

EFL CLASSROOM AND LEARNER'S PERCEPTION ON DIRECT TRANSMISSION SCAFFOLDING

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Abstract

This study explored the learners' perception on the use of direct transmission and scaffolding in the EFL classroom through a semi-structured interview. In this study, the constructivist view was narrowed to scaffolding. The method used by the higher education in Indonesia was still dominated by the situation where the lecturer acted as the knowledge provider. However, some lecturers have let go of the control in the classroom and give the opportunity for the learners to explore more. In this situation, the lecturers' job is to assist the students and provide help (scaffold) if it is necessary. This study also employed a pre-test and post-test as a part of triangulation data to see the result from another perspective. The findings showed that the learners claimed in understanding and remembering the lesson more in scaffolding. However, the test showed that the learner's score improved more in direct transmission.

Keywords: constructivist, direct transmission, EFL, scaffolding

Introduction

In the teaching and learning process, the teacher may have her or his own approach to help the learners to reach the aim of the lessons. When it comes to the approaches used by the teacher, Pressley et al. (2003) mentioned that there are two overarching approaches, direct transmission and constructivist approach related to the teaching processes. Direct transmission view is also seen as a teacher-directed approach in the classroom (Pressley et al., 2003). Meanwhile, constructivist view by Vygotsky (1896-1934) emphasizes the situation when the learners have to actively participate in acquiring knowledge (Bada, 2015; OECD, 2009). The method used by the higher education in Indonesia is still dominated by the situation where the lecturer as the one who delivers the material (Kurdi, 2009). In other situations, some lecturers have let go of the control in the classroom and give the opportunity for the learners to explore more. Group work is mostly used by the lecturers for the learners to learn and acquire the knowledge by themselves. While the learners do the task in a group, the lecturers' job is to assist the students and provide help (scaffold) if it is necessary. However, there are some lecturers who stick in the conventional way of teaching. Taking these phenomena into account, the question about the learners' perception about direct transmission and scaffolding used in EFL classroom appears.

Direct Transmission

Direct transmission is known as an old yet useful method in English Language Teaching (ELT) and mostly utilized in colleges (Shah & Saeed, 2015). It is also known as a teacher-directed approach in the classroom (Pressley et al., 2003). This concept shapes the teacher provides the well-structured and comprehensible knowledge, demonstrates accurate solutions for solving the problems, and maintains conducive atmosphere inside the classroom (OECD, 2009; Pressley et al., 2003). In this method, the sequence of the lesson is in order, starting with the explanation and demonstration, learners exercise activity, and feedback (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003). However, the important points of the material covered is based on the teacher's consideration (Reynolds & Miller, 2003). In the other word, there is a reassurance that the essential points will be delivered to the learners (Pressley et al., 2003). As the teacher has a deliberation in covering and arranging the content of the lesson, unrelated or irrelevant material can be avoided (Farooq, 2013) and the learners will not miss the important information.

However, in this method, the learners are passive (Haydey, Zakaluk, & Straw, 2010) as their role in this method is to get or receive the knowledge (Xu, 2012). As, it is also known as teacher-directed or teacher-centered approach in the classroom (Pressley et al., 2003), it shares the same condition wherein teacher-centered approach the learners are also positioned as a passive receiver and the teacher as the knowledge provider (Zohrabi, Torabi, & Baybourdiani, 2012) or the center in the classroom (Idris, 2016). There are some other downsides to direct transmission than making the learners passive. Bowers and Flinders (1990) mentioned that the discussion in this method often makes the learners bored and there is only one student interacting with the lecturer at a time (cited in Pressley et al., 2003).

In the study conducted by Shah and Saeed (2015) the majority of the teachers prefer to go with the traditional method of teaching despite it makes the learners passive and unmotivated as they see it as easier and safe method to be applied. On the other hand, the learners prefer the modern method of teaching where the opportunity for being more active involve more in the classroom discussion is higher (Shah & Saeed, 2015). For the language proficiency improvement, Zohrabi, Torabi, and Baybourdiani (2012) conducted a study which resulted in the significant improvement of the language proficiency under the teacher-centered learning despite the score is lower than learner-centered learning which shows a slight advancement. The same result appears in Ganyaupfu (2013) study where the learner's assessment score in teacher-centered learning shows a significant difference than the other methods.

Scaffolding

The constructivist view emphasizes on the learners as a party who actively gaining the knowledge on their own inside the classroom (Bada, 2015; OECD, 2009) as they are also required to explain their thinking (Pressley et al., 2003). This belief is also used as the root of the learner-centered approach where the learners are also having the responsibility in acquiring the knowledge instead of being passive (Idris, 2016). It is mentioned that the learners will absorb the knowledge best if it is found by the learners' self. In return, the learners shall be given time to think before the teacher will show or guide them on how a problem was solved

(OECD, 2009). Pressley et al. (2003) mentioned that the guidance provided by the teacher in this view is known as scaffolding.

Scaffolding is a theory of teaching strategy which is arisen from the constructivist Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in which it is related to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept (Hussain, 2012). ZPD refers to the distance between what an individual can achieve by oneself and what the individual can achieve with the assistance from others (Gibbons, 2015; Samana, 2013). Gibbons (2015) mentioned that scaffolding is not just a help which is given to the learners, but it is a specific help which leads the learners into a new mastery, notion, and extent of understanding. However, Pressley et al. (2003) stated that the process of guiding the learners to find the understanding takes more time than direct teaching.

Vygotsky's theory (cited in Santoso, 2010) emphasizes on the importance of social interaction for the learners to gain the meaning about something during the learning process and the source for the learner's mental process which comes from the social activities. Therefore, Vacca and Levitt (2008) asserted that in the classroom with a scaffolding, the interaction is not only between the teacher with the learners but also among the learners in order to complete the tasks which demanded to them.

A study by Alake and Ogunseemi (2013) shows that learners who are taught by using scaffolding proclaim a significant improvement in their academic achievement than the learners who are taught with the traditional method or teaching. In other studies related to scaffolding, scaffolding is claimed as unsuccessful or ineffective, especially during the interaction between the learners. Kayi-aydar (2013) stated that even though a low English proficiency learner is able to provide the scaffold for the peers, but it is seen as inefficient due to the domination problem in the process and the peers who are being less responsive. Similar case is shown by Samana (2013) as the learners with low English proficiency are not being able to manage the amount of the assistance, give a deeper explanation, and improve the learning like the scaffolding which is given by the teacher. These studies are also in contrast with Alake and Ogunseemi (2013)'s finding which indirectly stating about the success of scaffolding through the increasing of the learners' academic performance.

Method

This study was an exploratory research as it was designed to discover and gain insights toward a specific situation or phenomenon. In this context, it was to investigate the learner's perception of the use of direct transmission and scaffolding in the EFL classroom. However, the data related to the learners' perceptions on the benefits was supported by the result of pre-test and post-test which acted as the triangulation of the data.

The participants were 6 students from the first semester of English Department in a private university located in Jakarta. The selection was based on the consideration of having the less exposure of the English language through the lessons which used English as the medium of its instruction. The participants of this study were those who's EPT score under 500. It was due to the academic standard

set by the English Department in one particular institution for taking thesis and graduation requirement which is 500. The participants were divided into two groups, direct transmission (DT) group, and scaffolding (SC) group. There were 27 skills delivered in their respective designed class for five meetings with two hours for each session. In order to know the learners' perception of both direct transmission and scaffolding, the teaching strategy was reversed in the last meeting. In other words, the direct transmission group received scaffolding for the teaching strategy and the scaffolding group experienced the learning with the direct transmission. In this meeting, two additional skills were taught.

After the participants received the treatment, experienced both of the direct transmission (DT) and scaffolding (SC), also did the post-test, an in-depth interview was conducted to gain their perception on both of the direct transmission and scaffolding. The participants were scheduled to have a one-on-one interview and asked the guidance interview question which could be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Semi-structured interview questions guidance

Aspects	Questions
General Perspective	You have experienced both scaffolding and direct transmission, how do you think about them?
Efficiency (critical thinking, benefit, time)	Which one gives you more opportunity to learn more? Which one that you think have more benefits for you? What are they? In the context of time, which one is the most efficient to be conducted? And which one that is taking a long time? Explain.
Preference	Which one that you prefer? Direct transmission or scaffolding? Why?
Lesson comprehension	Which one that makes you understand about the lesson more? Explain.
Strength and weakness	What are the strength and weaknesses of direct transmission and scaffolding according to your experience?

Findings and Discussion

General Perspective

Four out of six participants were under the impression that scaffolding allowed them to be more active as they tended to explore and find the information on their own.

In scaffolding, it feels like we have to find out what we are going to learn, the teacher is only a facilitator, and we find out by ourselves what we know about this and that. (DT2)

Scaffolding is more fun since we have to be active in searching for the information. (SC3)

One participant asserted that scaffolding is better than direct transmission as it required them to think.

Scaffolding is better than direct transmission as it requires us to think. It makes me still remember about the material a bit. (SC1)

One participant stated that scaffolding as two ways of interaction, required them to think critically, and provided an opportunity to improve their speaking skill.

Scaffolding is two ways of interaction; it makes us thinking directly and critically. In SC we are also need to speak and if I have any wrong pronunciation, I can get it corrected. (DT1)

Five participants described the direct transmission used in the classroom positioned them to be the receiver when all of the knowledge came from the teacher.

In direct transmission we only receive and our brain is blank. I forgot already the material that uses DT. (SC1)

Direct transmission is like one way of teaching from the teacher and all the material (explanation) is from the teacher. (DT2)

Out of all answers, SC2 described that the use of direct transmission in the classroom provided more understanding due to the learning characteristic possessed by SC2.

Direct transmission makes me understand more because I'm the type that I have to be explained first for me to understand. (SC2)

Efficiency (Critical Thinking, Benefit, Time)

All participants stated that the classroom with scaffolding gave them the opportunity to learn more and activated their critical thinking as they were required to think in order to analyze a problem.

Scaffolding, because we are forced to be the focus in thinking and ability to analyze whether something is correct or not. If it is wrong, we have to find out the correct one. We are also forced to remember the things from the past (the use of background knowledge). (SC3)

Scaffolding, because we can be more active in answering the questions not just receiving the information, also we can do the analysis like seeing at which part that is wrong or the answer. (SC1)

All participants picked scaffolding as the one which provided them more benefit. Being active in acquiring the knowledge was mentioned as one of the benefits provided by the use of scaffolding in the classroom by half of the participants. However, three participants claimed that scaffolding made them remember the material of the lesson more.

Other than being active, it helps me to remember as well. (SC1)

In scaffolding, I can explore on my own. Also, we have to think about how to get the answer by trying to remember the lesson in the past. Because I make the effort to find the answer, it lingers more as well. (SC2)

In addition to the benefit of the use of scaffolding, two participants claimed to understand the material more with scaffolding.

Scaffolding, it is fun. It makes us learn more since we are more active and it makes me grasp the content of the material more. (DT3)

Scaffolding, because we are forced to think critically and it makes me understand more. (DT1)

One participant declared that he/she was able to explore and the class with scaffolding was not monotonous. These two aspects were seen as the benefit of scaffolding.

Scaffolding, because we are not limited to explore, not monotonous, we are forced to learn and based on the students' pace. While in direct transmission the limitation is set and we are just directed into that way. (DT2)

All participants agreed that the class with scaffolding was taking more time than the class with the direct transmission. Three participants reasoned that they took more time to do the thinking process in the class with scaffolding.

Scaffolding takes more time because we are required to think and the thinking process cannot be fast. (SC3)

Direct transmission is more efficient (in the matter of duration) because it is directly taught. While in scaffolding, we need to think and discuss first something. (DT2)

Preference

Four participants preferred the scaffolding since it was not monotonous, required them to be active, and gave them the opportunity to do more exploration.

Scaffolding, for the same reason (makes me active). (SC3)

Scaffolding, because it is not monotonous and we can explore more. In DT I feel like there is a limit and I cannot explore more. (DT2)

SC3 also picked direct transmission added with the other two (DT1, SC2) for it did not require them to think or talk. Yet, DT1 and SC2 claimed that they remembered the material more in the class with scaffolding.

I prefer direct transmission because I do not have to speak at all and if I do not understand, it would not be shown. But, in scaffolding, I grasped the content more quickly and since I have to speak, it makes me remember about it. (DT1)

Direct transmission, it's because I don't have to make effort to think. But in this context scaffolding makes me understand and remember more. (SC2)

Lesson Comprehension

Five participants pointed out that the scaffolding provided them with a better understanding and claimed that the information lingered on more with the use of scaffolding.

Scaffolding, since being forced to think at the moment makes me remember more, while in direct transmission we only listen to the explanation and it makes me sleepy. (DT1)

Scaffolding, because it lingers more in our brain than the one that being explained. If we find things ourselves, it will be like we remember it somehow. (SC3)

DT2 claimed to be able to grasp the knowledge quickly with the direct transmission. Yet, the scaffolding was mentioned to make the knowledge lingered on more than the ones used the direct transmission.

For the matter of understanding and understand it fast it will be with direct transmission because it is all directly given. But, scaffolding is more memorable since we find out things on our own, so I remember it more. (DT2)

Strengths of Direct Transmission

Four participants appeared to agree that the strength in the class with direct transmission was in its time efficiency. During the treatment, the skills taught by using the direct transmission finished sooner than the one with the scaffolding.

It is faster in the matter of time. (SC1)

For the time, it's more efficient and we can get the answer right away. (DT2)

DT1 and DT3 mentioned that the strength in the direct transmission fell on the concept where the knowledge was coming from the teacher. However, they stated a different reason regarding that concept.

Only listening to the explanation, I think it is the strength because I don't have to do or speak anything. (DT1)

Because everything is from the teacher, so we gain the right information and only need to memorize it. (DT3)

Weaknesses of Direct Transmission

Two participants argued that the weakness of direct transmission was related to the information. It appeared to be easily forgotten when it was delivered by using direct transmission.

For the material, it's not really clear, like it is just passing by. (SC1)

The material can be easily forgotten. (SC2)

Meanwhile, two participants mentioned that direct transmission positioned them as a passive learner.

It makes us less active. (DT3)

The students are passive. (SC3)

For the rest of the participants, one commented that the direct transmission made the learner felt bored. Another participant stated that the class with direct transmission limited the learner to explore.

It makes me bored. (DT1)

It is monotonous and there are some limitations for us to explore. (DT2)

Strengths of Scaffolding

Two participants remarked being active as the strength of the scaffolding. Meanwhile, three participants were interested in how they were able to remember and understand the material more in the class with scaffolding.

We are forced to think straight at the moment and be active. (DT1)

It is fun and helps me to remember. (SC3)

The strength of the scaffolding stated by one participant was that it provided more opportunity to explore.

It's not monotonous and the opportunity to explore is bigger. (DT2)

Weaknesses of Scaffolding

Five participants agreed that the weakness of the scaffolding fell on the time spent for the learners to gain the information.

It takes more time. (SC2 & DT2)

It requires a longer time. (SC1)

Out of the five participants, two added that the confusion the learners faced when they were trying to explore as the weakness of scaffolding.

It takes more time. Also, since it is like more independent, I don't know which one is right and wrong. There are some moments when I feel confused about scaffolding. So, it's like we need, must, to be directed more to know the right answer. (DT2)

Time and the information we have at the first may not correct and still need a direction and help more from the teacher to know the correct one. (DT3)

One participant claimed being forced to think and speak in the class with scaffolding as a weakness due to the reluctance of being asked to utter the answer or the thought out loud.

I have to think and speak. (DT1)

In summary, scaffolding is generally preferred by the learners than direct transmission for its opportunities and benefits. There are some claimed benefits from scaffolding that are not found in direct transmission. Those benefits are the opportunity to be active in the classroom and to explore the knowledge more in scaffolding. It is also claimed by the participant that those benefits make them remember about the lesson and material more.

As a part of the data triangulation, the participants' pre-test and post-test result were used to provide a different insight of this finding related to the benefit that the learners gained from direct transmission and scaffolding. In order to see the improvement of the participants in their respective class, the score which was being compared here was taken only from the 27 skills in 27 questions. The result could be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Pre-test and post-test's mean in direct transmission and scaffolding

	Ls	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre- and Post-test Mean
	DT1	7	14	
DT	DT2	10	17	6.67
	DT3	2	8	
Mean		6.33	13.00	
	SC1	9	16	
SC	SC2	10	12	4.00
	SC3	5	8	
Mean		8.00	12.00	

Table 2 reveals that the learners' English proficiency score test improve more in direct transmission than in scaffolding. The mean of pre-test and post-test recorded for scaffolding is 4.00 which is lower than direct transmission which is 6.67.

It shall be taken into consideration that this improvement may be caused by another factor, for instance, the exposure of English from other classes, out of the context of this study. As an English department's students, the participants of this study also required to attend some courses with English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI). Therefore, the exposure they receive from those courses may also affect the improvement of the learners' English proficiency in this study. In order to know whether English exposure from other classes with EMI will contribute to the learners' improvement in this study, a further research related to this matter shall be conducted.

As a part of the finding in this study, this result is consistent with the finding by Zohrabi, Torabi, and Baybourdiani (2012) and Ganyaupfu (2013) who reported that the learners' achievement in direct transmission or teacher-centered method shows a significant improvement than the other methods. The lower mean of scaffolding than direct transmission is in contrast with Alake and Ogunseemi (2013)'s study. In their study, scaffolding is reported to proclaim the learners'

significant improvement in their academic achievement in scaffolding compared to the traditional method or teaching. However, the role of the English language in the place where the study was taken place needs to be put into a consideration. The studies which direct transmission show more improvement was taken place in the country where English is as a second and foreign language. In the opposite, Alake and Ogunseemi (2013)'s study was taken place in the country where English is their official language.

There are several possible reasons for why the improvement in the classroom with scaffolding is lower despite it is favored by the learners. Similar to the reason of ineffectiveness proposed by Kayi-aydar (2013), the domination of one particular learner in the process may be one of the reasons also found in this current study.

Excerpt 1

SC3: Okay. This one as, more than, as... is it? Is this right?
SC4: Omit the subject and the be-verb.
SC3: This one is here... More than...right?
SC1: This one... yes yes yes yes yes..
SC3: Yes, I'm right?
SC1: Yes yes yes
SC3: Yas yes yas yes
SC1: Just stick it

Excerpt 2

SC1: Next, skill 46
SC3: Adjective
SC1: Yes. Use basic adjective and adverb correctly. The first one is adjective, write adjective. Adjective, uh..the- the formula. Subject plus to be plus adjective
SC4: Noun, subject plus to be plus adjective plus noun
SC3: Uh-huh
SC1: The second one is without noun, just subject plus to be plus adjective
SC3: There is two formula?
SC1: Yes

Excerpt 3

Instructor : So? Why is it?
SC1 : Omit the adjective clause subject and the be-verb.
Instructor : Yes, that's right. Next?
SC1: Although she feels a bit sick, the student will attend the class, becomes although feeling a bit sick, the student will attend the class.
Instructor:Why?
SC1: If there is no be-verb, omit the subject and change the verb to the –ing form.
Instructor:Yes

The three excerpts above are taken from different meetings of the classroom with scaffolding. It can be seen in Excerpt 1 that during the group work activity the basic user learners (A1 and A2) rely on the independent user learner (B1) whose English language proficiency score is the highest among them. In another group activity in Excerpt 2, the independent user learner dominates the group discussion and dictates the basic user learners. During a discussion with the teacher in Excerpt 3, only the independent user learner actively joins the discussion. Excerpt 1 proposes another reason for the lower improvement in the classroom with scaffolding especially in the context of students-students interaction. It is compatible with Samana (2013) that the learners with low English proficiency are not being able to manage the amount of the assistance and give a deeper explanation to the peers during the group work.

Correspondingly, the higher improvement in the classroom with direct transmission in improving the learners' English proficiency score is conceivably due to the situation where the teacher is the center of the classroom. The learners are provided with all the important information about the lesson. It is stated by Pressley et al. (2003) that the advantage of direct transmission is the reassurance of the essential points to be delivered to the learners. Moreover, when the teacher has a deliberation in avoiding unrelated or irrelevant information (Farooq, 2013) that the learner might not be able to do during the group work.

In the final analysis of this study, the learners' English proficiency score improve more in the classroom with direct transmission than scaffolding. It is despite the fact that scaffolding is more favored by the learners. All things considered, the learners face some obstacles in the classroom with scaffolding unknowingly. It starts with the dominating problem during the classroom activity and the situation in which the peers tend to rely on the dominant one. In dealing with this matter, the teacher needs to encourage the learners to involve more in the group activity and motivated them to be more active in gaining the information. In other words, the teacher needs to embolden the learners to not completely rely on the more knowledgeable one.

More importantly, the learners may not be ready for the scaffolding in which they are expected to explore more on their own and the help of the peers. To this extent, the learners are used to be taught with direct transmission or teacher-directed the classroom where the teacher has a big involvement in the classroom and each of the teaching and learning process.

Conclusion

Scaffolding is preferred by the learners as it provides several advantages that are not found in the direct transmission. However, the learners' English proficiency score increase more in the direct transmission. Scaffolding is asserted to give more opportunities for the learner to be active and able to explore more in the classroom. Even though it is more time consuming than the direct transmission, the lesson taught by scaffolding is claimed to be absorbed faster and lingered longer in the learners' mind than the ones taught by direct transmission. Nevertheless, the learners' improvement score in the classroom with scaffolding turns out lower than the improvement score in direct transmission. There are some possible reasons for

the result of the learners' English proficiency score improvement. The learners encounter some problems unknowingly despite they enjoy being taught by the scaffolding. The problems include the domination problem in the classroom and the learners tend to rely on the more knowledgeable learner to complete the tasks. As correspondingly, the higher improvement on direct transmission in improving the learners' English proficiency score is conceivably due to the situation where the teacher delivers all the important and essential information to the learners as the knowledge provider.

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