



## **The effect of scaffolding on reading comprehension of various text modes on Iranian EFL learners with different proficiency levels**

**Mohammad Attarzadeh**

**Islamic Azad University of Khorsgan, Isfahan, Iran**

### **Abstract**

*The sociocultural theory of L.S. Vygotsky is shaped by the notion that all human learning is driven by the social interaction. The same is true for learning reading comprehension. This quantitative study drew upon experimental design to examine the effects of scaffolding language on learning reading comprehension of various text modes on Iranian EFL learners with different levels of language proficiency. 180 EFL learners were randomly selected and divided into three groups of low, mid and high proficiency through the TOEFL language proficiency test. They were taught different text types such as narrations, argumentations, descriptions and explanations. The scaffolded groups were exposed to a constructivist-interactive model of learning while the non scaffolded groups were subjected to the traditional individual reading. At the end of the treatment provision period a post test was administered. A two way ANOVA was performed. The findings suggest a choice in favor of scaffolded narrative text types for mid level of learners.*

**Keywords:** Reading, Social Constructivism, Scaffolded Learning

## **1. Introduction**

Besides reading usefulness as a social skill, it is recognized as one of the most important skills in academic and professional success in general, and in second or foreign language education in particular (Grabe, 1991; Carrell, 1989). Furthermore, due to the prominence of the English language as an international means of communicating scientific and technical information around the globe, reading in English acts as a satellite to receive the published information. That is probably why Alderson (1984) believes that reading in English is a pre-requisite to almost all graduate programs. In spite of such an importance, most foreign students suffer from deficiencies in reading. (Farhady & Sajadi, 1999) Recent years have seen an increase in attention to the concept of reading especially towards academic reading. Learners are required to take reading comprehension course in EGP and ESP. Therefore, applied linguists have been concerned with developing theoretical models as well as practical activities to enhance foreign students' reading ability. Any practical activities in the classrooms including reading should be backed by theory of nature of knowledge.

Epistemologically, there are two paradigms for acquiring knowledge (A) transmissional rooted in the positivism, which holds that the knowledge is out there and it is the teacher's responsibility to transfer this knowledge in the frame of a lecture to a learner, (B) transformative which states that people construct meaning through their interpretive interactions in their social environments. (Johnson, 2004) Vygotsky (1978) argues that knowledge is constructed through social interaction then within the individual.

This development followed the principle of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The question may be raised under what condition a novice person can benefit from interactive activities. From constructivist perspective it is under guidance or in collaboration with more knowledgeable person which causes movement of learners from lower level to a higher level. This guidance or assistance is scaffolding in Vygotskian terminology. This assistance in the ZPD functions most effectively when it is tailored to the learner, adapted and eventually withdrawn in response to learner development (Lantolf & Aljaffareh, 1996).

Based on the literature that has been reviewed, the present paper aims to apply the principles of social constructivism into practice with a scaffolded modality of learning. Therefore, it is hypothesized that understanding of scaffolded passages of various text modes for the purpose of reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners with different proficiency levels are enhanced because of hermeneutical nature of passage interpretations and interactional opportunities which are provided from negotiated interaction in the EFL classrooms. This research is an attempt to shed some light on the ways of improving reading comprehension considering the scaffolding of various text modes, level of language proficiency, and their interactions on reading comprehension.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

As Oxford (1997) states new theories are seldom an increment to what is known. Rather, they require a deconstruction of prior theory, a reevaluation of prior facts, and are typically conducted by many people over a significant amount of time. Competition between segments of the scientific community is the only historical process that results in the rejection of previous theory in adoption of another the same is true for educational psychology. There has been a move from behaviorism to constructivism in educational psychology. Vygotsky's theory represents a transition from classical to non-classical psychology (Robbins & Stetsenko, 2002).

Constructivism emerged as the leading metaphor of human learning by the 1980s and 1990s as interest waned in behaviourist and information-processing perspectives (Mayer, 1996). Vygotsky (1962) criticized the behaviorist approach as being too narrow, specialized, isolated and intrapersonal in standpoint. Likewise, the information-processing approach of the 1960s and 1970s was criticized as being overly reductionist in its analogy of computer and mind (Mayer, 1996). Both approaches failed to reflect either the active role of the learning agent or the influence of the social interactive contexts in everyday educational settings. Their mechanistic underpinning by an orderly, predictable, and controllable view of the universe proved inadequate to capture the active and social characteristics of learners (Phillips, 1995). On the other hand, Vygotsky's educational theory is guided by an alternative epistemological paradigm – that of cultural-historical psychology or sociocultural theory. This theoretical perspective needed to be recognized in the literature of constructivism. (Liu & Robert, 2005). Today, among the variants of constructivism; Philosophical, Radical, Cybernetic, Cultural, Critical, Cognitive, and Social constructivism, two are said to figure most prominently: cognitive constructivism, and social constructivism. (Liu & Robert, 2005). The social constructivist tradition is often said to derive from the work of Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1978) is a pioneering theorist in psychology who focused on the roles that society played in the development of an individual. Individual learning can be more or less socially-mediated learning. Individuals can participate in the learning of a collective, sometimes with what is learned distributed throughout the collective more than in the mind of any one individual. Individuals and social aspects of learning in both of these senses can interact over time to strengthen one another in a reciprocal spiral relationship. (Martin, 1998) Vygotsky matched learning with developmental levels. Vygotsky's main concern is that social interaction and social context, other people, who interact with the child from birth onwards, are essential in the cognitive development. He states that "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on

the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapychological). (Vygotsky, 1978).

Scaffolding is the term introduced by Bruner (1986) to refer to the help given to a child by an adult, usually a talk that supports a child in carrying out an activity. Wood (1988), Bruner and Ross (1976) define scaffolding as a metaphor for the interaction between an expert and a novice engaged in a problem- solving task or the adult controlling those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence. (Ferreira, 2007). Ellis (2004) states the social dimension of the development of a new skill is handled in sociocultural theory through the notion of scaffolding. Scaffolding is the dialogic process by which one speaker assists another in performing a function that he or she cannot perform alone. In the words of Al-Jaafreh, (1992) scaffolding is defined as a mediating strategy which must be both leveled for the learner's apparent ZPD and helpful in overcoming the specific problems the learner has already displayed. (Ellis, 2004).

Chi (2007) investigated and compared scaffolding strategies employed by two EFL teachers in the process of instructing learners, and tried to explore the most effective scaffolding strategies used by teachers to students. The results showed implementing scaffolding strategy effectively in the process of instruction students' reading comprehension upgraded students' reading comprehension. In another study Vethamani & Nair (2007) studied the use of analogy as a scaffolding tool by teachers in their attempts to comprehend literary texts. Based on a qualitative study, they identified and explored how teachers scaffold their partners in pair work, with the use of analogy. The findings of this study suggest that analogy generates positive impact in the comprehension of literary texts.

Some research also has drawn upon the dialogism of Bakhtin (1981, 1986), Rommetveit (1974), and Volosinov (1929/1973) to understand the role of interaction in both learning generally and reading comprehension specifically. These studies highlight the interaction of teacher, students, and peers dynamically figuring things out in class—face-to-face, teacher and students together (Alexander, 2004; Dyson, 2000; Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 1999).

A replicated study was performed by Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran (2003) found that discussion-based instruction, in the context of high academic demands, significantly enhanced literature achievement and reading comprehension. (Cited in Nystrand, 2006)

Different scholars have looked at the same entity of reading comprehension from different angles and have reached somewhat different conclusions about the nature of reading. Discrepancy of views has partly been the result of the different theories and models with which researchers have approached reading. (Sadeghi, 2007) We have witnessed the emergence of three reading models: the linear models, i.e. the Bottom-Up or reading as product which focuses on text and the Top-Down or reading as process which focuses on the reader, and the interactive models (Tolstefl, 2007). Although these models have been effective in the domain of language reading comprehension skill, they could not account the complexities associated with reading comprehension. Therefore, it is still a challenging issue in the reading pedagogy classrooms which is worthwhile to deal with it from a fundamentally different perspective (Johnson, 2004). Therefore, this research is an attempt to shed some light on the ways of improving reading comprehension considering the scaffolding of various text modes, level of language proficiency, and their interactions on reading comprehension.

### **3. Method**

#### **3. 1. Participants**

The population from which the participants were drawn consisted of 360 EFL learners enrolled in two institutes in Qom. One hundred and eighty male native Farsi speaking EFL aged 15 to 20 were randomly selected and divided into three groups of low, mid and high proficiency through the TOEFL language proficiency test. Mean and standard deviation of the scores were computed. One standard deviation of below the mean and one standard deviation above the mean were the criterion for selection of low and high of learners. The subjects were randomly and equally divided into three homogeneous classrooms of 30 for scaffolded groups (experimental) and three for non-scaffolded (control) groups. The experiment was conducted in the fourteen succeeded sessions of autumn 2009.

### **3. 2. Materials**

Materials consisted of twenty elementary, twenty intermediate and twenty advanced English texts which were taken from the books: Reading through Interaction<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> by P. Hartmann, J. Mental & E. Kim, Developing Reading Proficiency II by A.Afghari & M.H. Tahririan, Pre-intermediate College English, Intermediate College English by F.Khodabandeh& M.H. Tahririan, Developing Reading Proficiency I, II by M.H. Tahririan. The texts represented a variety of modes such as narrations, argumentations, descriptions and explanations. The texts were authentic and on general topics.

### **3. 3. Procedures for the hypothesis**

Constructivist instructional and collaborative learning designs were two strategic principles of this study which the researcher tried to apply them in the classes during the study. The study was conducted by the constructivism principle during the semester in fourteen succeeded sessions. All classes were taught 20 units on selected different text types for each level. The texts represented a variety of modes such as narrations, argumentations, descriptions and explanations. The texts were authentic and on general topics. Forty- five minutes was divided to two time span of thirteen and fifteen minutes for both scaffolded and non-scaffolded groups. The first thirteen minutes was assigned to identical teaching conditions for both groups including pre-reading and while-reading activities. The readers of scaffolded group were exposed to a constructivist-interactive model of learning while the non-scaffolded group was subjected to the traditional individual reading. Collaborative learning was also another typical activity in the classes in order to operationalize the tenets of sociocultural theory of learning. Collaborative learning could be achieved with peers and teacher interactions by means of discussions of problems in the classrooms. The question was how the instructor could motivate group discussions. Ur (1981) suggested a goal was necessitated for a successful discussion. This aim was achieved through thinking, interaction, result and interest. The instructor followed Ur's suggestions in his class management during the course of teaching reading comprehension. He asked the students to read the texts by themselves and form an opinion as an individual before group discussion. This pre-reading activity provided a number of problems which motivated the readers to interact with the teacher and their classmates. The result of the interaction between the members was some idea formation interested by the readers. After idea formation the classrooms proceeded with pre-reading activities recommended by Philips (1984). Philips (1984) recommended some activities for pre-reading. They included (a) brainstorming (b) looking at visual, headlines, titles, charts or other contextual aids (c) predicting (d) skimming (e) identifying topic sentences and main ideas (f) making global judgments.

Finishing the pre-reading phase of the reading process, the groups entered the second phase of while-reading activities. During this stage the instructor helped students develop reading strategies, improve their control of the second language, and decode problematic text passages. The instructor introduced different strategies such as guessing word meanings by using context clues, word formation clues, or cognate practice; considering syntax and sentence structure by noting the grammatical functions of unknown words, analyzing reference words, and reading for specific pieces of information (Barnett, 1989). At the end of the first time span, the control groups i.e. non-scaffolded group readers continued individually and read the passage as many times as they liked and utilized their own individualistic learning styles to deal with the post-reading activities. The experimental group readers received the treatment of scaffolding. This scaffolding was Vygotsky's ideas which translated into classroom practice in the way that the instructor responded to the learner's private speech by using Bruner and Ross (1976) suggestions and reciprocal teaching. The instructor scaffolded the task of reading texts through interaction with the learners by following Bruner and Ross (1976) suggestions: (1) recruitment (2) reduction in degrees of freedom (3) direction maintenance (4) making critical suggestions (5) Frustration control (6) demonstration. The instructor also conducted the experimental groups with reciprocal model of teaching, a research-proven technique for teaching reading comprehension strategies (Oczuks, 2003). He followed the goals of reciprocal teaching included: (1) Using four strategies that is predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing (Palinscar & Brown, 1984) to improve comprehension (2) scaffolding instruction of the strategy by modeling, guiding, and applying the strategies (3) Guiding students to become metacognitive and reflective in their strategy use (4) Helping students monitor their reading comprehension (5) Using the social nature of learning to improve and scaffold reading comprehension (6) providing instruction through a variety of classroom settings – whole-group, and guided reading groups. (Oczuks, 2003) He also varied his activities as the same tasks did not work as well for all

groups of students. (Swain and Lapkin, 1998) He used directions, repetitions, assisting questions, and devices such as gestures and pauses and all means which helped to achieve scaffolded assistance (Antón, 1999). He also asked the class members compare and contrast their understanding and problems with each other with the aim to settle the problems. Finally the class members were asked to jot down the discussions' key points since it would help the readers to reconstruct their knowledge which was the main concern in constructivism.

Lack of sufficient motivation in doing reading activities specifically in the non-scaffolded groups might affect the study. In order to reduce the effect, the instructor tried to motivate the learners to participate in class discussion. As the treatment came to an end, the groups administered a post-test. The post-test was included identical unseen texts for the groups with a number of multiple choice questions and the participants were asked to read the texts individually and answer the reading comprehension questions.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Data Analysis**

In determining the effect (if any) of the experimental treatment, quantitative data collected through the pretest and the posttest was examined through SPSS statistical package to compute the collected data. For the purpose of examining the effect of the experimental treatment, a research hypothesis corresponding to the research question was proposed. The hypothesis is as follow: EFL learners with different proficiency levels in the experimental group will obtain statistically higher mean scores in the reading comprehension test at the end of the experimental treatment compared to mean scores obtained by EFL learners with different proficiency levels in the comparison group who did not experience the experimental treatment.

In order to test the hypothesis given above, it was restated in the form of a null hypothesis as follow: scaffolding language has no effect on learning reading comprehension of various text modes on Iranian EFL learners with different proficiency levels for the hypothesis. Due to the lack of research base in studies similar to this present study, a 2-tailed non-directional test was used and the level of significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . (Hatch & Farhady, 1995).

A 4 x 3 x 2 randomized-groups factorial analyses of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the data obtained from each of the language learning outcomes. The ANOVA tested for the main and interaction effects of the independent variables on the various dependent variables. Following the ANOVA tests, Scheffe tests were performed as all post hoc comparisons among means in order to investigate the effect of scaffolding on reading comprehension of different text types and level of learners.

The results of the ANOVA tests revealed significant main or interaction effects on any of the dependent variables that would support the hypothesis. There was significant on main effects (different text types and levels of language proficiency) and interaction effects of the independent variables. A more detailed analysis of the data by dependent variable will now be presented.

#### **4. 2. Hypothesis One**

As the treatment came to an end, the groups administered a post-test. To measure reading ability, the post-test was included identical unseen texts for the groups with a number of multiple choice questions and the participants were asked to read the texts individually and answer the reading comprehension questions. The descriptive statistics for the text types and level of learners are reported in Table 1. As in table one is shown texts varied from a mean high of 4.20 for scaffolded narrative text types for mid level of learners to a mean low of 1.27 for non-scaffolded descriptive text types of low of learners.

**Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics**

**Descriptive Statistics**

Dependent Variable: RESPONSE

TEXTTYPE	LEVELS	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Scexplanative	Low	2.40	.932	30
	Mid	3.07	1.015	30
	High	2.87	.860	30
	Total	2.78	.969	90
Nonscexplanative	Low	1.37	1.098	30
	Mid	2.17	1.053	30
	High	2.17	.699	30
	Total	1.90	1.028	90
Scdescriptive	Low	2.43	1.104	30
	Mid	3.67	3.604	30
	High	3.67	1.093	30
	Total	3.26	2.315	90
Nonscdescriptive	Low	1.20	.961	30
	Mid	2.00	.983	30
	High	2.67	.994	30
	Total	1.96	1.141	90
Scargumentative	Low	3.30	1.208	30
	Mid	3.20	.997	30
	High	2.47	.681	30
	Total	2.99	1.044	90
Nonscargumentative	Low	1.60	.770	30
	Mid	2.20	.847	30
	High	1.80	.664	30
	Total	1.87	.796	90
Scnarrative	Low	2.93	1.015	30
	Mid	4.20	.664	30
	High	3.40	.563	30
	Total	3.51	.927	90
Nonscnarrative	Low	2.17	.699	30
	Mid	2.87	.730	30
	High	2.87	.937	30
	Total	2.63	.854	90
Total	Low	2.17	1.197	240
	Mid	2.92	1.676	240
	High	2.74	.999	240
	Total	2.61	1.358	720

Table 2 shows the SPSS GLM ANOVA for the original untransformed scores. Both of the main effects and the interaction are highly significant,  $p < .001$  that is scaffolding reading comprehension of various text modes, levels of learners and interaction of them are highly significant. Strong, statistically significant differences among text types were evident.  $F(7, 240) = 27.759$   $P < .001$ ,  $SE = .122$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .218$ .

Strong, statistically significant differences among levels of learners were also evident.  $F(2, 180) = 27.120$ ,  $P < .001$ ,  $SE = .075$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .072$ . These main effects were modified but statistically significant interaction between various text types and different proficiency levels.  $F(14, 696) = 3.342$ ,  $P < .001$ ,  $SE = .211$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .063$ .

All post hoc comparisons among means were tested using a Scheffe test. These comparisons showed that the scaffolded narrative text type with the strongest mean was superior to all other text types and mid level of learners also has the strongest mean in comparison with the other levels. These findings suggest a choice in favor of scaffolded narrative text types for mid level of learners.

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: RESPONSE

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>a</sup>
Model	5303.667 <sup>b</sup>	24	220.986	165.324	.000	.851	3967.774	1.000
TEXTTYPE	259.733	7	37.105	27.759	.000	.218	194.311	1.000
LEVELS	72.503	2	36.251	27.120	.000	.072	54.241	1.000
TEXTTYPE * LEVELS	62.542	14	4.467	3.342	.000	.063	46.789	.999
Error	930.333	696	1.337					
Total	6234.000	720						

a. Computed using alpha = .05

b. R Squared = .851 (Adjusted R Squared = .846)

**Table 4.2 Tests of Between – Subjects Effects**

Tables of Estimated Marginal Means show standard errors of means for each effect, to be reported in the Result section. Table 3.2 shows text types varied from a mean high of 3.511 for scaffolded narrative types to a mean low of 1.86 for non-scaffolded argumentative types. Table 3.3 shows levels of learners also varied from a mean high of 2.921 for mid level of learners to a mean low of 2.175 for low level of learners. Table 3.4 shows interactions between various text types and different proficiency levels varied from a mean high of 4.200 for scaffolded narrative text types for mid level of learners to a mean low of 1.200 for non-scdescriptive text types for low level of learners.

**Table 4.3 Estimated Marginal Means**

**1. Grand Mean**

Dependent Variable: RESPONSE

Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
2.611	.043	2.527	2.696

**2. TEXTTYPE**

Dependent Variable: RESPONSE

TEXTTYPE	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Scexplanative	2.778	.122	2.539	3.017
Nonscexplanative	1.900	.122	1.661	2.139
Scdescriptive	3.256	.122	3.016	3.495
Nonscdescriptive	1.956	.122	1.716	2.195
Scargumentative	2.989	.122	2.750	3.228
Nonscargumentative	1.867	.122	1.627	2.106
Scnarrative	3.511	.122	3.272	3.750
Nonscnarrative	2.633	.122	2.394	2.873

**3. LEVELS**

Dependent Variable: RESPONSE

LEVELS	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	2.175	.075	2.028	2.322
Mid	2.921	.075	2.774	3.067
High	2.738	.075	2.591	2.884

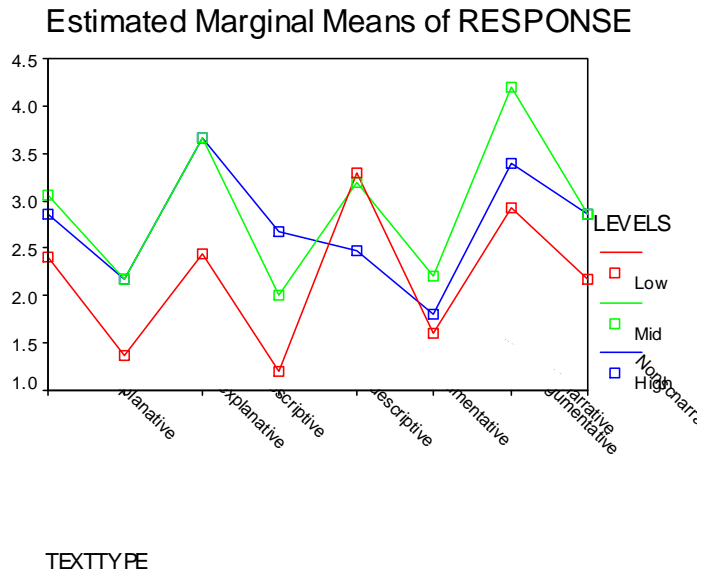
**4. LEVELS \* TEXTTYPE**

Dependent Variable: RESPONSE

LEVELS	TEXTTYPE	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	Scexplanative	2.400	.211	1.986	2.814
	Nonscexplanative	1.367	.211	.952	1.781
	Scdescriptive	2.433	.211	2.019	2.848
	Nonscdescriptive	1.200	.211	.786	1.614
	Scargumentative	3.300	.211	2.886	3.714
	Nonscargumentative	1.600	.211	1.186	2.014
	Scnarrative	2.933	.211	2.519	3.348
	Nonscnarrative	2.167	.211	1.752	2.581
Mid	Scexplanative	3.067	.211	2.652	3.481
	Nonscexplanative	2.167	.211	1.752	2.581
	Scdescriptive	3.667	.211	3.252	4.081
	Nonscdescriptive	2.000	.211	1.586	2.414
	Scargumentative	3.200	.211	2.786	3.614
	Nonscargumentative	2.200	.211	1.786	2.614
	Scnarrative	4.200	.211	3.786	4.614
	Nonscnarrative	2.867	.211	2.452	3.281
High	Scexplanative	2.867	.211	2.452	3.281
	Nonscexplanative	2.167	.211	1.752	2.581
	Scdescriptive	3.667	.211	3.252	4.081
	Nonscdescriptive	2.667	.211	2.252	3.081
	Scargumentative	2.467	.211	2.052	2.881
	Nonscargumentative	1.800	.211	1.386	2.214
	Scnarrative	3.400	.211	2.986	3.814
	Nonscnarrative	2.867	.211	2.452	3.281

Figure 1 plots means and standard errors for all combinations of various text types and different proficiency levels.

**Figure4.1 Estimated Marginal Means of Responses**



## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The Systemic Functional Linguistics pedagogic model (Halliday,1994) typically conceives of the teaching and learning process as a cycle, allowing students different points of entry and enabling teachers to gradually and systematically expand the meanings students can create through increasingly sophisticated understanding of how texts work (Rothery, 1996). This methodology draws on Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding to support the learner through an interactive process of contextualization, analysis, discussion, and joint negotiation of texts. This approach can be explored in focusing on genre and text-types (Paltridge, 2001), exploiting genre sets (Paltridge, in press), and establishing text-based syllabuses (Feez, 1998, Cited in Hyland, 2002).

Genre-based approaches, where teaching and learning focuses on the understanding and production of selected genres of texts have become increasingly influential in the field of English language teaching (Derewianka, 2003), and identified as one of the major trends in the new millennium (Rodgers, 2001). Genre-based approaches are concerned with the social purposes of language, and not just form: the genres in focus are generally defined according to social purposes of communication. The classification and labeling of genres may vary, depending on the theoretical influences behind each approach. For example, in some instances, genres are defined in terms of familiar broad categories such as narratives, description, persuasion and argumentation and so on. (Lin, 2006)

There was no agreement on the definition of narrative text and researchers still debating over the features of a story. Usually a narrative text depicts events, actions, emotions, or situations of people in a cultural experience (Graesser et al., 1991). A story is written to excite, inform, or entertain readers (Pearson & Fielding, 1991) and may report true or fictitious experiences (Graesser et al., 1991).

Morgan (2007) defines narrative is a text composed in signed, written or spoken medium. Narrative is taken to be a particular use of language, and discourse is a term used to describe a particular analytical level of language structure, involving the conjoining of several utterance strings across the sentence boundary. Narrative involves the building up of layers of information about characters, places and events. Bruner (1988, 1990, 2002) has researched and written extensively about the role of narrative as a way of knowing and a major form of language that profoundly structures experience. Indeed, the metaphor of 'life as narrative' sums up Bruner's (1988) claims that stories become inseparable in our lives, intertwined in our living, telling and interpreting. Vygotskian concepts also identifies narrative as a cultural-cum-cognitive tool (Egan, 2002), and structures storytelling and conversational inquiry through forms of scaffolding and narrative practices. (Cited in Grant, 2006).

Graesser et al. (1991) forwarded three reasons for the privileged status of narrative text structure. First, narrative content is typically more familiar to students than expository content. Graesser et al. (1991) referred to the more familiar content as mutual knowledge, with narrative text structure having a higher density of "mutual knowledge" (e.g., shared experiences, world knowledge structures) than expository text structure. Second, this familiar content of narrative includes event sequences (e.g., intentional acts in pursuit of goals; events that occur in the material world). Event sequences are the core content of most children and adults' experience in everyday life. Third, narrative structure is prevalent in oral language. (Alidib, 2004)

Hazel (2008) states various disciplinary and organizational studies across the world have demonstrated a growing interest in narrative. This may well be a function of our information society, where communication and the means of communication have become increasingly important to societies, organizations, and individuals alike. As a fundamental form of human expression through which individuals are able to make sense of themselves, their lives, and events (Gergen, 1994; Hanninen, 2004), narratives construct a spatio temporal context that assists in meaning-making. In particular, referring to narratives in organizational studies, Boyce (1995) posits that narratives constitute symbolic forms through which groups and members of organizations can construct meaning. Narratives also provide individuals with a means to express and shape their identities.

Davis, Megan, et.al (2007) argue that narrative is central to the construction of social meaning. By fitting events into a narrative pattern we construct and inhabit a meaningful, consistent and predictable world (Bruner 2002). We develop our sense of self and are able to understand the behaviors of others and to respond in ways seen as meaningful and consistent. Narrative gives a framework for interpreting new events, in particular surprising events or behaviors which do not accord with our expectations, and for fitting them into a temporal framework (Bruner 2002; Porter Abbott 2002). Stories also serve us in the classrooms in two main ways: they provide a means of teaching and learning in general; they provide a means of teaching language, specifically.

Willis (1996) suggests that what is essential is that the learner has exposure to accessible language, has opportunity to use language, and has the motivation to learn. Using these three notions – exposure, use, and motivation – it is easy to see how story lends itself easily to the fulfillment of Willis' conditions for learning. The text of the story provides the potential for comprehensible input that is language within the range of access of the learner. This input can be achieved in multiple ways: for example, by a teacher scaffolding such as reading aloud, a number of learners sharing stories with one another, groups of students working on a core text and taking it in different directions according to their own imaginations. Generally a story offers an opportunity to engage in the calibrating, adjusting and repair work that happen in language interactions. (Morgan,2007; Wajnryb, 2003). Stories are connected task that engages the audience in further activity. In the classroom setting, a connected task that accompanies, precedes or follows the story may afford the learner further opportunity to use the language. The classroom context also offers the possibility of feedback – from the teacher or from other students which is an important component of language use. The story itself that is its content and meaning, addresses the issue of motivation. Stories in the classroom have something about the action – happening as we speak quality of narrative that moves a listener along with the story line, involving and engaging the learner. It would seem then, that using story in the classroom is both a natural way to teach in general and a particularly effective way to teach language. (Wajnryb, 2003).

This study focused on the effects of scaffolding language on learning reading comprehension of various text modes at different levels of language proficiency. The findings support the idea of both text types and levels of language proficiency of dependency in reading comprehension tasks in the hypothesis. Concerning scaffolding text types, the findings of this study support the important role of carefully selected reading materials double as effective prompts for reading comprehension. Among different genre and text-types, narrative genre is more sensitive to scaffolding than other text-types. The findings of the study also support the important role of overall language proficiency in processing reading comprehension. The results of the analyses showed that the mid proficiency group of subjects did differently on all scaffolded text-types, while such a difference in the performances of low and high proficiency group of subjects was not discerned. Moreover, the interactions between various text types and different proficiency levels showed the superiority of scaffolded narrative text types for mid level of learners.

The findings of the present study offer several theoretical and practical implications for reading comprehension skill in EFL contexts. At a theoretical level, first the study helps take a step forward in the shift of paradigm of SLA theories from transmissional to transformative that is from cognitivism theories to social constructivism. Second, the concept of holistic view of language learning can be backed up concerning different skills i.e. reading skill is not separated from other skills such as writing, listening and speaking.

There is a growing realization among EFL teachers that the overt processes involved in the four skills of language which have been, in the past, treated somewhat in isolation, in fact have so much in common with each other, that it makes much more sense to treat them holistically. It has been noted that the links between reading and writing, for example, have been emphasized to such an extent that it is now normal to see them referred to as literacy. (Wray & Medwell 1991)

There are some practical implications of the proposed model of reading comprehension. Vygotsky's strategy was essentially a cooperative learning strategy. Regarding teaching, for example, it is recommended that the classroom should be viewed at a socio-cultural setting where an active participation in the target language culture is taught, and enhanced. The findings of this research would contribute to the development of materials for EFL learners in general, and for learners at different levels of language ability in particular. For instance new textbooks should be written to promote the view of second language ability as the process of becoming an active participant in the target language culture. Moreover, if the materials are intended for mid level of learners, the texts for reading comprehension should be given primacy and superiority to narrative genre over to other text types. As the level of proficiency of the learners increases, so would the variety of the selected text types. Of course, further research with different gender and age groups is needed to both verify and consolidate the findings of this research. Such research will definitely shed more light to our understanding of the nature of scaffolding of reading comprehension.

There are various limitations to the study arising from the various necessary decisions that needed to be made in the course of carrying out the research. One limitation pertained to focusing purely on the formal features of different text types or genres in fact leave out one of the most important elements of reading to accomplish social purposes. We need ways therefore to emphasize the fact that although genres are usually characterized by certain regularities of form, the form that a genre is typically recognized as having is in fact driven by the social action that we want to accomplish. In other words, there is the danger of oversimplifying by assuming blocks of texts to be mono-functional and ignoring writers' complex purposes.

Moreover, that the experimental group received the treatment from the researcher himself was a potential limitation to the study. Following Klingner et al. (1998), it was also thought important to carry out the instruction by other classroom teachers. Future research is needed to determine if the results and findings of the study can be replicated when regular classroom teachers are trained to implement the treatment. Another limitation of the study is the classification of the collected texts into elementary, intermediate and advanced English texts is somehow arbitrary one. The researcher trusted on the intuitions of the authors who are scholars in the field of applied linguistics. The last one is that some of the participants may be quite familiar with the structural elements of a narrative while others not this may affect the results of the study. This problem should be controlled in the pretest.

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