

The use of scaffolding to support an EAL (English as an Additional Language) student in the UK

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The purpose of this small scale action research was to find out how to support a newly arrived student in the UK with English as an Additional Language (EAL). The EAL support accelerates the speed of those students to make themselves prepared to follow the national curriculum. The subject of the research was a 13 year old Afghan Muslim girl who arrived in the UK without experiencing any form of formal education due to the political situation in Afghanistan. When investigating how to support the subject who represented many other newly arrived students whose first language is not English, scaffolding played a major part. The research was completed in seven cycles and each cycle “composed of four stage procedure such as the planning stage, the acting stage, the developing stage and the reflecting stage”(Mertler & Charles cited in Mertler, (2006:11). “Scaffolding is the instructional support that helps learners to accomplish tasks that might otherwise be too challenging” (Williams, 2005:59). The trial lessons were tailored according to a task-based approach. The support provided to the subject was considered as “contingent teaching “(Wood, 1988:81) because at the beginning of each task the subject was given the full support with a gradual removal of scaffolding towards the end of the task. The research proved that continuous support extended to the subject made her feel relaxed at the beginning of the tasks and a strong urge to continue the tasks even when the scaffolding was removed. Data was collected through observation, field notes and pupil’s responses. Data was analysed using “inductive process” (Mertler, 2006:124). Through the research, the importance of scaffolding and how the demands and the support could be balanced were perceived.

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