

Teachers' Scaffolding Practices in Teaching Reading Comprehension at Eight Preparatory Schools in East Gojjam Zone: Grade 11 in Focus

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Abstract

This study examined English teacher's scaffolding practices on students' reading comprehension skills in East Gojjam Zone Preparatory Schools, Ethiopia. Forty five preparatory English teachers participated in the study using purposive sampling technique. Questionnaire, interview and structured classroom observation checklists were used as data collecting instruments. The quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, means and percentages whereas the qualitative ones were meta-explained. The quantitative and qualitative data indicated that English teachers had good awareness on how to practice their scaffold works in teaching reading comprehension. However, the actual classroom observation revealed that most English teachers (65%) did not practice their scaffold works while teaching reading comprehension. Moreover, other teachers (35%) did not give equal attention for all stages of reading while practicing their scaffold works. Therefore, it is recommended that training should be given to English language teachers that promote their practices on teaching reading lessons in English classrooms properly. Besides, it is recommended that a detailed future investigation and intervention be made in the area.

UNIT ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English is used as the language of international communication. As result of this, the ability to speak, read and comprehend the language has become prominent for students in the world. Proficiency in English facilitates global communication in education, business and vocational fields (Bockare, 2002; Krashers, 1993; Oller, 1970) and greatly enhances EFL students' learning experiences and opens up a lot of career opportunities for them.

However, students are in problem of comprehending a text written in English. This may be due to various reasons such as lack of motivation, insufficient knowledge of vocabulary or unsatisfactory knowledge of grammar (Whiting, 1992). To minimize such drawbacks students can be presented with a kind of instruction which is intentionally and carefully scaffold, through which they can be independent and self-regulated learners (Vygotsky, 1986). According to (Locastro, 2001), many studies have referred to scaffolding to explain the important role of teachers, adults, or more knowledgeable peers in guiding students' learning and maximize learners output to gear not only language proficiency and development but also cognitive gains.

Sociocultural theory (SCT) has provided a very useful framework for the study of language interaction in the classroom. This theory focuses on the social factors in the process of learning stating that learning is not an individualistic process. Rather it needs to be learned in a social context with the help of capable peers, parents or expert teachers (Vygotsky, 1978). Accordingly, individuals are not isolated entities but indispensable members of their socio cultural community where the fusing robust inter relation between the members and the community culminates in reciprocal and complementary configuration of another. Within language classrooms, learning takes place the goal-directed interactions between the teachers and the learners where the pivotal role of scaffolding comes to light.

With social constructivism, Vygotsky's theory of learning has offered a reconstructing model of learning and has projected a new perception in to teaching/learning a language. Vygotsky (1978; 1986) considers all knowledge social in nature and believes that learning occurs in a context of social interactions leading to understanding. In this theory learning is formed effectively through the zone of proximal development (ZPD) in social interaction with others.

There is a consensus among scholars that the notion of the ZPD is at the heart of the concept of scaffolding. Scaffolding is an instructional technique where by the teacher or a more capable peer models a desired learning strategy or a task and/or provides the necessary help, in order to enable students to perform a skill or master a concept that they could not do without assistance, and then gradually shift responsibility to the students. Scaffolding is considered as an important instructional tool because it support students' learning, helps them understand that they can both teach to and learn from others, helps them reorganize information in a way that makes sense to them, reduces learning ambiguity, and thus increase growth opportunities

According to Kham wan (2007), academics feel familiar with the concept of classroom interaction between the teacher and students. However, the scaffolding practices in teaching reading comprehension through the three phases of reading have received very little attention. The students are not familiar with the scaffolding from

peers, and they are not trained to scaffold their peers because they don't receive many opportunities for the different phases of reading among peers. In line with this, there are very few studies mentioned in teachers' scaffolding practices in EFL classroom contexts in Ethiopia.

Reading comprehension is one of the most important skills that need to be fostered by EFL teachers to enable learners cope with more sophisticated texts and tasks and deal with them efficiently, quickly, appropriately and skillfully (Ur, 1996:147).

Mastropieri and Scruggs (1997 cited in Hoffmann, 2010: 18) support the idea of the importance of reading comprehension as an academic skill which includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and finally, comprehension.

Comprehension is "reading with complete understanding of the text. It involves knowledge of vocabulary, understanding of sentence structure and syntax, and ability to interpret the intentions of the writer"(Flowers, 2013: online).

A reader's background knowledge can influence reading comprehension, i.e., life experiences, educational experiences; knowledge of how texts are organized rhetorically, etc. Incorrect background knowledge may hinder comprehension (Nunan, 2003:74).

So, reading and comprehension are closely interrelated in that students cannot recognize and interpret the written material without comprehending and understanding it. For this, the teachers' main concern is to help students comprehend the text without resorting to translation into their native language (Rivers, 1981: 259).

Comprehension strategies are "routines and procedures that active readers use to better understand what they read" (Dole, 2012: online). Interpretation, integration, critique, inference, analyses, connecting and evaluating ideas in texts are all reading comprehension strategies learners may use to comprehend a text (Teaching Comprehension Strategies, 2010: 3).

A variety of comprehension strategies are used by good learners simultaneously and sometimes specific strategies are applied deliberately to help them in their comprehension specially with challenging texts (ibid.). However, the use of reading comprehension strategies can be considered effective if, as Bassiri (2012: 34) states, learners are provided with appropriate assistance accordingly they can attain a goal or engage in a practice or task that is beyond their reach. This assistance is known as scaffolding which is a "Vygotskian metaphor for teacher support of a learner through dialogue, questioning, conversation, and nonverbal modeling, in which the learner attempts literacy tasks that could not be done without that assistance" (ibid.: 31). Scaffolding for reading instruction can be examined under three headings: pre-reading, during reading and post-reading activities.

Graphic organizers are "visual representations of information from a text that depict the relationships between concepts, the text structure, and key concepts of the text"(Miranda, 2013:100). They provide means of teaching students how to recognize text structures. That is to say, students better comprehend texts when they are shown visually how the text information is organized (ibid. 101). As a tool of scaffolding, graphic organizers can be utilized throughout the reading process, including pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading.

This paper will attempt to re-sharpen the focus on scaffolding, and demonstrate how it entails a very specific kind of support which does not simply teach students the technical skills necessary to complete their assignments, but which stimulates a critical and independent orientation to meaning-making within the context of their disciplines, and assists students to achieve well beyond their current "zone of capability" (Watson, 2007). We (researchers) maintain that it is the nature of support that is crucial to the notion of scaffolding. Support is valuable to students only when it leads to development, and ultimately, to student autonomy.

1.2 The Context of the Research Study

Due to the importance of scaffolding in facilitating language learning, this study focused on the scaffolding practices used in the Preparatory schools of East Gojjam and aims to investigate the various types of scaffolding practices on the level of classroom reading comprehension lesson in the Ethiopian EFL context.

It is already known that English in Ethiopia is taught as a compulsory course to students enrolled in the Preparatory School program. The difficulty of the levels increases as the students advance through the year. Students enrolled in the first courses in universities (EnLa 1011 & EnLa 1012) often complain that the course materials are too difficult, particularly in the areas of writing. For this reason, such grade levels (preparatory schools) will be selected for closer study because it is clear that there is an urgent need for teaching strategies that facilitate learning English at this level. This is especially so given the increasingly important role of English, both during and subsequent to students' academic studies (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Therefore, the use of strategies such as scaffolding help learner's move to a higher level of understanding and success in English language learning and are of paramount importance (Alyami, 2008).

Scaffolding is critical, especially in developing various English skills (macro & micro). This study aimed to investigate the scaffolding techniques that are employed by teachers at the EFL classes in teaching reading comprehension. Moreover, this study specifically aimed to investigate the scaffolding techniques used with various activities as students in preparatory level. This piece of research also aimed to ascertain whether or not

scaffolding techniques promote independent learning.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia, EFL learners are “word by word” readers and their level of achievement in reading comprehension is low (Chanyalew & Abiy 2016). Also, many instructors who teach this skill stated that most of our EFL learners are passive readers who rarely follow effective reading comprehension strategies to be good readers. Moreover, some teachers of reading comprehension focus on translation in giving meanings of new words depending on a wrong idea that the only strategy required in teaching reading comprehension. No further and advanced support is given to their students. Therefore, EFL teachers have to adopt various supports and give suggestions for appropriate reading comprehension strategies in order to help students overcome their problems in comprehending texts and using various useful reading comprehension strategies.

According to Graham and Bellert (2004, cited in Teaching Comprehension Strategies, 2010:2), learners' comprehension may be hindered due to the inappropriate and inflexible use of reading comprehension strategies by them. Thus, they highlighted that the "explicit instruction in comprehension strategies can be an effective way to help them overcome difficulties in understanding texts"(ibid).

Furthermore, the possible positive or negative impact of the scaffolding strategies employed on teaching and learning remains as yet unknown. This study aims to investigate which scaffolding techniques are the most frequently used in EFL classrooms and the effect of the observed scaffolding techniques on preparatory levels in the Ethiopian EFL context. More specifically, it aims to examine scaffolding works employed in relation to the teaching of reading comprehension.

The need to implement a scaffold will occur when we realize a student is not progressing on some aspect of a task or unable to understand a particular concept (Long, 1996). Although scaffolding is often carried out between the teacher and one student, scaffolds can successfully be used for an entire class. Even if scaffolding can be used to optimize learning for all students, it is a very demanding form of instruction.

In the beginning of language learning process, teachers guide students and gradually, students internalize what teachers have taught and become independent in learning. Therefore, in what way do teachers take part in helping young children's meaning negotiation process or support their interaction to advance language learning experience becomes an important area for second language educators to explore.

EFL learners who are enrolled in Debre Markos University (Freshman level) often complain about the instructional material being too difficult. This being the case, they need support in the form of scaffolding to overcome such problems in preparatory schools. It is unclear however, whether teachers at the preparatory schools actually use scaffolding techniques in their lessons and whether or not the teachers' implementation of the scaffolding techniques is effective in assisting students' learning.

In line with this, the researchers also have their own experiences as a teacher in preparatory schools. While teaching English, they have frequently used less support that cannot make students to be independent learners. In other words, our previous experiences in teaching English focused on less scaffolding practices. This clearly shows that the researchers' views of scaffolding practice were not reflected. This is because of lack of awareness as to how to practice scaffolding, lack of understanding in identifying appropriate scaffolding strategies, and unable to identify the actual and perceived scaffolding practices in EFL classrooms. The researchers have also faced problems in providing appropriate supports in relation to scaffolding when, how and why to EFL learners. Hence, the present study intends to examine the teachers' scaffolding works in teaching reading comprehension in the Ethiopian EFL context.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The main objective of the study was to investigate the teachers' scaffolding practices on teaching reading comprehension in EFL classrooms.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were stated as follows:

1. To examine EFL teachers' awareness about the importance of scaffolding.
2. To investigate scaffolding techniques used by teachers with EFL learners.
3. To explore the effects of scaffolding on EFL learners' reading comprehension.
4. To investigate EFL teachers' major problems in practicing scaffolding.

Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What nature of awareness do English teachers hold about the importance of scaffolding?
2. Which kind of scaffolding strategy is employed most in EFL classrooms?
3. What are the major effects of scaffolding practiced in EFL classrooms in teaching reading comprehension?
4. What kinds of problems do teachers face in their scaffolding practices?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Little research has been conducted concerning scaffolding practices in the Ethiopian EFL context. This study examined the teachers' scaffolding practices who were currently teaching English in grade eleven in East Gojjam. The study will be helpful for creating better ways while practicing scaffolding in EFL classrooms. This study was also intended to play an important role in the development of teacher and student awareness regarding the key role played by scaffolding in students' success in learning English. It also aims at assisting teachers to develop their use of scaffolding to support students and to ensure their successful performance, especially with demanding tasks that are at the limit of or beyond students' proficiency levels. Furthermore, it is proposed as a tool to help program planners design language programs tailored to enhance students' language proficiency, and to enable professional development units to provide necessary training courses to teachers to improve their classroom performance. It will also be worthwhile to EFL teachers and other educators in serving as a valuable reference material to conduct further study.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The research was conducted at eight Preparatory schools in East Gojjam Zone. This was true for the following reasons. For one thing, the area was new to conduct this research in that it hadn't got such chances before. Secondly, the geographic proximity of the schools to the researchers' residence helped them to get any of possible supports. Another reason was that Preparatory School teachers are more experienced in the researchers' belief to get relevant information while investigating the teachers' scaffolding practices in teaching reading comprehension in EFL classrooms.

1.7 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Scaffolding: It is a strategy used by teachers to help their students to become more independent learners during reading comprehension lesson, i.e., to perform the reading comprehension tasks independently.

Reading comprehension: It is a process related to deriving meaning from written language (including books and other forms of written language) and constructing meaning from written language.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study stands on a survey conducted in a purposive sampling method. If the questionnaires, interviews, and observations were supplemented with experimental works, we could have got more immune responses. The questions might have been more detailed and personal interviews could be conducted for students and other stakeholders.

UNIT TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 What Is Scaffolding?

Scaffolding is defined as the "strategy used by the teachers to facilitate learners' transition from assisted to independent performance" (Sukyadi and Hasanah, 2013:4). Another definition is given by Bradley and Bradley (2004: online) as the "contextual supports for meaning through the use of simplified language, teacher modeling, visuals and graphics, cooperative learning and hands-on learning".

Scaffolding is a teaching learning strategy in which the teacher and learners engage in a collaborative problem-solving activity with the support and guidance of the teacher to enable learners become increasingly independent (Richards and Schmidt, 2002:466).

The operational definition is that scaffolding is a strategy used by teachers to help their students to become more independent learners during reading comprehension lesson, i.e., to perform the reading comprehension tasks independently.

2.1.1 Scaffolding in Theory

Vygotsky (1978) is a pioneering theorist in psychology who focused on the role of society in the development of the individual. His main concern is that social interaction, i.e., to interact with the child from "birth onwards" is essential in the cognitive development" (Attarzadeh, 2011:4). Learning or cognitive development is the result of scaffolding in social interaction of the individual community, i.e., scaffolding brings the opportunities for the individual to learn actively from others, receive help in mutual interactions and construct new knowledge; this represents the principle of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Hosseini, 2008: 187-188).

According to Piaget's theory of constructionism, the ZPD should be "maximized through the help of active learners with peers and teacher"; whereas, according to Vygotsky's theory of social constructionism, scaffolding is "temporarily provided and it is gradually removed bit by bit as the learners become more competent independently" (Sukyadi and Hasanah, 2013:5). Later, scaffolding has been developed by Bruner (1986) to support a child in carrying out an activity (Attarzadeh, 2011:4). That is to say, there will be a close attention to the conversational partner, asking open-ended questions or comments to encourage learners speak, interpret or expand comments (Horwitz, 2008:32). Also, it involves setting up "temporary supports, provided by capable

people, that permit learners to participate in the complex process before they are able to do so un- assisted" (Ediger, 2001: 166).

In the educational setting, scaffolding may include models, cues, prompts, hints, partial solutions, think-aloud modeling and direct instruction (Hartman, 2002 cited in Van Der Stuyf, 2002:3). Therefore, this strategy is expected to be helpful in overcoming the specific problems the learners have already displayed in reading comprehension.

Let us start by looking at the term ‘scaffolding’ itself. Literally, scaffolding is something placed around buildings, thus enabling the builders to access the emerging structure. As soon as the building can support itself, the scaffolding is removed (Gibbons 2001:13).

The term has also been taken up as a metaphor in educational research (Mercer 1994:96). Wood et al. (1976) were the first to apply it to describe the nature of parental tutoring in young children’s language development (Gibbons 2001:14). Besides its initial use in the context of parent-child scaffolding, the metaphor has later on also been taken up in the context of classroom interaction, where it portrays the assistance teachers provide for their students to help them to accomplish a task they would not have been able to solve on their own, so that they will eventually be enabled to complete such tasks alone (Mercer 1994:97). It is this kind of scaffolding – often called “instructional scaffolding”.

As to the theoretical underpinnings of instructional scaffolding, they can be traced back to Vygotsky’s learning theories (Gibbons 2001:20), that is his sociocultural theory and his concept of the “zone of proximal development” or “ZPD” (Vander Stuyf 2002:6). According to Vygotsky, learning is socially and culturally based (Mercer 1994:92). Thus, it is not an individual process but a social one and can therefore only occur in the interaction between individuals (Gibbons 2001:20). He also came up with the notion of the “ZPD” or, in other words, the difference between what learners can do without any help and what he or she can do with the assistance of more capable peers or under adult guidance (Meyer 1993:42-3).

Having discussed the term “scaffolding” as well as its theoretical underpinnings, let me now consider some features that are crucial to instructional scaffolding: One important feature is the teacher support. It should be timely, that is provided at the point of need, and temporary (Meyer 1993:47). Apart from this, extending understanding is another feature. The term signifies that the teacher is able through his support to extend what his learners know (Gibbons 2001:15). Furthermore, macro and micro focuses are an important point: The tasks chosen by the teacher should always serve curriculum related goals (Gibbons 2001:17-8). Other features are the appropriateness of the instructional level, dialogue and non-evaluative collaboration (Meyer 1993:47-9).

2.1.2 Scaffolding in Practice

According to Mercer (1994), there are several scaffolding techniques. First, the teacher can set particular themes and elicit responses to draw the learners along a certain line of reasoning (Mercer 1994:99). One way to do this is to pose a follow-up question after the student has given a response instead of just saying “right”, which would end any further discussions. Hence, the learner is required to engage in further talk by giving extended or reformulated answers. Thus, he or she can do lots of things with the teacher’s support by absorbing new information into his or her existing understanding (Sharpe 2001:52).

Another way to draw the students along a line of reasoning is by extending or reformulating their answers, thereby creating a “section summary” or a “met statement” serving as a hook for the students (Sharpe 2001:53). Moreover, the teacher can cue responses, for instance through the form of his or her questions (Mercer 1994:99) or by referring to shared experiences (Sharpe 2001:45).

Other scaffolding strategies are the elaboration and refinement of the requirements of an activity and the use of “we” to show that the learning experience is shared by the teacher and his or her pupils (Mercer 1994:99). The techniques of offering explanations and inviting the students to participate in class are some other techniques mentioned by Hogan and Pressley (1997).

Additionally to these techniques, Sharpe (2001) also discusses some scaffolding strategies usually used to help students do develop technical vocabulary. Among these is the repetition as well as the recasting of student remarks, which means that the teacher acknowledges the answer but then modifies it so that it is technically more appropriate. Finally, there is also appropriation, that is the transforming of the student’s answer by taking up the general idea behind it and offering it back in a technically more appropriate way (Sharpe 2001:49).

The main purpose of scaffolding instruction is to break information up into chunks of information that can be more easily learned doing so allows instructors to naturally support their students’ absorption of the information. With scaffolding instruction, students are able to master skills or ideas that are required for further learning of a certain concept.

Breaking up large lessons into smaller bits allows you as the teacher to see which students are having trouble and with which concepts. If a student is struggling on a particular chunk of new information, an instructor may briefly backtrack to make sure the student has a proper grasp on relevant background+d information (i.e., their scaffolding). Whether by reviewing a lesson chunk with the whole class or by providing an individual with tools to better understand the information, teachers have the opportunity to provide more

support to students not yet ready to move on to the next building block of the larger lesson.

As students demonstrate their comprehension of lesson chunks, you begin to remove support from already-mastered concepts and introduce new concepts. This process is repeated until a whole unit, book, or concept is mastered by your students and they are able to work without the supports in place. Scaffolding instruction is much easier to see in practice.

2.2 Reading Comprehension

Reading is essential to a person's life, especially to learners as this serves a key to wisdom and unlocks the gateway of imagination, pleasures, and glimpse of the world. Reading is an active process in which readers interact with text to reconstruct the message of the author and give meaning based on their own experiences (Clerigo et. al., 2016).

The definition of reading has moved beyond decoding printed symbols and recognizing words, thus, reading is a process of constructing meaning to a written text. It is a dream of any teacher that every student may acquire knowledge, skill, and understanding to combat the challenges of life in order to meet the global demands. Through the teaching of reading, knowledge in different areas can be ascertained. We can safely say that reading is the backbone in learning Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and other subjects (Davis et. al. , 2016).

Reading is the "ability to comprehend the thoughts and feelings of others through the medium of written texts"(Mousavi, 2012:604). Every reader may read for pleasure and information. For this, in teaching the reading skill, EFL teachers try to help their students enjoy and obtain information for language study (Frisby, 1970: 208).

In construction terms, scaffolding is the additional structure built onto another to make some improvement or repair possible. Imagine the planks and pipes attached to a house that is being repainted. Without the scaffolding, the painters would not be able to perform the necessary work on the building.

Scaffolding is a process that supports and improves the performance of students before, during, and after reading. Graphic organizers, pictures, and charts can all serve as scaffolding tools. All of them can help; guide and shape students' thinking when they apply them, i.e., students can discuss, write an essay, or use them with the difficult reading texts and new challenging information (Abdul-Majeed, 2015).

Scaffolding is the term given to the provision of appropriate assistance to students in order that they may achieve what alone would have been too difficult for them. Visual scaffolding is support that includes images and words that can be seen as well as heard. Visual scaffolding is an excellent way to provide comprehensible input to ESL students so that not only will they learn the essential subject content but also they will make progress in their acquisition of English.

Şahan (2012:3) highlights the significant role of reading comprehension strategies to comprehend a text. He (ibid) states that "students who are equipped with sufficient and effective reading strategies employ them correctly and appropriately to comprehend the text. Thus, the good reader is a strategic reader and he knows how to approach the text". Garner (1987, cited in ibid.) defines reading strategies as "generally deliberate, plan full activities which are undertaken by an active reader many times to remedy perceived cognitive failure, and facilitate reading comprehension".

A reader probably is unaware of the strategies s/he is using while reading. Reading requires effort and paying attention to reread and reflect. Sometimes when a passage is not clear, a reader may stop, think about it and then read on to see how understanding grows. This process has been described as "extracting and constructing meaning" (Introducing Comprehension Strategies to Adult Readers, 2013: online).

Harris and Hodges (1982:266) define reading comprehension as the "linguistic process of reconstructing the intended message of a text by translating its lexical and grammatical information into meaningful units that can be integrated with the reader's knowledge and cognitive structures".

Another definition is given by Richards and Schmidt (2002:443) as "perceiving a written text in order to understand its contents". This understanding is called reading comprehension. Reading comprehension can also be defined as the "process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language."

Operationally, reading comprehension is defined as the interactive process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of writing.

Scaffolding is justified as a form of prompting the learners to read based on their existing schema. The Vygotsky's theory propels a connection of meaningful learning experiences, where learners'construct their own meanings, in a more constructivist approach of teaching.

2.3 Reading Comprehension Strategies for English Language Learners

According to Richard and Schmit (2002:515) strategies are "procedures used in learning, thinking, etc. which serve as a way of reaching a goal. In language learning, learning strategies are those conscious or unconscious processes which language learners make use of in learning and using a language".

Strategies are also defined as “specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information” (Brown,2007: 119). The operational definition is that strategies are specific actions, steps or procedures used to accomplish either learning or teaching goal during a lesson.

When scaffolding is done correctly, students are encouraged to develop their own creativity, motivation and resourcefulness (Vacca, 2008). When a new building is constructed the builder uses scaffolding on the outside of the building to give the builder access to the emerging structure as it is being created. When the building is able to support itself, the builder removes the scaffolding. Like the builder the classroom must provide essential but temporary support to their students. This temporary support will assist students to develop new understandings, new concepts, and new abilities. As students develop control of these abilities, the teachers need to withdraw support and only provide further help for extended or new tasks, understandings, and concepts.

In the classroom, scaffolding is a process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning. When scaffolding is done correctly, students are encouraged to develop their own creativity, motivation, and resourcefulness. As students gather knowledge and increase their skills on their own, fundamentals of the framework are dismantled. At the completion of the lesson, the scaffolding is removed altogether; students no longer need it (Lawson, 2002)

Comprehension is the goal of reading, but it can be the most difficult skill to master, especially for English Language Learners (ELLs). ELLs often have problems mastering science, math, or social studies concepts, for example, because they cannot comprehend the textbooks for these subjects.

ELLs at all levels of English proficiency and literacy development will benefit from improved comprehension skills, which allow them to read more accurately, follow a text or story more closely, identify important events and concepts in a text, master new concepts in their content-area classes, complete assignments and assessments and feel motivated to read in school and for pleasure.

There are a number of ways to build ELLs' comprehension skills. Often, standard strategies that teachers use in mainstream classrooms are a good starting point- they just need to be tweaked with ELLs' language and academic needs in mind. The strategies that are part of three main approaches: building background knowledge, teaching vocabulary explicitly, and checking comprehension frequently.

1. Build Background Knowledge

Draw on students' existing knowledge. Students may already possess content knowledge that they cannot yet demonstrate in English. Look for opportunities to make associations between students' experiences and new content. Allow students to use their native language with peers for a quick brainstorm to discover what they know about a topic before presenting their ideas to the whole class.

2. Teach Vocabulary Explicitly

Choose the vocabulary that your students need to know in order to support their reading development and content-area learning. Provide student-friendly definitions for key vocabulary.

Give students practice with new words: Ensure that your students can: Define a word; Recognize when to use that word; Understand multiple meanings (such as the word "party"); and Decode and spell that word.

Incorporate new words into discussions and activities: For students to really know a word they must use it— or they will lose it. Use new words in class discussions or outside of class, in other contexts such as on field trips. Give the students as many opportunities to use and master the new vocabulary as possible.

3. Check Comprehension Frequently

Use informal comprehension checks: To test students' ability to put materials in sequence, for example, print sentences from a section of the text on paper strips, mix the strips, and have students put them in order.

The following are some suggested ways that teachers can improve student learning by using scaffolding in their lessons (Vacca, 2008).

1. Establish continuity from one task to the next, and, if necessary, repeat some tasks with variations. Most of all make sure that the tasks are connected to one another according to the literal, interpretive, and applied levels of thinking.
2. Provide contextual support for the learners by encouraging them to explore, access, and discuss the content that they are learning using a variety of different available resources.
3. Establish rapport with the students and encourage mutual engagement among the learners. Motivate them to discuss the content with non-threatening participation and practice in a positive sharing classroom environment.
4. Adjust the task procedures depending on actions, contributions, and discussions of the learners.
5. Observe carefully the learners' readiness to take over increasing parts of the tasks and then handover the role and responsibility of completing more rigorous tasks to the learners as their skills and confidence with the content increase.
6. Establish a flow and balance with the skills and challenges of the tasks and make sure that the learners are focused on the tasks at all times and that they are respectful of one another when they are answering questions and discussing the content.

Robb (2003) presents many ideas for using informational texts and artifacts (trade books, letters, newspapers, magazines, or textbooks) in the classroom. The author shows teachers how to engage in responsive teaching and how to scaffold student learning from text. Robb examines and refutes the following four assumptions common to content area reading that: Textbooks are the main information resource; Lecture and copying notes are great ways to teach new information; and Review questions at the end of each chapter help students study and determine what they understand.

Robb further suggests that excellent comprehension instruction happens if teachers follow a three-part lesson framework-Getting Ready to Learn, During Learning Instruction, and After Learning Instruction. In addition she maintains that through lesson plans and vignettes from classroom experiences students become active learners of meaning. The author also maintains that each chapter should conclude with Pause and Reflect, a time for each student to reflect on classroom teaching practices. This strategy, Robb maintains, reinforces the relationship between that reading is reasoning have with each other. This Show Me, Help Me, and Let Me scaffolding strategy suggested by Robb and used in with the Civil War lesson was designed to give a gradual release of responsibility from teacher modeling to student independence as students become more proficient at constructing meaning from the materials.

The following are a number of scaffolding strategies: modeling, bridging, contextualizing, and schema building, representing text and developing metacognition.

1. Modeling: means “a learning process in which a person observes someone’s behavior and then consciously or unconsciously attempts to imitate that behavior” (Richards et al., 1992:233). It is according to Roehler & Cantlon (1997 cited in Bikmaz et. al, 2010:27) instructional activity which includes think aloud modeling, talk aloud modeling and performance modeling that shows how learners should think and act within a given situation.

When using the Read Aloud/Think Aloud strategy, teachers should initially use shorter passages and gradually build towards longer pieces of literature so students will be more likely to remain engaged in the reading and not become frustrated by the number of words or length of text. Each student should have a copy of the text to follow along with the teacher. During the Think Aloud portion, the teacher may offer both verbal and written responses to what was read, having the students make notes of their own from the discussion their copies of the reading. As students become more proficient, they will be able to ask questions and use critical thinking.

2. Bridging: “This calls for activating and building on knowledge that students already have, i.e., going from the known to the unknown. Students can make connections of the new concepts or behavior to previous learning. Then, they can show how the new material is pertinent to their live” (from Scaffolding Strategies, 2014: online).

3. Schema Building: It refers to clusters of meaning that are interconnected, i.e., how knowledge and understanding are organized. It is essential for teachers to building students’ understanding through helping them to see the connection of the new information with their pre-existing structures of meaning through a variety of activities. For example, a teacher may ask students to preview the text, noting heads and subheads, illustrations and their captions, titles of charts, etc. (Walqui, 2006: 173).

4. Developing Metacognition: Metacognition is defined as “the ability to monitor one’s current level of understanding and decide when it is not adequate. It refers to the ways in which students manage their thinking, and it includes at least the four aspects: (1) consciously applying learned strategies while engaging in activity; (2) knowledge and awareness of strategic options a learner has (3) the ability to choose the most effective one for the particular activity at hand monitoring, evaluating and adjusting performance during activity; and (4) planning for future performance based on evaluation of past performance” (ibid.).

5. Previewing: “Preview is a strategy to activate students’ prior knowledge, to facilitate their predictions about what they will read, and to generate interest. Preview consists of two activities: (a) brainstorming and (b) making predictions” (Bremer et al., 2002: online).

6. Self-monitoring: “is an important metacognitive tool for improving reading comprehension by developing the student’s internal dialogue or self –talk” (from Comprehension–Fix-up Strategies).

7. Summarizing: “is how we take larger selections of text and reduce them to their bare essentials: the gist, the key ideas, the main points that are worth noting and remembering” (from Strategies for Reading Comprehension Summarizing, 2012: online).

8. Use Graphic Organizers: Visual aids, including graphic organizers, can be used throughout the reading of a passage or story. 'Visuals' is a term often used for students who learn better by seeing things in action rather than simply reading them. Graphic organizers are also good tools to use to keep students engaged in the reading and assess their comprehension as they navigate through the text. Graphic organizers for young children should be kept as simple as possible so that the students' focus does not shift from the primary purpose, which is to understand what she is reading. Drawings, graphs, oral interviews, posters, and portfolios are just a few ways that students can demonstrate understanding as they are beginning to develop their reading and writing skills in English.

2.4 The Three Stages of Teaching Reading Comprehension

Broadly speaking, there are three stages in teaching reading text: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. In each stage, we need to involve students in different activities. Generally, in the first stage we set a scene for reading by relating the text with learners' knowledge of the world, next we involve students in extensive and extensive task in the second stage and finally we engage them in text related activities in order to relate the text with their experience. Doff (1995) states that in the pre-reading stage, we do three things: first we present some of the new words from the text, give a brief introduction to the text and eventually present one or two guiding questions. These all, help students giving them some idea what to expect, increase their interest and make them want to read the text, give the students a reason to read and finally lead them towards the main points of the text (Wilhelm et. al. 2001).

Similarly, during while reading stage, first we ask very easy questions which demand only extensive reading and slowly we move to difficult activities trying to make them read intensively. This simple to complex order holds learners' interest alive and they understand the text successfully. Likewise, in post reading stage teacher encourages students to express their opinions and make them share their experiences relating them with the reading text. This is production stage where learners are free to express what they feel after reading particular text. In this way, every stage has some activities, which all as a whole, help in developing reading proficiency in learners (Doff, 1995; Celce-Murcia, 1991; Neyman, 2002; Wilhelm et. al. 2001).

2.5 The Importance of Scaffolding

In the special education classroom, scaffolding is a process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning. When scaffolding is done correctly, students are encouraged to develop their own creativity, motivation, and resourcefulness. As students gather knowledge and increase their skills on their own, fundamentals of the framework are dismantled. At the completion of the lesson, the scaffolding is removed altogether; students no longer need it (Lawson, 2002). Walqui (2002) maintained that scaffolding can be thought of as three related pedagogical scales: (1) providing a support structure to the students to enable certain activities and skills to develop. (2) Carrying out of particular activities in class. (3) Providing assistance in moment-to-moment interaction.

Fournier and Graves (2002) use the example of training wheels on a bicycle example of scaffolding. The training wheels are adjustable and temporary and they provide the child with the support the she or he needs while learning to ride a two-wheeler. Without the training wheels learning to pedal, balance, and steer all at one time becomes very difficult, if not impossible for the child. Like the training wheels, scaffolding-aids the child to learn concepts in a supportive, directed, purposeful guided fashion.

McKenzie (1999 cited in Van Der Stuyf, 2002:5) summarizes that the importance of scaffolding by saying that scaffolding:

1. Provides clear direction and reduces students' confusion concerning the anticipated problems that students may encounter. In addition, it develops step by step instructions, i.e., explain what a student must do to meet expectations.
2. Clarifies purpose which means it assists the students to realize the reason and the importance of doing a certain task.
3. Keeps students on task by providing pathways (the designated tasks) for them. It enables the students to decide the path (task) and the things that must be explored along it without wandering off the designated task.
4. Clarifies expectations and incorporates assessment and feedback: examples of exemplary work, rubrics, and standards of excellence are shown to the students because expectations are clear from the beginning of the activity.
5. Directs the students to use worthy sources provided by teachers; thereby confusion, frustration, and time are reduced when students become able to choose suitable resources.
6. Reduces uncertainty, surprise, and disappointment. This happens when teachers diagnose the possible problems which appear in their lessons. Then, they improve their lessons to eliminate difficulties which in turn maximize learning.

2.6 Issues and Challenges

Reading is one of the most important skills in learning a second language. The success of language learner is largely influenced by his/ her reading practice. "Reading is useful for language acquisition...the more they read, the better they get. Reading also has a positive effect on students' vocabulary knowledge, on their spelling and their writing" (Harmer, 2007, p.99). Therefore, teacher must develop reading habit in students in order to help them enhance target language efficiency. This can be done by motivating students to read, especially by giving them reason to read. Neyman (2002), states that instead of waiting until later grade, extensive reading should be provided as early as possible so that they can use the facility that children have up to certain age. As a matter of fact, learners must feel the need of reading only then they can read on their own. In short, reading stands as

bedrock for learners' success in learning a second language, therefore it is language teachers' responsibility to cultivate reading culture in students.

But the fact is; there are so many challenges in teaching reading in EFL classroom of Ethiopia. Teaching a reading text is taken as the easiest task among all the activities that teachers do in a language classroom. Generally, teachers come in the class without any preparation and they deliver a long lecture on the content. They do not care whether the text is appropriate to the learners or not. Moreover, they hardly give any importance to language teaching and language learners and their interest. There is nearly no any task for students except memorizing word meaning and question answers. In most cases, teacher explains the words for the students and later they remember them for test. Students who have difficulty in reading choose neither to read nor to engage in other tasks involving reading (Stanovich, 1986, as cited in Ahmad, 2006). Students do not get chance to read on their own, as a result they struggle with the new text in making sense out of it in the real life situation.

From close study and careful analysis of EFL context, the following are considered as the major issues and challenges related to teaching reading: Selecting appropriate text; No reading culture; Designing reading task; and Lack of Schema activation.

Moreover, there are some other related issues such as lack of knowledge of target culture, difficult vocabulary, too much emphasis on bottom up approach by the teacher, lack of motivation to read on the part of the students, no sufficient preparation in teaching etc. All these challenges, as a whole, make reading text difficult and boring to learners.

In fact, teachers seem unaware about the fact that reading text is for students. They practice reading in the classroom and develop their reading proficiency instead of letting students enhance their reading skills. Gnawali (2005) states that it is teacher who improves his/her English in highly teacher-centered classroom but not the learners. Moreover, they are not even clear about the purpose of teaching reading text. Generally, they believe that they need to teach reading text simply because it is given in textbook and is going to be asked in examination. Ahmad (2006) states, "They (teachers) said that passing exam were more important than spending time on extra reading" (p.70). So, the main aim of teaching reading text for them is to help students in securing good score in exam. Above all, we can say that teachers do not know exactly why they do what they do in language classroom in their scaffolding practices while teaching reading comprehension in the three phases of reading.

Reading is more than just picking up words, phrases, and sentences written in the text; it is, an activation of the prior knowledge that we already have in our mind. When we read any text, we use our knowledge of the world to understand the text. Reading is, therefore, a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' (Goodman, 1967, as cited in Hedge, 2010). We make guesses and match them with what is given in the reading task. When our prediction is similar to information given in the text, we easily comprehend it but when our mental script is challenged or when we don't have any similar kind of experience; we face difficulty in understanding the text. Hudson (2007) states, "The reader makes guesses about the meaning of the text and samples the print to confirm or disconfirm the guess. In this way reading is an active process in which the reader brings to bear not only knowledge of the language, but also internal concepts of how language is processed, past experiential background and the general conceptual background" (p. 37). Thus, schema activation in teaching reading is a key factor in understanding the text.

However, the mental schema is activated only when we are familiar with the context and the information given in reading text. "...the first part of a text activates schema...which is either confirmed or disconfirmed by what follows" (Wallace, 1992, as cited in Stott, 2001). In other words, in order to make students able to use their schema, reading text must be similar to their background knowledge. Similarly, teacher must be able to prepare appropriate task to encourage students in using their knowledge of the world. But in context of Ethiopia, as we have already mentioned, there are so many problems with the reading texts and the tasks that teachers design while teaching reading passage. Therefore, these two issues: first selecting right kind of reading text and second preparing suitable reading tasks for students need to be discussed in details.

2.6.1 Selecting Reading Text: Authentic or Modified

Selecting right kind of reading text is a very debatable issue. There are two different views regarding selection of suitable reading text. First view favors authentic materials like newspaper, advertisement, speech as reading materials in language classroom so that language learners can read authentic texts in real life situation. Similarly, this view also opines that language cannot be separated from culture; hence learning second language also includes learning L2 culture. Therefore, authentic text is provided in order to expose authentic language and culture to learners. But, authentic texts cannot be easily understood by all learners because of their difficulty level and cultural related factors. Students cannot comprehend the text if they lack the schema needed to interpret it. Smith (1994) states, "Knowledge of relevant schemas is obviously essential if we are to read any kind of text with comprehension. A child who does not have a scenario about farming is unlikely to understand a story about farming or a reference to farming in a textbook (p. 15, as cited in Hudson 2007).

However, the next view prefers modified authentic text or a reading passage from local culture. In this view, when teacher bring reading texts from learners' culture, they can easily exploit their knowledge of the world in understanding them. Furthermore, the authentic text can be modified to meet students' level to make it easy for them to comprehend. "...learners with very little exposure to the second language have difficulty in reading. Thus second language reading instruction must find ways to avoid continually frustrating the reader. This can be accomplished through the use of modified text to fit readers' ability levels." (Day and Bamford, 1998, as cited in Hudson, 2007)

We can find literature (Ur, 2005, Hudson, 2007, Ahmad, 2006) supporting both authentic as well as modified reading texts in teaching reading. As a matter of fact, both kinds of texts have their own advantages and disadvantages. No doubt, when learners are provided text from their culture they feel easy to understand. But in doing so, learners are separated from target language culture and as a result, they may not be able to develop full mastery of target language. Regarding this issue, Ur (2005) suggests that we generally use simplified text with less proficient learners because such materials are more effective at earlier stages. Likewise, the use of authentic text for less proficient learners is often frustrating and counter-productive. But after all, our final aim is to make learners capable of coping with any kind of text like native speakers, therefore it is necessary to expose variety of authentic or near authentic texts when they can handle them.

Above all, we should provide modified text to less proficient learners at first and later on slowly and gradually we can give them near authentic and authentic texts. In this way learners will not feel difficulty in dealing with simplified passage in the beginning and then gradually they be given authentic text when they become capable enough to cope with it.

2.6.2 Designing Reading Tasks

Preparing appropriate task is very crucial in teaching reading text. The success and failure of the lesson depends on the activities we design for any text. Even an interesting text can be boring if we cannot engage students in right kind of tasks and the vice versa. It needs great effort on the part of teachers while preparing reading tasks. They need to read a text several times to design proper activities in order to engage students successfully in it. It is task that helps students in using their knowledge of the world to understand the text. Therefore, a reading task must be designed very carefully. Preparing right kind of task is very important in Harmer's view:

We need to choose good reading task- right kind of questions, appropriate activities before during and after reading, and useful study exploitation. The most useful and interesting text can be undermined by boring and inappropriate tasks; the most commonplace passage can be made really exciting with imaginative and challenging activities, especially if the level of challenge (that is how easy it is for students to complete a task) is exactly right for the class (Harmer, 2007, p. 102).

Robb (2003) also describes the following five roadblocks that affect teachers and students when reading and comprehending materials in social studies: (1) student avoidance of textbook reading; (2) student inability to read the textbook; (3) the myth of the concept of learning to read versus reading to learn; (4) the traditions of reading instruction at the intermediate and middle grades (time allocations, too much curriculum to cover; lack of preparation for teaching reading); and (5) the implementation of the Transmission Model of Learning, in which knowledge is transmitted to students through various teacher practices.

UNIT THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research adopted a survey research design to examine the teachers' scaffolding practices in teaching reading comprehension at Preparatory Schools in East Gojjam of EFL classrooms, Ethiopia. This method was chosen for the following reasons. For one thing, the method helped the researchers to get relevant information in a short time with balanced expense. In addition, the method was also more preferable than other research methods in helping the researchers to gather necessary information from participants in a limited time. To this end, mixed approaches (both qualitative and quantitative methods) were employed to analyze the data obtained from various instruments on the teachers' scaffolding practices in EFL classrooms.

3.2 Population and Sampling Technique

In accordance with the nature of the research and the need for reliable information, various sources were used. The sources of data of this research were Preparatory School EFL teachers in East Gojjam (45) who are currently teaching English in grade eleven (Jaica 5, Bichena 8, Lumame 3, Dejen 6, Amanuel 6, Debre Work 4, Motta 8, and Bahire Gyorgis 5). The researchers took all the selected participants (45) in the study using purposive sampling technique for filling up the questionnaire. Some classrooms (Jaica 1, Bichena 2, Lumame 1, Dejen 1, Amanuel 1, Debre Work 1, Motta 2, and Bahire Gyorgis 1). with their students and teachers were selected for observation using the same technique (purposive). The same technique (Purposive Sampling Technique) was also used for conducting interview from all observed classroom teachers (10).

3.3 Data Gathering Instruments

The researchers used three basic instruments for gathering data in this study: questionnaire, and interview and observation. These instruments were used to triangulate the information and to increase the credibility of the study.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire was prepared for preparatory English teachers. The items in the questionnaires in this study were designed using a five point Likert scales with numerical values (5, 4, 3, 2, 1). (See Appendix 1 on page 45-46).

3.3.2 Interview

All forms of interview questions (structured, unstructured and semi-structured) were used in order to assess the general attitudes and practices of teachers towards their scaffolding practices at Preparatory schools in East Gojjam in their EFL classes. In addition, the researchers used such instrument to get general information about students' participation in the lesson, students' language skill, and their competence while scaffolding was practiced in the classroom situation especially in reading comprehension. (See Appendix 2 on page 47).

3.3.3 Observation

The students' success or failure towards scaffolding practices in the study areas were observed on the purposely selected classrooms (10). In addition, the teachers' actual scaffolding practices in their EFL classrooms were observed for a month according to the scheduled time. The observation was conducted on the target populations using a structured checklist. (See Appendix 3 on page 48).

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The device of data collection for this study encompassed two-page separate written research questionnaire for teachers. The researchers contacted all preparatory EFL teachers in East Gojjam who were selected purposely. Then the printed copy of questionnaires were composed and distributed to the participants between March and April of 2017.

There were questions that were answered with five Likert scales (Agree, Strongly Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). The pedagogical goal of the survey was to explain and ask the participants to answer the questions. They answered the questionnaire quite willingly. The questionnaires for this survey looked for teachers' self-reported opinions, attitudes, and suggestions towards developing EFL teaching-learning scaffolding practices in classroom situations. Then the obtained data from the questionnaires were coded by the researchers and were analyzed quantitatively using means and percentages. The data were also collected through observation from purposely selected target participant teachers (10). In addition, the results of the data which were obtained from observation were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Furthermore, the results obtained from interview were analyzed qualitatively.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis process was done in several steps. Collected data of questionnaire was sorted out and the means of the participants offering the same answer were computed. The questionnaires were tabulated to record the responses from each participant for each option of the questions where necessary. Then the tabulations were read and re-read carefully. Observation was also conducted by the researchers on purposely selected Preparatory school teachers (10) and their classrooms. The results were reported qualitatively and quantitatively, and the data were analyzed to this end. In addition, the result obtained from interview was reported qualitatively. The mean of the answers of the target participants through questionnaires (expected mean) was computed with the actual mean (2.5).

3.6 Reliability of the Study

This study examined the teachers' scaffolding practices in teaching reading comprehension and their challenges in EFL classrooms. The researchers used questionnaire, interview and observation as data gathering tools. To check the validity of the instruments, the researchers discussed with academic experts and other experienced preparatory English teachers.

UNIT FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are presented in different parts. The first part shows the responses of preparatory English teachers on the three phases of reading while scaffolding students in teaching reading comprehension; while the second presents the teachers' responses regarding the observation checklist. The third, however, reports the researchers' interview results on teacher scaffolding works on the three phases of reading. Moreover, the major challenges of preparatory teachers in their scaffold works are also presented under each instrument (questionnaire, observation, and interview).

4.1 Teachers' Scaffolding Practices in the Three Phases of Reading

The questionnaires including the different items with Likert scales (strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree,

strongly disagree) on the three phases of reading (pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading) and the expected challenges on the teachers' scaffolding practices in teaching reading comprehension were distributed to forty five teachers in the study areas (eight preparatory schools) in East Gojjam, Ethiopia. The result of the teachers' questionnaire is indicated in the following tables (table 1, 2, and 3).

Table 1: Teachers' answers on their scaffolding practices in the pre-reading phase

No.	Items	Responses									
		SA		A		U		D		SD	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1	Before reading I help my students to establish a purpose for reading (e.g. answer a pre-question)	17	3.4	28	5.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Before reading my students are encouraged to activate prior knowledge towards their reading	16	3.2	29	5.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Before reading I present new concepts and key vocabulary to my students	13	2.6	32	6.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Before reading I ask my students what information they predict to be included in the text	15	3.0	30	6.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	Before reading I help my students to preview the text	17	3.4	28	5.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	I give the meaning of unknown words by using them in the sample sentences	16	3.2	29	5.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Before reading I give background knowledge about the author/poet of the work	20	4.0	25	5.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	My students are encouraged to use English-English dictionary to learn the unknown vocabulary	15	3.0	30	6.0	-	-	-	-	-	-

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U= Uncertain, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree F= Frequency, M= Mean

The first part of the questionnaire is formed by the questions which are related to the pre-reading activities. In that part the total number of the answers given by teachers was forty five. As indicated in table 1, the respondents replied that they had good awareness in their scaffolding practices while teaching reading comprehension on the pre-reading phase. According to this division, it is obvious that much more importance is given to the giving background information about the unknown vocabulary in the pre-reading phase. Most grade eleven teachers in the study area agreed in that they did lots of good things in the pre-reading phase (i.e. all the means are greater than the actual mean).

Table 2: Teachers' answers on their scaffolding practices in the while-reading phase

No.	Items	Responses									
		SA		A		U		D		SD	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1	While-reading my students are encouraged to read, comprehend, clarify, visualize and build connections	18	3.6	27	5.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	I help my students to integrate the knowledge and information they bring to the text with new information in the text.	16	3.2	29	5.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	My students are encouraged to pay attention to the structure of the text during their while-reading	15	3.0	30	6.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	I make my students to read to achieve the purpose for reading	13	2.6	32	6.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	I help my students to think about answers for certain questions	20	4.0	25	5.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	My students are encouraged to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts	22	4.4	23	4.6	-	-	-	-	-	-

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U= Uncertain, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree

F= Frequency, M= Mean

The participant teachers (45) replied that they agreed on what they do during their scaffold works in the while-reading phase. As shown in table 2, all responses of teachers were above the actual mean (2.5). Even if much emphasis was given by teachers in their responses under "agree" column, it is possible to conclude that they scaffold their students while teaching reading comprehension in the while-reading phase.

Table 3: Teachers' answers on their scaffolding practices in the post-reading phase

No.	Items	Responses									
		SA		A		U		D		SD	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1	After reading I encourage my students to expand prior knowledge, build connections and deepen understanding	10	2.0	25	5.0	10	2.0	-	-	-	-
2	After reading I help my students to show their understanding of what they have read by answering some comprehension questions	12	2.4	20	4.0	13	2.6	-	-	-	-
3	After reading I encourage my students to evaluate the value and quality of the text	8	1.6	25	5.0	12	2.4	-	-	-	-
4	After reading I encourage my students to respond to the text by discussing its main ideas	5	1.0	30	6.0	10	2.0	-	-	-	-
5	After reading I help my students to write a summary about what they have understood from the passage	9	1.8	25	5.0	11	2.2	-	-	-	-
6	After reading my students are given only passage reading as homework	6	1.2	25	5.0	14	2.8	-	-	-	-

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U= Uncertain, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree
 F= Frequency, M= Mean

In the third part, which is related to the after-reading phase, the total number of the answers given by the teachers was forty five. The results handled from the questionnaire given to the teachers shows that they claim that they are aware of the importance of reading skills and its phases and its suitable applications in reading classes. However, less attention was given by teachers during their scaffold works in the post-reading phase as compared with their practices in the pre-reading and while-reading stages.

As a result, it can be suggested that as being teachers it is very important to develop ourselves and our students in terms of the topic of this study, thus it should be given enough value to reading comprehension skill, its phases and their applications. After doing anything that should be done by teachers the rest belongs to students whose willingness and effort is very important in succeeding the issue.

4.2 Teachers' Challenges in Scaffolding Practices

All target participants (45 teachers) were also asked to fill in the questionnaire on the expected challenges they may face in teaching reading comprehension. The result is shown in table 4 as follows.

Table 4: Teachers' answers on their challenges in scaffolding practices

No.	Items	Responses									
		SA		A		U		D		SD	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1	Planning for and implementing scaffolds is time consuming and demanding	30	6.0	15	3.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of students	35	7.0	10	2.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Knowing the scaffold so the student does not rely on the support	24	4.8	21	4.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Knowing the students well enough (their cognitive and affective abilities) to provide appropriate scaffolds is challenging	26	5.2	19	3.8	-	-	-	-	-	-

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U= Uncertain, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree
 F= Frequency, M= Mean

The target participants (45 teachers) in the study areas answered that all the items in table 4 were their challenges while scaffolding their grade eleven students in teaching reading comprehension. Those challenges appeared in all stages of reading. This clearly indicates that all the means in table 4 are above the actual mean (2.5). Respondent teachers were strongly agreed on selecting the scaffold type that matches to their students was the high challenge to them with a mean of 7.0. In addition, planning and implementing scaffold, knowing the student well enough, and knowing the specific scaffold type were the challenges of teachers while scaffold their students in teaching reading comprehension respectively with means 6.0, 5.2, and 4.8. From this we can conclude that all the items listed in table 4 were the challenges to preparatory teachers in their scaffold works while teaching reading comprehension in their EFL classrooms.

4.3 Classroom Observation Result on the Three Phases of Reading

The teachers' (7) scaffolding practices while teaching reading comprehension was observed in seven preparatory schools for two weeks (16/08/2009 E.C. – 30/08/2009 E.C.). The result of their practices on the three phases of reading is indicated in tables 5, 6, and 7 as follows.

Table 5: Teachers' actual scaffolding practices in the first phase of reading

No.	Items	Responses			
		Yes		No	
		F	P	F	P
1	Established purpose for reading (e.g. answer a pre-question)	2	20	8	80
2	Activated prior knowledge	3	30	7	70
3	Presented new concepts and key vocabulary to students	4	40	6	60
4	Asking students what information they predict to be included in the text	3	30	7	70
5	Helping students to preview the text	2	20	8	80
6	Giving the meaning of unknown words by using them in the sample sentences	3	30	7	70
7	Giving background knowledge about the author/poet of the work	1	10	9	90
8	Helping students use English-English dictionary to learn the unknown vocabulary	3	30	7	70

F= Frequency, P= Percentage

As indicated in table 5, all preparatory teachers did not do very well while scaffolding their students in the pre-reading phase. The only item listed in number 3 was the only thing that was done well by teachers i.e. 40%. From this it is possible to conclude that teachers' scaffolding practice in the pre-reading phase requires special attention.

Table 6: Classroom Observation Result on the Second Phase of Reading

No.	Items	Responses			
		Yes		No	
		F	P	F	P
1	Helping students to read, comprehend, clarify, visualize and build connections	2	20	8	80
2	Helping students to integrate the knowledge and information they bring to the text with new information in the text.	3	30	7	70
3	Encouraging students to pay attention to the structure of the text	1	10	9	90
4	Helping students to read to achieve the purpose for reading	2	20	8	80
5	Encouraging students to think about answers for certain questions	3	30	7	70
6	Directing students to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts	4	40	6	60

F= Frequency, P= Percentage

Table 6 also revealed that little attention was given by teachers while scaffolding their students in teaching reading comprehension in the while-reading phase. Most teachers in the study areas did not scaffold their students while teaching reading comprehension in the while-reading phase. As illustrated in table 6 the teachers' scaffold was below 50%. This implied that their scaffold work during the second phase was low.

Table 7: Classroom Observation Result on the Third Phase of Reading

Ten participant teachers were observed in order to see their scaffolding practices while teaching reading comprehension at seven schools. The following result was obtained.

No.	Items	Responses			
		Yes		No	
		F	P	F	P
1	Expanding prior knowledge, build connections and deepen understanding	4	40	6	60
2	Showing students' understanding of what they have read	3	30	7	70
3	Helping students to evaluate the value and quality of the text	1	10	9	90
4	Encouraging students to respond to the text by discussing its main ideas	2	20	8	80
5	Directing students to write a summary about what they have understood from the passage	4	40	6	60
6	Giving only passage reading as homework	2	20	8	80

F= Frequency, P= Percentage

Table 7 showed that many preparatory teachers (above 50%) did not scaffold their students while teaching reading comprehension in their actual classrooms. This implied that what they said in the questionnaire and in interview was contrasted to each other. Therefore teachers in the study areas should give equal attention to what they say and they actually they do in their classroom scaffold works in all phases of reading while teaching reading comprehension.

4.4 Teachers' Challenges in Actual Classroom Observation

Ten teachers from the randomly selected schools were observed to see the challenges of grade eleven English teachers while scaffolding their students in teaching reading comprehension. The result was indicated in table 8 as follows.

Table 8: Classroom observation results on teachers' challenges

No.	Items	Responses			
		Yes		No	
		F	P	F	P
1	Planning for and implementing scaffolds is time consuming and demanding	6	60	4	40
2	Selected appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of students	8	80	2	20
3	Knew when to remove the scaffold so the student does not rely on the support	5	50	5	50
4	Knew the students well enough (their cognitive and affective abilities) to provide appropriate scaffolds	7	70	3	30

F= Frequency, P= Percentage

The participant English teachers (10) at ten randomly selected schools were observed by the researchers. Table 8 indicates the fact that all listed items were the major challenges of the teachers during their scaffolding practices while teaching reading comprehension. As shown in table 8, how to select the appropriate scaffold was a major challenge to the teachers (i.e. 80%). Similarly, knowing students very well, the time for planning and implementing any of the scaffold type in teaching reading comprehension using different phases were also other challenges to preparatory school teachers in the study area respectively (i.e. 70% and 60%).

4.5 Interview Results

The observed teachers (10) in the study areas were asked to answer different questions on teachers' scaffolding practices while teaching reading comprehension using the three phases of reading. The first question to them was "What is scaffolding?" Their answer was "Scaffolding is any kind of help to students in order to do various tasks". In addition, the researchers also asked another question "what are the benefits of scaffolding?" They answered it "scaffolding has lots of advantages in our teaching especially in reading comprehension class. For example, it helps teachers to be free from confusion. It is also important to teachers to identify the appropriate resource for teaching various language items. It also helps teachers to eliminate difficulties which in turn maximize learning".

Moreover, teachers were also asked how they scaffold their students while teaching reading comprehension. All of them answered "we scaffold our students while teaching reading comprehension in different ways: one way is considering what is already done on the three phases of reading. Then we try to support the daily lesson with other techniques like charts and other graphic organizers in order to make the classroom students easily understand the provided lesson and do their own best later". From this we can understand that teachers who are currently teaching in preparatory schools have good awareness about scaffolding, its importance, the way they scaffold their students while teaching reading comprehension.

The participant teachers in the study areas were also asked to rank on the challenges they may face in their scaffolding practices while teaching reading comprehension. The result is shown in table 9 as follows.

Table 9 Teachers' answers on challenges in their scaffolding practices

No.	Items	Ranks in Order		
		F	P	Rank
1	Planning for and implementing scaffolds is time consuming and demanding	2	20	2
2	Selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of students	5	50	1
3	Knowing the scaffold so the student does not rely on the support	1	10	4
4	Knowing the students well enough (their cognitive and affective abilities) to provide appropriate scaffolds is challenging	2	20	2

F= Frequency, M= Percentage

Table 9 revealed that the first challenge of preparatory English teachers in their scaffolding practices while teaching reading comprehension was how to select appropriate scaffolds to their students. Knowing the abilities of students was the second challenge (50%). The time constraint to plan and implement any kind of scaffold and knowing the specific scaffold that is already practiced in English classes while teaching reading comprehension were other challenges that are ranked third equally. Knowing the scaffold so the student does not rely on the support was also ranked last (10%).

Moreover, the participant teachers were asked how they tackle their challenges while scaffolding their

students in teaching reading comprehension. They answered “in the first place we try to identify the classroom students. Then we try to provide any kind of scaffold in the different phases of reading. Whenever we do this, we are not actually doing these things often. Different situations also affect our scaffold works like material selection and time constraints. Therefore, we simply focus on doing the tasks rather than providing scaffolds in each phase of reading”. From this it is possible to conclude that even if English teachers put these points as solutions in tackling their challenges during their scaffold works in teaching reading comprehension, their real practice still needs self-confidence and commitment.

4.6 Discussion

Preparatory school teachers in East Gojjam scaffold their students in various ways while teaching reading comprehension. Pre-reading scaffolding works for example stimulate students’ prior knowledge about a topic and involve students in the themes, concepts, or vocabulary of a text before they even open the book. Pre-reading scaffolds also prepare students to ask questions, make connections, form predictions, and categorize new information in the during-reading stage. This finding is correlated with Bamford (2000); Alibali (2006) & Breiseth (2016) in that most of the time preparatory school teachers highly devote their time in scaffolding their students in introducing new vocabulary words in the first phase of reading comprehension.

During-reading scaffolding works by preparatory school teachers in East Gojjam could help students practice the comprehension skills that good readers employ while reading. Such during-reading scaffolding gives students a structure for continual, active engagement with a text and forces them to grapple with comprehension while they are reading, as opposed to simply moving their eyes down the page. This result was also related with Clerigo et al (2016) in that it is better to consider reading as an active process in which readers interact with text to reconstruct the message of the author and give meaning based on their own experiences when moving from one phase to the next phase of reading.

Moreover, post-reading scaffolding works of teachers drive home the fact that the process of actively engaging with a text does not end once students have completed the reading. Struggling readers especially will need to be given opportunities to continue to flex their metacognitive muscles by debating themes in the text and summarizing the key points after they have done the reading. In contrast, preparatory school teachers’ scaffold works were less in the post-reading phase as observed in the actual classroom. This result was similar with Abdul-Majeed (2015) and Chanyalew et al (2016) in that teachers’ commitment in their scaffold works could increase especially in teaching reading comprehension when supported with practical trainings.

Scaffolding is defined as the strategy used by the teachers to facilitate learners' transition from assisted to independent performance (Sukyadi and Hasanah, 2013; Lawson, 2002; Richard and Schemit, 2002). However, the results of classroom observation showed that the reverse. The students were still highly depending on teachers for searching continuous help in all phases of reading. As Vacca (2008) argued, when a new building is constructed the builder uses scaffolding on the outside of the building to give the builder access to the emerging structure as it is being created.

As it is indicated in the results of observation, interview and questionnaire, preparatory school teachers in East Gojjam faced many challenges while scaffolding their students in teaching reading comprehension using three phases properly. How to select the appropriate scaffold was a major challenge to the teachers (i.e. 80%). Similarly, knowing students very well, the time for planning and implementing any of the scaffold type in teaching reading comprehension using different phases were also other challenges to preparatory school teachers in the study area respectively (i.e. 70% and 60%). The result was similar with Robb (2003); Gnowali (2005); Ahmad (2006) and Hedge (2010) in that the teacher should find his/her best ways while scaffolding their students especially in teaching reading comprehension. Therefore, equal attention should be given for all phases of reading while scaffolding students in teaching reading comprehension.

UNIT FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Preparatory school teachers’ scaffolding works in East Gojjam at various phases of reading are proved to be more effective in developing and enhancing students' reading comprehension skills since teachers became more aware about how to use the most suitable reading comprehension strategies in all phases. However, teachers’ actual scaffolding in East Gojjam preparatory schools while teaching reading comprehension in English classrooms did not enhance students’ autonomy, i.e., they became high dependent on the teacher. The findings of the study also showed that the use of various techniques in all phases of reading as scaffolding tools led to better comprehension of the text. In short, it is found out that applying various scaffolding strategies facilitated students' reading comprehension and work cooperatively in peers or groups.

5.2 Recommendations

The researchers have recommended the following:

1. EFL Teachers in preparatory schools of East Gojjam are advised to use various scaffolding techniques properly in order to foster learning in a variety of different areas particularly reading comprehension.
2. Preparatory level students in East Gojjam need to be guided and supported whenever it is necessary since they are required to achieve academically the best level during their whole period of their study at classrooms.
3. Preparatory school EFL teachers in East Gojjam are recommended to use graphic organizers as scaffolding tool in EFL classes because it provides a great support to students by enabling them literally see connections and relationships between facts, information, and terms while teaching reading comprehension using the three stages of reading.
4. Scaffolding is serving as an instrument in textual understanding and reading comprehension. Therefore, preparatory EFL teachers in East Gojjam should decide what to scaffold. A primary goal in mind for each phases of reading will be more effective to scaffolding instruction. Effective scaffolds also need to stimulate curiosity, self-esteem, and self-confidence. A good scaffold ought to be sensitive to individual difficulties. To provide more collaborative scaffolding, preparatory school teachers in East Gojjam are highly recommended to ask reflective questions and prompt deep reasoning rather than just reaction by providing tailored assistance.
5. Preparatory school EFL teachers in East Gojjam need to become involved in professional growth and form partnerships to discuss peer-coach and advance theoretical understandings of their practice.

5.3 Suggestions

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of the study, the researchers suggest the following:

1. A similar study is needed to investigate the effect of using scaffolding strategies on improving students' reading comprehension skills in other preparatory schools.
2. For the teacher, in teaching and learning process, the important thing is the teacher must be friendly and be a good motivator for the students. The English teacher of the preparatory schools students in East Gojjam are suggested to be more active, creative, and innovative in making, and conducting scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension.
3. The students in preparatory schools of East Gojjam are also suggested to keep on motivating and improving their reading comprehension more intensively, and motivate themselves to learn more seriously, and enrich their vocabulary through reading a lot of books. This study can be used as a way to improve their ability in comprehending a reading text, it is greatly expected that the result of this study would be very useful since this strategy enables them to solve and overcome their problem in reading and improve their reading comprehension.
4. To other researcher, this study can be used as a reference if they should make further research in this component. The researchers suggest the other researchers to be more creative in teaching reading comprehension in all preparatory schools of East Gojjam using various scaffolding strategies to get better result on the next research. Besides, this study can be modified for further investigations on the effect of scaffolding on other skills like speaking and listening.

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Appendix 1 Teacher Questionnaire on Scaffolding Practices in Teaching Reading Comprehension in EFL Classrooms

This questionnaire aims to find out your attitude towards practicing scaffolding in EFL classroom situation. Your answers will be used for research purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation!

Direction: Put 'X' mark on the space provided.

1 = Strongly Agree **2** = Agree **3** = Uncertain **4** = Disagree **5** = Strongly Disagree

No.	Items	Responses				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		1	2	3	4	5
Part 1: Teacher's Scaffolding Practices in Teaching Reading Comprehension						
Stage 1: Before Reading (Pre-reading)						
1	Before reading my students establish a purpose for reading (e.g. answer a pre-question)					
2	Before reading my students activate prior knowledge towards their reading					
3	Before reading I present new concepts and key vocabulary to my students					
4	Before reading I ask my students what information they predict to be included in the text					
5	Before reading I help my students to preview the text					
6	I give the meaning of unknown words by using them in the sample sentences					
7	Before reading I give background knowledge about the author/poet of the work					
8	My students use English-English dictionary to learn the unknown vocabulary					
Stage 2: During Reading (While-reading)						
1	While-reading I encourage my students to read, comprehend, clarify, visualize and build connections					
2	I help my students to integrate the knowledge and information they bring to the text with new information in the text.					
3	My students are encouraged to pay attention to the structure of the text during their while-reading					
4	I make my students to read to achieve the purpose for reading					
5	I help my students to think about answers for certain questions					
6	My students are encouraged to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts					

No.	Items	Responses				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		1	2	3	4	5
	Stage 3: After Reading (Post-reading)	1	2	3	4	5
1	After reading I help my students to expand prior knowledge, build connections and deepen understanding					
2	After reading I help my students to show their understanding of what they have read by answering some comprehension questions					
3	After reading I encourage my students to evaluate the value and quality of the text					
4	After reading I help my students to respond to the text by discussing its main ideas					
5	After reading I help my students to write a summary about what they have understood from the passage					
6	After reading my students are given only passage reading as homework					
	Part 2: Expected Challenges of Teachers' Scaffolding Practices in the Three Phases of Reading Comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
1	Planning for and implementing scaffolds is time consuming and demanding					
2	Selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of students					
3	Knowing when to remove the scaffold so the student does not rely on the support					
4	Knowing the students well enough (their cognitive and affective abilities) to provide appropriate scaffolds					

Adapted from Celce-Murcia, M. (1991); Day, R. & Bamford, J. (2000); Alibali (2006) & Breiseth, L. (2016): Reading Strategies

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Appendix 2 Interview Questions for Preparatory School English Teachers

1. What is scaffolding?
2. What are the major benefits of scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension?
3. How do you scaffold your students to make them independent readers?
4. The following things are expected as major challenges in implementing scaffolding in EFL classrooms. Rank them from the least challenge (4) to the most challenge (1).
 _____ Planning for and implementing scaffolds is time consuming and demanding
 _____ Selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of students
 _____ Knowing when to remove the scaffold so the student does not rely on the support
 _____ Not knowing the students well enough (their cognitive and affective abilities) to provide appropriate scaffolds
5. How do you tackle the challenges you may face in practicing scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension using the three phases in your classroom situation?

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Appendix 3 Observation Checklist

Teacher being observed: _____ Topic: _____
 Course: _____ School: _____
 Observer: _____ Date: _____

No.	Items	Responses	
		Yes	No
Part 1: Teacher's Scaffolding Practices in Teaching Reading Comprehension			
Stage 1: Before Reading (Pre-reading)			
1	Establishing a purpose for reading (e.g. answer a pre-question)		
2	Activating prior knowledge		
3	Presenting new concepts and key vocabulary to students		
4	Asking students what information they predict to be included in the text		
5	Helping students to preview the text		
6	Giving the meaning of unknown words by using them in the sample sentences		
7	Giving background knowledge about the author/poet of the work		
8	Helping students use English-English dictionary to learn the unknown vocabulary		
Stage 2: During Reading (While-reading)		Yes	No
1	Helping students to read, comprehend, clarify, visualize and build connections		
2	Helping students to integrate the knowledge and information they bring to the text with new information in the text.		
3	Encouraging students to pay attention to the structure of the text		
4	Helping students to read to achieve the purpose for reading		
5	Encouraging students to think about answers for certain questions		
6	Directing students to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts		
Stage 3: After Reading (Post-reading)			
1	Expanding prior knowledge, build connections and deepen understanding		
2	Showing students' understanding of what they have read		
3	Helping students to evaluate the value and quality of the text		
4	Encouraging students to respond to the text by discussing its main ideas		
5	Directing students to write a summary about what they have understood from the passage		
6	Giving only passage reading as homework		
Part 2: Expected Challenges of Teachers' in Scaffolding Practices		Yes	No
1	Planning for and implementing scaffolds is time consuming and demanding		
2	Selecting appropriate scaffolds that match the diverse learning and communication styles of students		
3	Knowing when to remove the scaffold so the student does not rely on the support		
4	Knowing the students well enough (their cognitive and affective abilities) to provide appropriate scaffolds		

Adapted from Celce-Murcia, M. (1991) & Day, R. & Bamford, J. (2000). Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language & Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom