Scaffolding and bilingual shared reading experiences: Promoting primary school students' learning and development

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This paper explores the connections between scaffolding, second language learning and bilingual shared reading experiences. A socio-cultural theory of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) underpins the investigation, which involved implementing a Language and Culture Awareness Program (LCAP) in a Year 4 classroom and in the school community. Selected passages from observations are used to analyse the learning of three students, particularly in relation to Languages Other Than English (LOTE). As these three case study students interacted in the classroom, at home and in the community, they co-constructed, appropriated and applied knowledge from one language to another. Through scaffolding, social spaces were constructed, where student learning and development were extended through a variety of activities that involved active participation, such as experimenting with language, asking questions and making suggestions. Extending these opportunities for student learning and development is considered in relation to creating teaching and learning environments that celebrate socio-cultural and linguistic diversity.

Introduction

Supporting children's literacy and language learning from a socio-cultural perspective has become increasingly appropriate in the current context of globalisation, complex migratory patterns and polarisation between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Sociocultural approaches to literacy emphasise the importance of integrating students' everyday life experiences and cultural practices into classroom pedagogies (Bloch, 1999; Breen et al., 1994; Heath, 1983; Toohey, 2001). In this regard, the shared reading context has particular pertinence because it offers a flexible arrangement that simulates an 'at home' storytime atmosphere, which enables learners to approach literacy through discussion and meaning-centred activities tailored to their needs. In relation to second language learning, whilst empirical studies have investigated the effects of shared reading, the methodology has generally been experimental or focused on participants who are learning the mainstream
language of a community. Little is known about how students enhance their second language development via bilingual shared reading experiences. Furthermore, little is known about how children obtain information from both first and second language experiences, appropriate it and apply it to various contexts, such as peer – peer interaction in the home or community. As scaffolding takes place with different partners and contexts, the breadth and depth of the zone of proximal development can be affected. The purpose of this article therefore is to enrich our understanding of how middle primary students can construct, apply and appropriate knowledge gained from bilingual shared reading experiences. In particular, the article will examine how students become agents of change, who disrupt routine learning in a school community, as they are challenged in a diverse socio-cultural environment via a process referred to as multi-tiered scaffolding.

Shared reading in classrooms
Holdaway (1979) initially employed the term shared reading experience in classrooms to describe the interaction between teachers and students during reading as well as the social and literacy events surrounding the story. These events took place typically in early childhood settings characterised by developmental literacy programs. Since Holdaway’s use of enlarged books to create a print-stimulated process, experimental studies aimed at promoting academic outcomes have investigated shared reading in classrooms (Aldridge, 1993; Morrow, O’Connor & Smith, 1990).

Involving students in classroom shared reading experiences can be especially significant for supporting second language learners. Strickland, Morrow, Fietelson and Iraqui (1990) examined disadvantaged Arab children who spoke a non-standard local Arab dialect before formal schooling where standard literate Arab was the norm. Individual tests of listening comprehension and a picture-story telling task demonstrated that children from the experimental class, who participated in shared reading everyday, outperformed their peers who participated in a structured language development program, in areas of listening comprehension and active language use. Carger (1993) observed that the rereading of two storybooks with ESL learners in class improved second language word count. As well as the quantifiable data, Carger noted affective results such as children’s increasing self-confidence and communication abilities after repeated pretend readings. Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri (1993) examined the metalinguistic benefits of an Italian program that focused on stories, rhymes and pictures. Conclusions suggested that after six months of instruction, marginally bilingual children showed a significantly higher level of word awareness than their monolingual counterparts. In a junior-primary ESL classroom, Dansie (2001) utilised story reading and retelling within a curriculum cycle to scaffold
oral language through processes such as modelling and joint construction. Results indicated that teacher practice involving high challenge and high support maximised student learning by creating conditions whereby students could practice retelling stories prior to producing more complex language.

This school-based research affirms the conclusions of earlier correlational studies that indicated a positive relationship between early childhood reading experiences with adults and children’s vocabulary development, their eagerness to read and success in learning to read (Chomsky, 1972; Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1974-75). However, since the 1980s, researchers have increasingly opted for descriptive methods to analyse how the complex interplay of oral and written language between adults and children in shared reading promotes emergent literacy skills (Heath, 1983; Phillips & McNaughton, 1990; Teale & Sulzby, 1987; Wells, 1986). More recently, researchers have employed socio-cultural paradigms to highlight issues of authority and power in the discourse patterns between teachers and students during shared reading. After examining the conversational interaction of small talk around big books in two Year two classrooms, Talty (1995) concluded that if traditional classroom question, answer and evaluation sequences dominate discourse, literacy learning is reduced to a competition aimed at guessing teacher answers. O’Brien (1998, 2001) worked extensively with a Reception to Year Two classroom to reveal how the perceived authority of texts could be disrupted by scaffolding students to critically analyse mass-market texts.

**Evolving frameworks of scaffolding in first and second language learning**

The metaphor of scaffolding was developed to describe how adults support children’s problem-solving activity through graduated and strategic assistance (Bruner, 1983; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). As such, it builds on a particular vision of how the zone of proximal development might be created through parental tutoring. Vygotsky (1978) described the zone of proximal development as the difference between the child’s actual level of development assessed through independent problem solving and the level of potential development determined from various forms of assisted performance. Recently, in school settings, practitioners have embraced the metaphor of scaffolding to describe the temporary structures of teacher support provided to facilitate children’s understanding and skills (Hammond & Gibbons, 2001).

However, the metaphor of scaffolding has often been viewed as a linear process, involving a sympathetic adult guiding a co-operative child, who gradually gains more control in the partnership. For example, Sharpe (2001) focused on the role of the teacher in the classroom to plan explicit strategies and execute ‘point of need’ scaffolding that builds on students’ questions during teacher-student talk. This perspective high-
lights the expert relinquishing control by directing the learner's attention to key aspects of the tasks, monitoring progress and adjusting degrees of assistance. However, some researchers have focused more intently on the child's active participation in problem-solving activities (Paris & Cross, 1988; Rogoff, 1990; Stone, 1993), which complements the more teacher-focused view of scaffolding. For example, Rogoff (1990) extended the concept of the zone of proximal development by describing two elements of guided participation: the interdependent and complementary role of children, their caregivers and companions and the importance of distal and face-to-face social interaction. Stone (1993) and Wells (1999) claimed that the potential for learning within the zone of proximal development varies as a function of the interpersonal relationship and interaction between participants rather than as a fixed attribute of the learner. Renshaw (1996) argued that the manner in which children obtain information from scaffolding and appropriate it through different contexts, such as peer-peer interactions or individual activities, needs to be investigated.

These authors have taken into consideration the sometimes conflicting nature which characterises social relationships during the scaffolding process. For example, despite a limited level of competence in a specific task, some children nonetheless attempt to lead or control the activity. On other occasions, children may resist requests by the adult to engage in an activity. A child may resist by objecting to suggestions by the scaffolding adult, or by telling the adult to do merely mechanical and peripheral aspects of the activity. Paradoxically in this process, the child begins to adopt the adult-like identity of the manager and designer of the activity. So, whilst we have learned a great deal about the scaffolding process, little is known about how students' learning and participation in scaffolding episodes are influenced by factors such as the context of the learning situation (e.g. school or home), the relationship between participants (e.g. family members or peers) and differences in meditational tools employed (e.g. books or multi-media texts). In particular, the extent to which factors such as changing partners and contexts might also influence the breadth of the child's zone of proximal development in second language learning has yet to be investigated.

To adapt the metaphor of scaffolding to investigate the zone of proximal development in second language learning, the study drew upon elements of the interactionist view (Krashen, 1982; Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). This perspective suggests that second language acquisition is supported by comprehensible input, created during natural conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers. Long (1985) suggested that the concept of 'interactional modification' was a necessary mechanism for making input comprehensible in conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers. Native speakers were seen to adjust their language level to facilitate comprehension, especially for beginning-level
learners acquiring a second language.

In particular, Lapp, Flood and Tinajero (1994) coined the term 'oral previewing' to describe the adjustment of teachers' language input to children's language proficiency and comprehension level during story reading in second language learning. This teaching strategy involves scaffolding techniques such as making frequent repetitions of key words and ideas, clarifying the meaning of words through illustrations and using gestures, body language and facial expressions to convey concepts. Again, the focus is on the process by which an adult assists a child to complete tasks beyond the child's individual capabilities (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). A broader metaphor for scaffolding in second language learning would consider the participation of students with a variety of partners and the patterns of harmony and conflict, characteristic of co-constructed meaning. Here, conclusions from research conducted in first language settings that focused on students' and teachers' roles during scaffolded activities can facilitate the reflection related to second language learning. For example, Jones (2001) claimed that differing beliefs about the processes of learning could shape classroom events; scaffolding strategies can unfold differently in two classes due to students' differing perceptions of the purpose of talk in the classroom environment.

The research context

The investigation took place at Saint Gabrielle's Catholic primary school in an isolated region in Queensland. A principal research question underpinning this qualitative study was 'How did student learning and development change in relation to use and understanding of language and social interaction during a teaching experiment?' As described by Davydov (1994), the term teaching experiment is based on an innovative research methodology introduced by Vygotsky (1926/1991), which examines children's development in a dynamic manner by focusing on the appropriation of socio-cultural patterns through upbringing and teaching. Characterised by active intervention of the researcher into the psychological and cultural processes being studied, this type of experiment differs significantly from the verification method that attempts to isolate and control independent variables.

Over a period of nine months, the principal researcher (Wendy) adopted the dual role of teacher-researcher in the school community. The selected Year 4 class consisted of 28 students, the majority of whom had little or no previous experience with LOTE classes in primary school, and their regular teacher. Although the teaching of French was the focus of the program, languages such as English, Dutch and Danish were also used to take advantage of the children's own resources. Throughout the study, the literacy learning of three students (Jerry, Sarah and Tom) was tracked in three case studies, which documented the students' language use and social interaction with a variety of partners in formal and informal
learning settings. As the case study students’ participation was analysed, the connections between scaffolding and second language learning emerged as important for understanding learning and development.

Methodology
Phase one of the study involved negotiating access to the field site and ensuring that trust was developed between the researcher and participants. In Phase two, the pilot study, various instruments in the classroom were trialled, such as direct observation, interviews and videotaped bilingual sequences. Phase three, the main study, involved implementing the teaching experiment using a variety of strategies. Nine semi-structured group and individual interviews were conducted with parents, teachers and students. Direct observation of students’ social interaction in formal and informal first and second language learning situations was conducted. A major focus of the main study was the design, implementation and analysis of the LCAP; the aim was to challenge students to extend their current understandings and literacy practices and begin to explore a diverse socio-cultural and linguistic environment.

Both traditional and participant observations were useful for recording events in diverse contexts, such as the classroom, school, local library and home. During participant observation, Wendy engaged in an active role, such as marking students’ work, conducting bilingual shared reading experiences or animating English reading groups organised by the classroom teacher. These participant observations were retrospectively recorded in a research journal, which provided a means to reflect and generate hypotheses and sometimes guide future interventions.

Videotaping was also conducted to capture moments of the daily life of the students. Although flexibility was permitted following discoveries grounded in the fieldwork, a predetermined plan guided some of the filming sequences. Care was taken to follow a procedure that would gradually introduce and demystify the video equipment for participants. For example, during the first week of data collection, the video camera and tripod were presented to the students, who were then given the opportunity to ask questions about the equipment. The following week, when the video camera and tripod were set up in the classroom, students were permitted to look through the camera lens and adjust the angle.

Teaching methods
In particular, the LCAP in the selected Year 4 classroom and school community involved the animation of a series of literacy activities for students, including:

• 7 bilingual shared reading experiences (classroom and local library)
• 1 shared reading experience (classroom)
In the classroom, independence in language learning was also encouraged through the establishment of a bilingual learning centre where students could choose to work. Following their engagement in learning centre tasks, students were encouraged to reflect on their learning through informal conversations. Parents were also encouraged to participate in the LCAP by conducting shared reading experiences in the classroom, with the option of introducing a LOTE through a story. To promote home-school links, a newsletter relating to the LCAP was distributed on a regular basis. The classroom teacher was also encouraged to engage in formal and informal curriculum planning and assessment of the LCAP. As described by Johnstone (1994), the approach used was based on awareness and emphasised two objectives. The first aimed to sensitise children to the nature, purpose and structure of language (language awareness). The second aimed to sensitise children to aspects of the cultures in which particular languages are spoken (cultural awareness). Via an integrated model, which has previously been utilised in second language teaching in Germany (Bliesener, 1993), the awareness perspective was combined with the embedding model (Johnstone, 1994), which integrates the teaching of a second language to other learning areas, such as English and Society and Environment.

The integration of curriculum areas was promoted particularly through the concept of the bilingual shared reading experience, which emphasised the social interaction and dialogue inspired by print or conversations surrounding print. The emphasis on social interaction also reflects a socio-cultural perspective, which examines the goals and beliefs underling the reading event and the process through which it is carried out. This integrated approach to sharing stories was adapted from the work of Holdaway (1979), Luke and Freebody (1999) and van Kraayenoord and Moni (1999). For example, during the Code Breaker practice, the pedagogical leader (Wendy, the community librarian or a parent) introduced the theme words or expressions in LOTE by using songs, poems or games. Here, attempts were also made to access students’ prior knowledge by asking for predictions about the story to be told or read. Illustrations, titles and sub-titles in the chosen story were used in discussions.

The Text Participant practice involved the students listening, thinking, responding to or initiating questions or comments about the story. Often, the LOTE theme words were repeated in chorus throughout the story reading or telling. Sometimes students were invited to use learning management strategies such as note taking or drawing the story. Here, students were also encouraged to critically analyse the story by discussing elements such as plot, characters and language use. When appropriate, attempts were made to discuss the author’s depiction of
socio-cultural and linguistic diversity. The Extension of the Text practice involved students’ engaging in written or oral activities (in English and/or LOTE), such as playing memory match games, interactive computer games or making story maps, which reinforced concepts or expressions introduced in the stories.

**Results:**

**Spaces for learning and development during scaffolding**

As Jerry, Sarah and Tom’s progress was tracked during the LCAP, results indicated that the most dramatic possibilities for learning and development were observed in social spaces that unfolded as pedagogical connections were made between school, home and the community. These meeting points were shaped through social interaction and a variety of contextual elements, such as teaching strategies, formal objectives and perceptions of various actors in the field. Sahni (2001) described social spaces as circles of mutuality where children restructure the class through actions such as making choices, playing with language and expressing needs and wishes. For Jerry, Sarah and Tom, social spaces were constructed frequently during informal group contexts where children’s talk was predominant and teacher intervention was minimal. In such spaces, teachers attempt to build on students’ previous knowledge by providing open-ended questions and directive strategies to support risk-taking (Van Lier, 1999). Because teachers are not viewed as the only source of authoritative knowledge, these spaces blur the boundaries between teachers and students by dispersing social control. The social spaces in which students’ learning and development were particularly illuminated involved a process referred to as multi-tiered scaffolding (Cumming-Potvin, 2001). Here, Jerry, Sarah and Tom monitored and extended their learning through collaboration during purposeful, child-directed tasks with peer partners of differing ages and an adult. The nature of the sequential interaction was often triangular (involving three participants), and emphasised the sharing of expertise to complete a common task. This interactive and sometimes unpredictable sharing of peer-peer and child-adult language appeared to momentarily rupture the predominant teaching-learning pattern observed in the classroom, which involved much teacher-talk, student passivity and the exclusive use of English. For Sarah, the process of multi-tiered scaffolding was revealed in an informal classroom-based activity involving English and Dutch. Wendy initially provided scaffolding during a Code Breaker activity, which followed a story reading. Courtesy expressions in diverse languages (i.e. bonjour, hola and sayonara) were introduced and students were invited to bring multilingual resources from home to share. Several weeks later, Maureen (a pupil in the Year 4 classroom), excitedly approached Wendy in the corridor and stated that her mother had received a Dutch birthday card from friends in Holland, but neither she
nor her mother could read it. Wendy suggested that Sarah (whose family spoke Dutch) might help by translating the greetings from Dutch to English. As illustrated in the following extract taken from transcribed field notes of the informal Text User activity ‘Dutch Birthday Card’ (7/4/98), by translating the Dutch greetings, Sarah provided scaffolding for both a peer and an adult, which allowed the three participants (Maureen, Sarah and Wendy) to function collaboratively in the zone of proximal development:

Maureen [She hands the card over to Sarah]: Can you tell us what this means in English?
[Sarah takes the card and begins to read it.]
Wendy: A friend from Holland sent it to Maureen’s Mum for her birthday.
Sarah: Wait a minute. [She opens and closes the card several times as she rereads it.] I’m not sure.
Wendy: Maybe we could ask your Mum.
Sarah [She is still looking at the card]: No, I don’t need to ask her. I can read it. It says ... Hip, hip Hooray. Ah, [She points to the words.] Congratulations on this special day.
Maureen [smiling]: Thanks Sarah.
Sarah: It’s okay. [She smiles and hands back the card to Maureen.]
Wendy: [looking at the card as Maureen holds it]. Some of the words are similar in Dutch and English.
Maureen: Yeh.
[Sarah and Maureen move together and look closely at the Dutch words].

During this informal reading task, Sarah assisted Maureen to make conceptual links between languages by appropriating past knowledge from bilingual shared reading experiences in school, community and home settings. Rather than identifying isolated pre-determined words, Sarah embarked on a complex process of translation that involved coining the meaning of Dutch expressions that necessitated a general comprehension of the text. Previously, during a formal bilingual shared story session animated by the community librarian, Sarah stated that she was unable to speak Dutch. However, when given an informal opportunity to create meaning from two languages, Sarah adopted the role of resource person by focusing on the linguistic demands of the task. As Sarah began to monitor her learning and that of others, she resisted the suggestion to consult her mother. Here, Sarah’s ascending ownership for the task alludes to the shifting nature of the zone of proximal development, which varies in relation to the context of the learning, the participants’ perceived identity and the relationship established between group members.

For Jerry, the process of multi-tiered scaffolding was revealed in a classroom activity entitled ‘Jerry and Doug Work Together’ (30/3/98), which involved both English and French. Jerry’s mother, who spoke French as a first language, initially offered scaffolding by modelling the
use of the French letter game to Wendy in a home setting. Several weeks later, Wendy modelled the mechanics of the French game to the students while explaining a range of tasks for the bilingual learning centre. Following the demonstration, Jerry and Doug (who had established a friendship outside the classroom), spontaneously chose to collaborate to complete the task. For several minutes, the boys repeated the following series of steps that allowed them to focus on graphophonic aspects of the words and function collaboratively in the zone of proximal development:

- Jerry pointed to a specific word on the card;
- Doug took the appropriate letter out of the box and handed it Jerry;
- Jerry and/or Doug pronounced the name of the letter;
- Jerry placed the letter on the card.

For Tom, multi-tiered scaffolding emerged as an evolving network of peer-peer and teacher-student partnerships in a formal group activity that involved the use of English and French. For example, following several formal bilingual shared reading experiences in class settings, Wendy provided books published in both English and French during partner shared reading sessions. As illustrated in Turn 1 of the following extract taken from transcribed field notes of the activity ‘Tom reads with Cathy and Mary’ (3/4/98), Wendy provided scaffolding by inviting the students to select a book from the collection placed on the bench.

In Turn 4, Mary, (a pre-primary aged child who was informally visiting the class), initiated a second stage in the scaffolding process. Raised in a bilingual environment from birth, Mary spoke only English in the public arena, but used French at home. Mary’s desire to read in French was associated with her ability to comprehend simple conversations and pronounce isolated words in French. After examining the collection of books, Mary insisted on reading one that was written in French. When Mary handed the book ‘Petit Ours Brun’ to Tom and Cathy, she physically articulated her desire to be read to in French. She also pointed to the illustration and provided the English translation for the word ‘petit’, thus providing scaffolding for the two Year 4 students. Confronted with a perceived inability to read French, but a willingness to help a younger peer, Tom and Cathy directed their attention to Wendy. In Turn 7, Tom initiated the third stage in the scaffolding process by asking Wendy to read the book. In Turn 8, Wendy read the first page before asking the children a question that encouraged them to take responsibility for solving the linguistic challenge.

[Wendy places the books on the bench for the students to peruse. Mary, who is sitting on another bench, stands up, walks over to the pile of books and begins to look through them].

[Mary chooses a book written in French and returns to the benches where Tom and Cathy are sitting. Mary hands the book to both partners.]
[Tom and Cathy open the book together and look at the pages.] This book's in French! [They turn towards the researcher, who is sitting approximately two metres away on the bench.]
Wendy: Is it?
Mary: She takes the book from Tom and Cathy. I want to read this one. Little brown bear. [She points to the illustration on the front cover]. Petit. See [points to bear]. He's little.
[With Mary in the middle and Tom and Cathy on either side, all three partners sit on the bench looking intensely at several pages in the book.]
Tom: [He directs his attention to Wendy, looking slightly worried.] Can you read it?
[Wendy approaches the children, looks over their shoulders and reads the title page of the book.] Petit Ours Brun se reveille. What do you think se reveille means?
Mary: He's getting up.
Wendy: That's right. It looks like he's waking up.

As the episode unfolded, both Year 4 partners collaborated to create meaning from the French text. They predicted the meaning of isolated French words by comparing English and French spelling and by associating the written text with illustrations. As Tom and Cathy created English meaning for words such as 'Maman', 'non' and 'content', they initiated a fourth stage of scaffolding. Although initially reserved about reading French, Tom and Cathy extended their learning through the collaborative use of word attack strategies which were consistent with those used during previous bilingual shared reading experiences whereby Wendy demonstrated how to search for similarities between words in French and English. This episode thus demonstrates the effectiveness of students appropriating past skills and strategies that, taken alone, would have been insufficient to successfully complete the present task. In addition, as Tom and Cathy purposefully translated words from French to English for Mary and attempted to read, they affirmed their identity as English speakers who were able to read words in French.

Discussion
To complement the socio-cultural theory of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), Mehan's model of discourse analysis (1979), which described talk in classrooms as a teacher-initiated, structured round of questioning, was adapted to consider how structured and naturally occurring scaffolding is embedded and renewed by dialogue, contexts and partnerships. To analyse the phenomenon which has been described as multi-tiered scaffolding, Mehan's definition of initiation was widened to accommodate teacher, student and peer utterances, that were articulated in the form of questions or statements. From this viewpoint, current speakers are perceived to expect that one of a range of possible actions should be completed by subsequent speakers (Schegloff, 1972). To extend the notion, scaffolding that takes place during dialogue between
past and present speakers is influenced not only by the learning context and the relationship between speakers and listeners (Stone, 1993; Wells, 1999), but also by the language used, the dynamic nature of the subjectspecific knowledge and skills of participants and their perceived identity within the learning task.

In this sense, the notion of multi-tiered scaffolding broadens the widely accepted definition of scaffolding as temporary support whereby a more accomplished partner (normally a parent or teacher), gradually relinquishes control to an apprentice (Bruner, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Sharpe, 2001). In the examples relating to Sarah, Jerry and Tom, a zone of proximal development was created through the process of sequential, triangular interaction that involved the interplay between a multiplicity of past and present ‘voices’. Here, scaffolding comprised sequenced partnerships involving at least three individuals. The first partner provided scaffolding for at least one other member of the partnership. The second partner(s) then provided scaffolding for a third partner(s). Whilst the second round of scaffolding often occurred almost immediately, it sometimes took place several weeks later in a new context.

By emphasising the dynamic nature of the scaffolding process with respect to partners, time and setting, the notion of multi-tiered scaffolding adds nuances to popular classroom shared reading models. Such models explicate the various components of typical shared reading experiences that teachers animate in classrooms. The notion of multi-tiered scaffolding explores evolving small group interactions where students using bilingual texts in ways that connect knowledge constructed from home, school and community experiences. Tom appropriated word attack strategies gained from shared story experiences to use in a purposeful bilingual setting where he scaffolded and was scaffolded by a younger aged peer. Sarah appropriated Dutch linguistic skills gained in the home setting to scaffold an adult and a peer informally in class. Whilst engaging with a French board game provided by his mother, Jerry applied graphophonic strategies and collaborated with a friend to complete a learning task. It is in these relatively unexplored zones that the children began to appropriate knowledge and skills obtained in one context to use in various combinations of peer-peer and teacher-student interaction.

These learning contexts often involved the use of two languages; multi-tiered scaffolding generally coincided with purposeful tasks in which students collaborated to complete a bilingual activity with partners of differing ages. Although students collaborated, at least one member of the partnership momentarily adopted the adult-like identity of designer or manager of the task. Group members’ identity sometimes shifted as knowledge was extended. When faced with the inability to understand Dutch, Wendy momentarily relinquished the voice of authority to Sarah.
As Sarah adopted the role of resource person, she expressed a ‘voice’ that served not only to scaffold others, but also to construct an identity that was linked to a community of bilingual learners. In this sense, the metaphor of scaffolding is widened to encompass not only temporary teacher support in classrooms, but also on-going knowledge gained from peer and family interaction.

**Conclusion**

In this article, an attempt has been made to contribute to the limited amount of research investigating the connections between scaffolding, second language learning and shared reading. Based on a socio-cultural theory of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), the study tracked three Year 4 students’ LOTE learning in relation to bilingual shared reading experiences. A number of socio-cultural research strategies, including the design and implementation of a teaching experiment were utilised to extend students’ current knowledge. As they explored a diverse socio-cultural and linguistic environment, the case study students were challenged by the changing nature of scaffolding in a variety of contexts. Multi-tiered scaffolding was observed as students engaged with various partners to co-construct knowledge in a changing classroom environment that promoted experimenting with language, asking questions and making choices. It appeared that students appropriated and applied knowledge in formal and informal contexts and from one language to another.

In the contemporary Australian classroom, bilingual shared reading experiences used in English and LOTE classes may assist practitioners to widen the ‘tourist method’ often taken towards second language learning. Bilingual stories can be based on authentic pedagogical material, which links teaching and learning to students’ life experiences and socio-cultural practices. These stories may be shared in a manner that incorporates interactions from bilingual resource people in the community. These individuals can contribute by sharing stories and discussing differences and similarities in languages and cultures. Parent volunteers could also assist to decorate the classroom with multilingual posters, signs and paintings. Recycled materials, such as newspapers, magazines and food containers can create visual or tactile experiences reflecting cultural and linguistic diversity. Learning centres can be used to promote a balanced literacy program to acquaint students with a diverse array of languages and cultures through multimodal activities such as viewing videos, listening to recorded music and stories and engaging with interactive computer programs. Picture books written in LOTE can also be included in the classroom library. From this perspective, the actual story reading or telling forms part of a multi-dimensional process undertaken to celebrate the socio-cultural and linguistic diversity of the school community.
References


