# Application of Scaffolding Teaching Method in the Course of Introduction to the English-speaking Countries

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**Abstract:** *Constructivism is an educational theory which aims at improving students' creative ability. Scaffolding instruction is the key element of the constructive instruction model and it is a mature teaching method. The course of introduction to the English-speaking countries is a comprehensive course combining the knowledge of the major and the skills, which is to make the students have a general idea of the geography, history, economy, politics and other aspects of the English-speaking countries. The teacher can make use of the Scaffolding instruction to provide the students the studying scaffold. Through the scaffolding instruction, the teacher can help the students finish the construction of knowledge in their future study.*

**Keywords:** Constructivism, Scaffolding Instruction, Introduction to the English-speaking Countries, Construction of Knowledge.

## 1. Introduction

Constructivism teaching theory is a student-centered teaching theory that emphasizes students' active construction of knowledge and the guiding role of teachers. This theory provides new ideas and guiding directions for teaching practice, and helps cultivate students' innovative and practical abilities. Scaffolding instruction is an important part of the constructivism teaching model. Scaffolding instruction is a learner-centered teaching method based on constructivism learning theory. It emphasizes that in the teaching process, teachers should provide students with appropriate, small clues or prompts (i.e. "scaffolds") for learning, so that students can make use of these scaffolds, gradually discover and solve problems in learning, master the knowledge to be learned, improve problem-solving ability, and eventually become an independent learner. Scaffolding instruction is a relatively mature teaching method. It is student-centered and uses learning elements, such as context, collaboration, and conversation, to give full play to students' initiative, enthusiasm, and innovative spirit, and ultimately achieve the goal of enabling students to effectively construct the current knowledge they have learned. In recent years, many courses in foreign language teaching in Chinese universities have been studied and practiced under the guidance of scaffolding instruction, and the teaching effect has been greatly improved compared with traditional teaching methods.

## 2. Application of Scaffolding Instruction in the Course of Introduction to the English-speaking Countries

Introduction to the English-speaking Countries is a course with specific nature and objectives. It is the basis for English major students to learn other language basic courses and English literature and translation courses in senior grades. It helps students expand their language and cultural knowledge, cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness, and improve students' language application and cross-cultural communication skills. This course aims to enable students to understand the geography, history, economy, politics and other aspects of major English-speaking countries, and understand the cultural traditions, customs, social life and other related situations of major English-speaking countries. This course improves students' professional cultural quality, language skills and communication skills and it also focuses on cultivating students' reading and expression skills by studying the background information of major English-speaking countries. It is usually offered in the third year, when English majors have solid basic knowledge and independent learning ability. Teachers can use scaffolding instruction to help students build learning scaffolds in the teaching process. By building multiple implicit and explicit scaffolds, teachers can help students complete the construction of knowledge in subsequent learning. The following points can be noted in the application of scaffolding instruction in the teaching practice of Introduction to the English-speaking Countries.

### 2.1 Guiding Students to Build Example Scaffolds Together

Example scaffolds are common learning scaffolds. Teachers can skillfully use example scaffolds to impart key knowledge of the course according to the characteristics of the course of Introduction to the English-speaking Countries. The specific approach is that the teacher first roughly divides the teaching contents of a semester into several parts, and then divides the students into several study groups, and lets the students build example scaffolds together in the form of a team. Through specific teaching practice, we may find that creating an official account of this course is very popular with students. The teacher can ask each group to edit the important contents of a chapter in an article in advance according to their understanding of the teaching contents in the form of homework one week before learning this chapter. Before that, the teacher can show examples of the works of previous students, or give some examples to the students. Good examples will guide students' learning in terms of technology and themes, and it also can avoid lengthy or ambiguous explanations and help students achieve their learning goals

more quickly. With the teacher's demonstration guidance and the cooperation of the team, the articles edited by students in the account not only highlight the key points of the learning contents, but also are often comparable to professional accounts in terms of editing and typesetting. Students can have a deep understanding of the knowledge of this course they have learned by building their own example scaffolds. At the same time, the gap between the actual level of students solving problems independently and the potential level of solving problems under the guidance of teachers is quickly narrowed with the reasonable help of teachers or other students. The reasonable help here refers to building appropriate example scaffolds with students in the nearest development zone during teaching. In addition, the teaching of English major itself should also be open. Cooperation and communication between teachers and students, and between students will have an important impact on the process of students' knowledge construction. The distinctive feature of scaffolding instruction is that there are many interactive links and more participation of the students. Students may provide multiple open answers to the same question. Teachers need to analyze and evaluate these answers, guide students to make their own choices, and finally obtain knowledge construction. This is actually the joint construction of learning scaffolds by teachers and students.

## 2.2 The Skillful Combination of Question Scaffolding and Suggestion Scaffolding

The so-called problem refers to the unknown state that people face in a certain situation in order to meet a certain need or achieve a certain goal. It is the most common scaffold in the teaching process. Experienced teachers will provide such scaffolding naturally and flexibly in the learning process of students. At the same time, in studying some specific topics, "scaffolding problems" are often more structured than "framework problems" and pay more attention to details and operability. When teachers anticipate the difficulties that students may encounter, it is necessary to design problem scaffolding appropriately. Through the teacher's inspiration and guidance, students can develop the habit of independent exploration and analysis by themselves, so as to play their role as the subject of learning. In the process of constructing the knowledge, it is inevitable that problems such as inconsideration will occur due to the experience and knowledge deficiencies of the students, so the introduction of background knowledge and heuristic questions have become the most commonly used scaffolding construction methods for teachers. In the teaching process, teachers can focus on the relevant theories and provide the most powerful scaffolding for students. For example, when teaching the chapter on the British general election, class and race, the teacher can design some related questions in advance based on the current reality in the UK, so that students can think about the knowledge they have learned in the process of finding answers. When students encounter difficulties in independent exploration or cooperative learning, teachers can make appropriate suggestions to facilitate the smooth progress of learning. Compared with the problem scaffolding, the suggestions of the suggestion scaffolding are less systematic and logical, but they are more straightforward and often point out the key to the problem directly.

In specific teaching practice, we can let students play the role of teachers and teach a certain chapter in groups. Students summarize the relevant contents they will teach according to the textbooks and materials proposed by the teacher, make a speech outline, and clearly tell the teacher and other students about the contents they will introduce in class. The important knowledge and related materials involved in the speech should also be prompted in their presentation. Before teaching, the teacher should build a question scaffold for the contents to be taught by the students. In this way, students will naturally introduce the important contents of the course to other students by finding materials related to the teaching contents and carefully designing their teaching plan. In this process, the teacher should give appropriate suggestions on teaching style, teaching contents and other aspects according to the teaching state of the students at any time, so as to facilitate the smooth progress of the teaching and achieve the expected results. In order to achieve better teaching results, the students in the study group can also make full use of multimedia and other teaching equipment to create a real English language environment by making video, audio, PPT and other forms during teaching, introduce students into certain situations, fully reflect the principle of combining audio-visual with thinking and the optimization principle of media selection and combination, and increase the fun and participation of the teaching form. The skillful combination of question scaffolding and suggestion scaffolding is a very good teaching method for senior students. It can not only provide a role model for senior students to learn, but also improve student's overall level of language through questions and discussions between students and teachers. With the help of the scaffolds carefully set by the teacher, on the basis of sharing the results of collaborative learning, students will have a relatively comprehensive and correct understanding of the concepts they have learned, that is, they have completed the initial construction of the knowledge they have learned. The effect of such knowledge construction is very desirable.

## 2.3 The Guiding Role that Teachers Should Play in Scaffolding Instruction

Teachers play a vital role in guiding scaffolding instruction. By setting clear learning goals, building learning scaffolds, providing timely support, encouraging students to explore independently, conducting evaluation and reflection, teachers can effectively promote students' all-round development and improve their learning effects and autonomous learning abilities.

In the scaffolding instruction process under the theory of Constructivism, the working state of teachers is different from the previous lecture-based teaching method, but this does not mean that teachers are completely in the position of bystanders, they are in the position of guides. Teachers need to design a learning path for students to follow. This path should clearly show the key concepts and skills that students need to master, as well as the logical relationship between them. Through clear learning goals and learning tasks, teachers can help students understand what they are going to learn and the purpose of learning. When students encounter learning difficulties, teachers should provide necessary support and guidance in a timely manner. This support can be direct knowledge explanation or proper guide to the students

to use learning strategies or resources. As students' understanding and mastery of knowledge improve, teachers should gradually reduce the support provided and allow students to solve problems more independently.

Scaffolding instruction mainly adopts the teacher-student interaction method, which is one of the most prominent features of scaffolding instruction. The classroom is not only a place for teachers to ask questions and explain, but also a stage for students to ask questions freely and participate in explanations. After the presentation of the student, the teacher and students can discuss together, comment on the presentation. In this teaching mode, the teacher is no longer the only speaker. While encouraging students to self-evaluate the presentation or encouraging other students to discuss with each other, the teacher plays the role of asking questions, guiding and summarizing. The teacher is the designer and provider of the scenario in classroom teaching. Teachers can use multimedia to create specific scenarios, guide students to actively participate in practical learning and communication activities, and let students make use of the knowledge they have learned to deal with new problems in real situation.

Scaffolding instruction puts forward more requirements for teachers to prepare lessons. It requires teachers to fully understand the level of the students, make quick and accurate judgments on various situations that may occur in the classroom, adjust the classroom teaching plan in time, etc. Scaffolding instruction requires teachers to have professional knowledge in their own research fields, have a deeper understanding and preparation for the subjects they offer, and always pay attention to the problems that students have in the cognitive process. At the same time, teachers should impart relevant theories and the knowledge to students in the process of students' independent learning. Teachers should also actively communicate with each other on their teaching method and teaching contents, and constantly improve their own professional knowledge.

In the teaching practice of the course to Introduction to English-speaking Countries, teachers can use various forms, such as problem scaffolding, situation scaffolding, and resource scaffolding, to guide students to actively explore, analyze and understand the social and cultural phenomena of English-speaking countries. Through problem scaffolding, teachers can raise a series of progressive questions to stimulate students' thinking and guide them to deeply study the knowledge. By using situation scaffolding, teachers can create real or simulated situations related to the society and culture of English-speaking countries and allow students to learn and experience in the situation; By using resource scaffolding, teachers can provide rich learning resources and reference materials to support students' independent learning and in-depth exploration. At the same time, teachers should also continuously enrich, develop and improve the scaffolding teaching model under the guidance of constructivism theory in their teaching practice. This includes flexibly adjusting the form and contents of scaffolding according to the characteristics of students to make it more in line with the results of students' learning, paying attention to the learning progress and feedback of the students, adjusting teaching strategies in a timely manner, and providing students with more personalized support, and constantly exploring and innovating new forms and methods of scaffolding instruction to adapt to the continuous development and changes in foreign language teaching.

## 3. Conclusion

Under the guidance of the theoretical model of scaffolding instruction, the flexible application of commonly-used scaffolding forms to the teaching practice of Introduction to English-speaking Countries is an effective way to improve students' familiarity and understanding of the social and cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries, and it is also the key to cultivating students' innovative ability. Scaffolding instruction emphasizes student-centered teaching method and helps students quickly learn the new knowledge by building a progressive learning scaffold, thereby forming a systematic cognitive framework. Constructivism scaffolding teaching provides great theoretical support and practical guidance for the teaching practice of Introduction to English-speaking Countries. By flexibly using scaffolding forms and constantly enriching and improving teaching models, we can effectively improve our foreign language teaching, make students have a better understanding of the knowledge of English-speaking countries, cultivate students' innovative ability and autonomous learning ability, and lay a solid foundation for their future development.

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