How can teachers deliver content to higher standards when learners are struggling to use language in conceptually and grammatically appropriate ways? This Bulletin examines the dynamics of scaffolding, or providing temporary support through multiple, increasingly complex practice opportunities. The purpose of scaffolding is to foster more complex use of language and more independent approaches to learning.

Why is scaffolding important? Just because students can't use English proficiently does not mean they can't think. Scaffolding enables learners to build upon already-known knowledge and understanding and to have practice opportunities to use language with greater complexity and accuracy of expression. Scaffolding involves collaborating with others and/or the teacher. Finally, scaffolding requires learners to talk, i.e., use intended, purposeful, and meaningful connected discourse centered around a particular topic. This inevitably leads to more cognitively demanding learning and creates the pathway to higher standards.

**SEPARATING CONCEPT FROM LANGUAGE**

An important consideration in scaffolding is understanding the difference between content knowledge and the language used to express that knowledge. Although connected to each other, concepts and the language used to talk about them are different. The goal for students is the ability to use appropriate language to demonstrate understanding of content. This does not require grade-appropriate use of language. To be sure, learners must learn to use conceptually appropriate language, but assessment of content is separate from the complexity of the language used to express this understanding. The challenge for teachers is to frame their delivery of instruction comprehensively for all learners and to assess student performance accordingly. This can be accomplished through scaffolding.

The following is a discussion of the different ways scaffolding can be employed in the classroom.
SCAFFOLDING PROCEDURES

1. Scaffolding Content Area Activities
   In designing content activities, teachers can use scaffolding to help students demonstrate conceptual knowledge. Example: Content Standard: Engages in historical inquiry, analysis, and interpretation. Activity: Students develop a list of questions to be answered for a unit on the American Revolution. Language Goal: Students will develop ‘if’ and inferential questions to be answered throughout the unit. Scaffolded Language Goal: Students will brainstorm a series of yes/no and ‘wh’ questions to be answered throughout the unit. Notice that the integrity of the content standard, "Engages in historical inquiry, analysis, and interpretation", is maintained. What differs is the language required to accomplish the task.

2. Verbal Scaffolding
   Teachers can help students expand through language by modeling through restatement and questioning.
   a. Restatement - paraphrasing a student’s response through verbal elaboration. Student: The soldiers did not like the British taxes. Teacher: Yes. The colonists were angry about the system of taxation.
   b. Questioning - How did they show, or manifest, their anger? What did they do to show, or demonstrate, this? Notice that the teacher provides a more accurate reformulation of language, with more specific vocabulary. In addition, the teacher asks the student to expand the answer through additional, follow-up questioning.
   c. Think-aloud - eliciting a learner’s thinking with verbal prompting. It is "exploratory talk" allowing learners to clarify thinking or to try out a line of thinking.
   d. Contextualized definition reinforcement - elaborating with a definition. Teacher: "It was an earthquake. The ground was shaking and the buildings were falling apart."

3. Scaffolding by Teaching on a Continuum
   This scaffolding approach leads to more independent student learning. The following are possible options:
   a. Teacher-centered - lecture, direct instruction, demonstration, recitation;
   b. Teacher-assisted - drill and practice; discovery learning, brainstorming, discussion;
   c. Peer-assisted - role playing, peer tutoring, reciprocal teaching, cooperative learning;
   d. Independent study - rehearsal strategies (repeated reading, selected underlining, two-column-notes); elaboration strategies (mental imagery, guided imagery, creating analogies); and organizational strategies (clustering, graphic organizers, outlining).

4. Scaffolding through Sequencing Instruction
   There are various scaffolding approaches involving sequencing:
   a. Teach/model/practice/apply - using an instruction procedure which ultimately involves practices and individual application opportunities;
   b. One-on-one teaching/coaching/modeling - assisting a student with independent learning through direct intervention.
   c. Whole group/small group/partner/independent reading - sequencing to practice a particular reading strategy or to engage in a reading-related activity.

SOURCES: