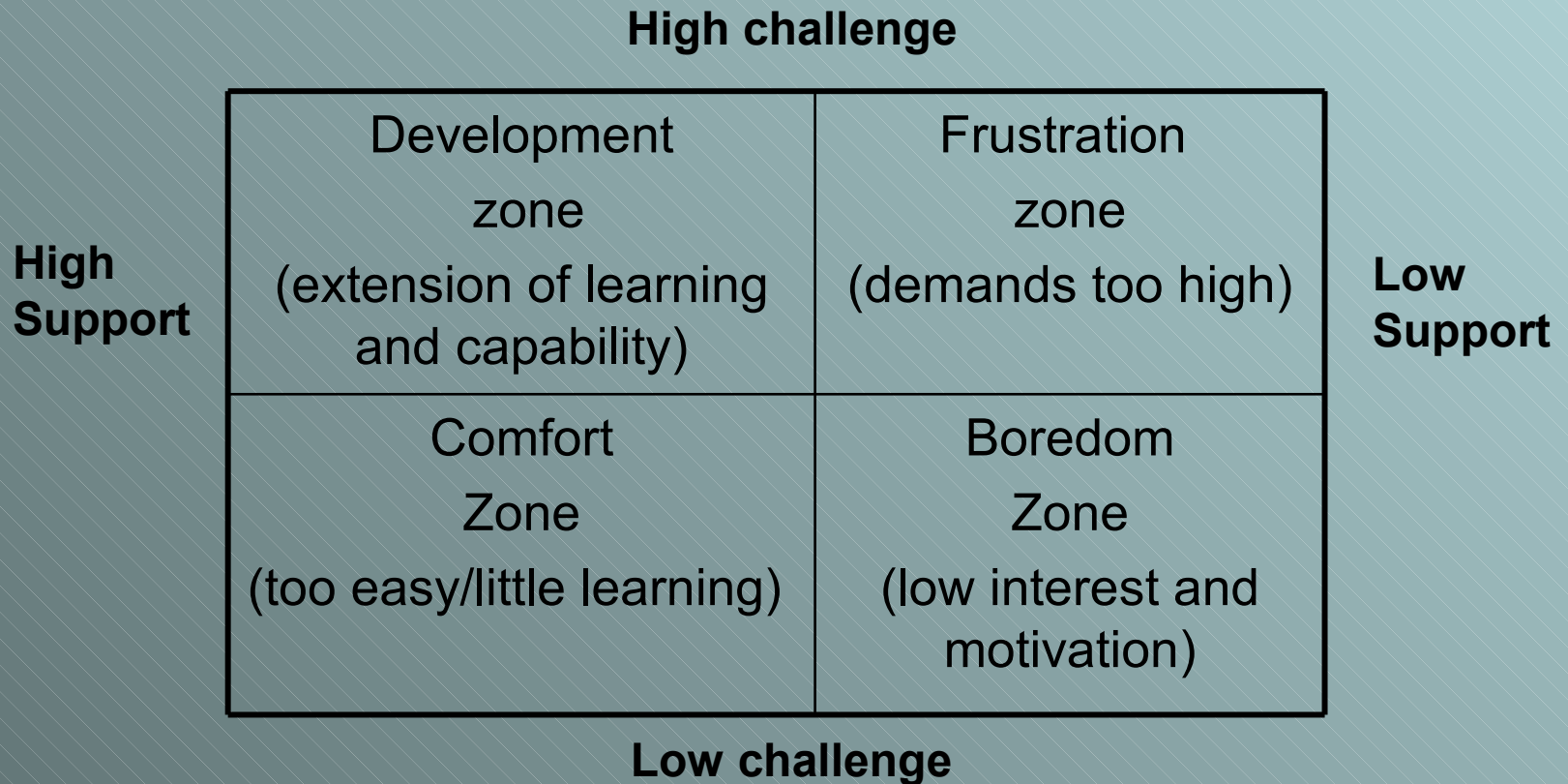
(Hammond and Gibbons, 2001)

- students' prior knowledge and experience
- selection of tasks and activities
- sequencing of tasks and activities
- participant roles (teacher/students)
- semiotic systems (classroom interaction, resources)
- mediational texts (materials/examples used to support learning)

# **Contingent scaffolding (moment-by-moment through interaction)**

- taking up student responses
- extending student responses
- linking interaction to prior experiences
- recoding (spoken or written or other meaning-based resources)
- increasing prospectiveness (leading students to next learning point)
- indicating to students how to self-correct

# A model of classroom support and challenge (Mariani, 1997)



Adapted from Mariani, L. (1997). Teacher support and teacher challenge in promoting learner autonomy. *Perspectives*, 23(2).

# The project

- Conducted for the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) Research Centre, Macquarie University, Sydney, 2003-4
- Funded by Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
- AMEP centre researchers:
  - Anne Burns, Macquarie University, Sydney
  - Helen de Silva Joyce, NSW Adult Migrant English Service
- AMEP teacher researchers:  
10 teachers from NSW, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania

- Key focus areas emerging from the research:
  - *learning-centred teaching* rather than *learner-centred* approaches that support learning and ensure learner success
  - *task-based* approaches that develop practical activities to support learning
  - *text-based* approaches that focus on whole texts as the ultimate goal of learning
  - *scaffolded* approaches – *built-in* and *contingent* scaffolding

# Scaffolding reading - built-in

Choose texts that are relevant to students' reading needs (for pleasure; study; work?)

Work towards whole texts, not parts of texts or sentence level

Select texts slightly above students' current abilities (high challenge)

Work towards *explicit* teaching of the context, topic and genre, sequence, meanings of the text through (high support)

# Scaffolding reading - contingent

Look for opportunities to link signs of students' new understandings to existing knowledge

Check students' responses and understanding of meanings continually

Affirm, extend and expand on students' contributions

Elaborate meanings beyond sentence level by defining, discussing and explaining structures and meanings

# Example of classroom sequence

## Step 1: Reading the story

- Teacher reads the story (listening for gist).

## Step 2. Reviewing the story

- Oral discussion about general meaning.
- Questioning for meaning (*Which part of the text tells about..? How does X feel about Y?*).
- Building language knowledge (*Which words tell you about the landscape?*).
- Leading questions (*What happened next? What did he do when he reached the top?*)



# Example of classroom sequence

## Step 3: Reading in groups

- Students read aloud in mixed-ability groups, (ask questions and seek clarification)
- Teacher facilitates group reading, provides reading for meaning strategies, and guides understanding

## Step 4: Writing the text

- Students write a synopsis in groups (collaborating, pooling ideas, scanning text, asking for clarification, recombining text elements)

# Example of classroom sequence

## **Step 5: Sequencing the text**

- Students work in pairs to sequence the cut-up synopsis (negotiating, rationalising decisions, re-reading)

## **Step 6: Revisiting the text**

- Students re-read original text individually
- Students retell the text to a partner
- Teacher links this text explicitly to others to be read next (same genre, different genre)

# References

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- Wood, D., Bruner, J., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17, 89-100.
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