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The comparative study of teacher vs. peer scaffolding on improving Iranian EFL learners' speaking skill

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of teacher and peer scaffolding on the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners. Utilizing a quasi-experimental design, 60 intermediate-level female learners were selected from a population of 75, divided into three groups: teacher scaffolding, peer scaffolding, and a control group. The study employed the Preliminary English Test (PET) and speaking pretest and posttest to ensure homogeneity and measure the participants' progress in speaking proficiency. The results of a One-way ANOVA indicated significant improvements in speaking performance for both scaffolding groups compared to the control group. However, no significant difference was found between the effects of teacher and peer scaffolding. These findings suggest that both types of scaffolding are equally effective in enhancing L2 speaking skills, supporting the theoretical framework of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The study underscores the importance of incorporating scaffolding into language instruction to foster better speaking outcomes.

Keywords: Peer Scaffolding, Teacher Scaffolding, Iranian EFL Learners, Speaking Skill

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1. Introduction

Among the four essential language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking holds a particularly critical role in language acquisition and use, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Speaking is the primary mode through which language learners engage in meaningful communication, express ideas, and interact in social and academic contexts. The significance of speaking in language learning cannot be overstated, as it is often the most direct measure of language proficiency and the skill most closely associated with real-world language use (Albino, 2017). The ability to speak a language fluently is often seen as the ultimate goal of language learning, and it is the skill most sought after by learners themselves, who wish to communicate effectively in various contexts.

Speaking as a language skill has been extensively studied, reflecting its importance in the broader field of language education (Boonkit, 2010; Rahnama et al., 2016; Razmjoo & Ghasemi, 2016). These studies underscore the complex nature of speaking, which involves not only linguistic competence but also the ability to use language appropriately in different social situations. As Steiner et al. (2022) note, speaking is an interactive process in which meaning is co-constructed through the production, reception, and processing of information. This process requires the speaker to manage multiple cognitive and linguistic demands simultaneously, making speaking one of the most challenging skills to master.

Proficiency in speaking is often equated with overall language proficiency, highlighting its importance in language learning. As Ur (2006) suggests, a learner's ability to speak fluently and accurately is a key indicator of their overall competence in the language. Given the centrality of speaking in language learning, it is crucial to explore effective strategies for enhancing learners' speaking skills. One such strategy is scaffolding, a pedagogical approach that involves providing learners with the necessary support to perform tasks that are within their capabilities but which they might struggle to complete independently (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

The concept of scaffolding, introduced by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) and later expanded by the works of Vygotsky (1978), has been a focal point in educational research, particularly in the context of language learning. Scaffolding is grounded in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which represents the difference

between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with guidance. Within this framework, scaffolding refers to the temporary support provided by a more knowledgeable individual, such as a teacher or a peer, to help the learner perform a task. As the learner's competence increases, the support is gradually withdrawn, allowing the learner to perform the task independently.

Scaffolding has been widely recognized as an effective strategy for supporting language development, particularly in speaking. Research has shown that both teacher and peer scaffolding can significantly impact language learning outcomes, including the development of speaking skills (Ahmadi Safa & Rozati, 2016; Amiri Samani & Khazayie, 2017; Harraqi, 2017; Khajeh Khosravi, 2017). For example, group work that involves expert-novice interactions has been found to provide more learning opportunities than unassisted group work (Luoma, 2004). Similarly, studies have shown that learners working in pairs or groups can achieve results that surpass what they could achieve on their own (Lacey et al., 2020).

Despite the wealth of research on scaffolding, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the comparative effects of teacher vs. peer scaffolding on the development of speaking skills. While both types of scaffolding have been studied independently, few studies have directly compared their effectiveness in improving speaking abilities. This gap in the literature is particularly relevant in the context of Iranian EFL learners, who often face unique challenges in developing their speaking skills due to the limited opportunities for authentic language use in their environment.

The problem addressed by this study is the lack of empirical evidence on the comparative effectiveness of teacher and peer scaffolding in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' speaking skills. Given the centrality of speaking in language learning and the critical role of scaffolding in supporting this skill, it is essential to determine which type of scaffolding is more effective in improving learners' speaking abilities. This knowledge is crucial for educators and curriculum developers who seek to optimize language teaching practices and improve learners' speaking outcomes.

The findings of this study have the potential to make significant contributions to the field of language education, particularly in the context of EFL teaching in Iran. By comparing the effectiveness of teacher and peer scaffolding on speaking skill development, this study aimed to provide insights into the most effective strategies for

supporting learners in their language acquisition journey.

One of the key contributions of this study is its potential to inform language teaching practices. If the study finds that one type of scaffolding is more effective than the other, educators can use this information to refine their instructional approaches. For example, if teacher scaffolding is found to be more effective, teachers may focus more on providing targeted, individualized support to learners during speaking activities. Conversely, if peer scaffolding proves to be more effective, teachers might emphasize collaborative learning activities that encourage peer interaction and support.

Moreover, the findings of this study could have implications for syllabus designers and curriculum developers. If one type of scaffolding is shown to be more effective, it may lead to the integration of more targeted scaffolding techniques into language curricula and instructional materials. For instance, if peer scaffolding is found to be particularly beneficial, syllabus designers might incorporate more group work and peer interaction activities into speaking courses. This could help create a more supportive learning environment that fosters language development through social interaction.

Policymakers in the field of language education could also benefit from the findings of this study. By providing empirical evidence on the comparative effectiveness of teacher vs. peer scaffolding, this study could inform policy decisions related to language teaching practices and teacher training programs. For example, if teacher scaffolding is found to be more effective, policymakers might consider implementing professional development programs that focus on enhancing teachers' ability to provide effective scaffolding in the classroom.

Material developers could also use the findings of this study to design activities and resources that incorporate the most effective scaffolding strategies. For example, if peer scaffolding is shown to be more effective, material developers might create activities that encourage peer interaction and collaboration, such as role-plays, debates, and group discussions. These activities could help learners develop their speaking skills in a supportive, interactive environment, ultimately leading to improved language proficiency.

Finally, this study can contribute to the broader body of knowledge in language

education by providing empirical evidence on the comparative effectiveness of teacher vs. peer scaffolding. This research can offer valuable insights for researchers, educators, and practitioners who seek to enhance language learning outcomes, particularly in the context of EFL speaking skill development. By filling the gap in the literature on this topic, this study can help advance our understanding of the most effective strategies for supporting EFL learners in their language acquisition journey.

In conclusion, the comparative study of teacher vs. peer scaffolding on improving Iranian EFL learners' speaking skills is a timely and important investigation that has the potential to make significant contributions to the field of language education. By providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of different scaffolding strategies, this study will help educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and researchers better understand how to support learners in their efforts to develop their speaking skills. Ultimately, the findings of this study will contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve language teaching practices and enhance language learning outcomes for EFL learners.

For this purpose, the current study proposed the following research questions:

RQ1: Does peer scaffolding significantly affect the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners?

RQ2: Does teacher scaffolding significantly affect the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference between the effects of peer scaffolding and teacher scaffolding on the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners?

In line with the above research questions, the following null hypotheses were formed:

H01: Peer scaffolding makes no significant impact on improving the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners.

H02: Teacher scaffolding makes no significant effect on improving the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners.

H03: There is no significant difference between the effects of peer scaffolding

and teacher scaffolding on improving the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

For this study, a total of 60 female English students from one of the branches of Safir Language Academy were selected using convenience non-random sampling technique which involved choosing the most readily available students. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 25. A PET exam was administered to ensure the participants were homogeneous in terms of overall language proficiency. To select the required participants, the PET, which includes all four language skill subtests, was given to the initial 75 EFL learners. Sixty intermediate learners whose scores fell within the range of +/-1 standard deviation from the mean were chosen for the study and divided into two experimental groups and one control group, with each group consisting of 20 learners.

2.2. Instrumentation

Preliminary English Test (PET)

The Preliminary English Test (PET) was utilized in this study to select homogeneous participants. All the four main language skills including reading, writing, listening, and speaking were included in this test. More precisely, the test was made up of four papers, reading (paper 1), writing (paper 2), listening (paper 3), and speaking (paper 4). The researcher himself and one of his colleagues who held MA in TEFL with at least five years of teaching experience rated the writing and speaking sections of the test and the inter-rater reliability of the scores were checked running Pearson Correlation coefficient.

Speaking Pre-treatment test

The speaking scores from the PET speaking section were used for homogeneity purposes by the researcher to ensure that there were no significant differences between the two groups' speaking performance prior to the main investigation.

Speaking post-test

The researcher administered a posttest speaking exam using a different version of the

PET, to participants in both groups. This posttest was administered to assess whether there were differences in the participants' speaking performance as a result of the varying treatment modalities: peer scaffolding, teacher scaffolding, and the traditional method.

The post-test speaking test was run with two raters, the same as in the pre-treatment speaking test. In other words, each participant had an interview with two raters for about 10-12 minutes. The speaking post-test was exactly like the one used at the beginning of the study and the procedure was the same as the pre-treatment test. However, the tasks chosen from the Bank of PET speaking section were different.

Speaking Rating Scale

Since the speaking part of the PET is regarded as a level B1 speaking test, the rating scale used to grade the speaking element was derived from the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations paper under the name of evaluating Speaking Performance-Level B1. This scale was selected because, in accordance with the guidebook, it is a thorough rating scale that, in its numerous administrations in diverse evaluation contexts, has produced inter-rater reliability of above .81. The rating scale was divided into four sections: interactive communication, discourse management, grammar and vocabulary, and pronunciation. Each sector had a maximum of five marks and a minimum of zero.

List of Words for Instruction

To determine the vocabulary items for the study, a vocabulary placement test developed by Cambridge University Press (2005) was first used. The test comprised 150 items that assessed the participants' vocabulary from elementary to advanced levels. Respondents were required to answer every question, and they just kept going as long as they were familiar with the terms.

A list of target words was created in order to teach the terms using peer/teacher scaffolding techniques. This list was created using the results of the vocabulary test the participants took at the beginning of the study. Stated differently, questions selected for training were those to which 90% of participants answered incorrectly or never at all.

To enhance speaking practice, the author of the study chose to incorporate vocabulary lists. These lists served as valuable tools in both peer and teacher scaffolding, providing a structured way to support students in their speaking exercises. Specifically, the teacher could guide students in using the vocabulary to form sentences, encourage the use of synonyms, and motivate them to apply the vocabulary in their speech. Similarly, peers could use the lists to help each other improve their speaking skills, as outlined in the procedure. This approach effectively facilitated speaking practice.

2.3. Procedure

Initially, 75 participants, selected based on convenience non-random sampling, were given a PET and the results were used to select only those learners whose scores fell within the range of +/- one standard deviation. The selected subjects (who were sixty learners) were divided into two experimental groups (40 learners) and one control group (20 learners). As stated earlier, the results of the speaking section of the test was used as pre-test. Following that, a vocabulary test was given to both groups to identify the vocabulary items unknown to the learners and based on them, the treatment was given.

The peer scaffolding group of participants received a list of target words each session and instruction of the target words was carried out through peer scaffolding drawing on Nation (2001). Accordingly, students in peer scaffolding group were grouped in pairs and each student in pair received half of the target words in each session. Each student was asked to use a variety of sources like the internet, dictionary, book, etc., and find example sentences for the given words and underline the words. While back in class the next session, each pair exchanged the sentences they found and asked their partner to guess the meaning of the words. The partners were allowed to give hints like giving synonyms, and examples so that their partners were assisted in working out the meaning of the unknown words. This stage (noticing stage as in Nation, 2001) was to familiarize the students with the target words and draw their attention on the words they were going to learn. As for the next session, the same procedure continued plus two extra exercises. In one of the exercises, students in pairs read the sentences from the previous session and asked their partner to give the meaning of the unknown words. For instance, one student would read “I can’t find my specs anywhere, have you seen them?” and then asked “what is the meaning of

specs". This stage was in line with retrieval stage of Nation (2001). In the other exercise, students were asked to produce example sentences orally containing the target words which was in line with generation stage of Nation (2001).

As for the teacher scaffolding group, the same procedure was utilized with minor changes. First of all, all the vocabulary items were presented by the instructor without being split. Secondly, as in peer scaffolding, the instructor presented the new words in sentences and students guessed the meaning (noticing). In the next session, the same sentences were read by the instructor and students were encouraged to remember the meaning (retrieval), and finally in the same session, students were asked to produce a sentence orally containing the new words (generation).

As for the control group, the participants followed the conventional syllabus of the institute and neither peer nor teacher scaffolding was provided. Upon finishing the treatment, the researcher gave the three groups a speaking posttest and the scores were used to address the research questions.

2.4. Design

There were between-group comparisons on the pretest and posttest in this quasi-experimental study. The lack of randomization in the sampling process made the design quasi-experimental. There were three groups, comprising two experimental groups each representing a teacher and peer scaffolding technique and they were compared to the control group. Peer scaffolding was administered to one experimental group, while teacher scaffolding was administered to the other; both treatments accounted for the independent variable. Speaking ability among students was the dependent variable, and it was assessed both before and after the treatment (pretest and posttest). To reduce the potential detrimental impact of participant variances in language proficiency on the study's outcome, language proficiency was controlled in the current investigation. As long as participants performed equally on the pretest, this design allowed for the tracking of the treatment's impact on the posttest.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to answer the research questions. Through descriptive statistics, participants' speaking performance in terms of mean score and standard deviation was described both before and after the treatment. To compare the participants statistically to track any significant differences, inferential statistics (One-way ANOVA) was employed. Other inferential statistics

pertinent to One-way ANOVA like normality check and homogeneity of variances were also utilized.

3. Results

The main instrument of the study was PET. To estimate reliability of the speaking and writing sections, inter-rater reliability was employed. Table 1 shows the results of correlation coefficients for inter-rater reliability of PET speaking section.

Table 1.

Inter-rater Reliability of PET Speaking Section

Writing		Rater 2
Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	.71**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	30
Speaking		Rater 2
Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	.73**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the results of correlation analysis, inter-rater reliability index of speaking section was above 0.70. Accordingly, it can be suggested that PET was reliable for the purpose of the current study.

3.1 Selection Process and Homogeneity of the Participants in Terms of Speaking Performance on Pretest

In the first step, it was needed to choose participants with homogeneous English language proficiency. As stated earlier, PET was used for this purpose. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the PET scores belonging to the initial 75 learners.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of 75 Students on PET

Variables	N		Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
	Valid	Missing				
PET	75	0	38.6667	2.63210	28.00	45.00

As clearly outlined earlier, those students with scores below and beyond the mean score ±1SD were removed from the study leading to a homogeneous group of

students in terms of language proficiency. Table 3 shows the statistics of 60 students whose scores fell within ±1SD mean score.

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of the Participants on PET after Removing the Students with Scores Below and Beyond Mean Score ±1 SD

Variables	N					
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Homogenized PET	60	15	39.321	1.98376	30.00	43.00

After selecting 60 homogenized learners in terms of language proficiency, they were divided into three groups of 20. A One-way ANOVA was run on the speaking pretest scores to make sure that the three groups were homogenized in terms of speaking performance prior to the treatment. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of the groups in terms of pretest scores.

Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics of the Groups in Terms of Pretest Scores

Task based	20	6.9000	1.86096	.41612
Focus on forms	20	6.8500	2.23120	2.66112
Control	20	6.5500	2.16370	.48382
Total	60	6.7167	1.98376	.25610

Before running ANOVA, it was necessary to make sure that the data sets met the assumption for this test. The main assumption for ANOVA is the normality of the scores. Table 5 displays the results of Levene's test for the pre-test Scores.

Table 5.

Results of Levene's test for the Pre-test Scores

Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.255	2	17	.124

As seen in the table above, the sig. equals .124 which is higher than the confidence level of 0.05 indicating that the normality assumption is met. Table 6 demonstrates the results of ANOVA.

Table 6.

Results of ANOVA on Pretest Scores

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.233	2	.617	.152	.859
Within Groups	230.950	57	4.052		
Total	232.183	59			

Results of ANOVA (Table 6) showed that the groups were not significantly different from each other in terms of pretest scores, F= 0.152, P≤0.05. Accordingly, it was concluded that participants of the study were homogenized in terms of speaking before receiving treatment. Afterwards, students underwent treatment and at the end of the treatment, the three groups were given speaking posttest the results of which were used to address the research questions.

3.2 Addressing the Research Questions

To investigate the research questions of the current study, a One-way ANOVA was run on the posttest scores of the three groups. Table 7 displays the results of Levene's test for the post-test Scores.

Table 7.

Results of Levene's test for the Pre-test Scores

Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3.442	2	17	.321

As seen in the above table, Levene's test produced a significant value (p = .321), which is higher than the standard alpha level of 0.05., indicating that the normality assumption is met. More precisely, since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met. This means that the variance in speaking performance across the three groups (Peer Scaffolding, Teacher Scaffolding, and Control) was roughly equal, justifying the use of ANOVA. Table 8 demonstrates the results of ANOVA.

Table 8.

Result of ANOVA on the Posttest Scores

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	332.033	2	166.017	39.404	.000
Within Groups	240.150	57	4.213		
Total	572.183	59			

ANOVA indicated that significant differences existed between the three groups of the study, F=39.40, P≤0.05 on the speaking posttest. Based on this result, it can be concluded that somewhere between the groups significant differences existed which means that at least one of the groups outperformed the other two groups or one of the groups outperformed the other one. However, ANOVA alone does not specify which groups differ from each other. This requires further analysis using post hoc tests, and to do so, post hoc test of Tukey was run. Table 9 presents the results of multiple contrasts employing the post hoc test of Tukey.

Table 9.

Results of Multiple Comparisons by Tukey Test

	(I) Method	(J) Method	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Tukey HSD	Peer Scaffolding	Control	-4.75000*	.64909	.000	-6.3120	-3.1880
		Teacher Scaffolding	.45000	.64909	.768	-1.1120	2.0120
	Control	Peer scaffolding	4.75000*	.64909	.000	3.1880	6.3120
		Teacher Scaffolding	5.20000*	.64909	.000	3.6380	6.7620
	Teacher Scaffolding	Peer scaffolding	-.45000	.64909	.768	-2.0120	1.1120
		Control	-5.20000*	.64909	.000	-6.7620	-3.6380

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Peer Scaffolding vs. Control Group: The mean difference is -4.75000* (p = .000), indicating a significant improvement in the peer scaffolding group compared to the control group.

Teacher Scaffolding vs. Control Group: The mean difference is -5.20000* (p = .000), indicating a significant improvement in the teacher scaffolding group compared to the control group.

Peer Scaffolding vs. Teacher Scaffolding: The mean difference is -.45000 (p = .768), which is not significant.

The significant results (p = .000) between both the Peer Scaffolding and Control group, and the Teacher Scaffolding and Control group suggest that both scaffolding methods (peer and teacher) significantly improved the speaking performance of the participants compared to those who received no scaffolding. This rejects the first two null hypotheses (H01 & H02). More precisely, Peer scaffolding and Teacher scaffolding had a significant positive effect on improving the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners. However, the lack of significant difference (p = .768) between the Peer Scaffolding and Teacher Scaffolding groups indicated that both methods were equally effective in enhancing speaking skills, supporting the third null hypothesis (H03). That is to say, there is no significant difference between the effects of peer scaffolding and teacher scaffolding on speaking performance.

The study's findings contribute to the understanding of scaffolding in language learning by demonstrating that both peer and teacher scaffolding are effective strategies for improving speaking skills among EFL learners. The use of a One-way ANOVA was appropriate for comparing the mean scores across the three groups, as the Levene's test confirmed the assumption of homogeneity of variances. The significant results from the ANOVA indicated the need for further investigation, which was effectively carried out through the post hoc Tukey test.

The Tukey test results showed that both peer and teacher scaffolding methods significantly outperformed the control group, highlighting the value of structured support in language learning. However, since there was no significant difference between the effects of peer and teacher scaffolding, educators might consider using either approach depending on the context and available resources, as both methods offer comparable benefits.

The rejection of the first two null hypotheses and the acceptance of the third provide a clear direction for educators looking to enhance speaking skills in EFL contexts. By utilizing scaffolding (whether peer or teacher-based) language instructors can facilitate more effective language acquisition and communication skills among learners.

4. Discussion

The current study set out to examine the effects of teacher and peer scaffolding on the

speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners. It also aimed to investigate whether there were any notable distinctions between the impacts of teacher and peer scaffolding on speaking performance. The results of the One-way ANOVA indicated that both peer and teacher scaffolding had a significant impact on speaking performance. However, there was no discernible difference between the effects of peer and teacher scaffolding on speaking performance.

These findings align with recent studies, such as those by Zhang and Thomas (2018), which found that teacher scaffolding significantly facilitates students' acquisition of various language components and skills. The outcomes also correspond with research by Rezaei and Shokrpour (2011), Li and Li (2017), and Jones and Carter (2019), who all reported a significant impact of peer scaffolding on language learners' speaking and writing abilities.

The fact that there was no discernible difference between the two forms of scaffolding—peer and teacher—and that both had a major impact on the students' speaking performances suggests that both have the potential to improve speaking. This shared effectiveness may be attributed to the fact that both peer and teacher scaffolding stem from the same underlying theoretical framework, namely Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD represents the difference between what learners can achieve independently and what they can achieve with guidance from someone more knowledgeable (Kozulin, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978).

Scaffolding, as described by Vygotsky, is the support provided by a more knowledgeable individual—whether a teacher or a peer—to help the learner transition smoothly from their current level of understanding to the target knowledge (Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2019). This support, whether provided by teachers or peers, serves to reduce the learner's uncertainty and confusion (Lantolf & Poehner, 2018; Zheng, 2016).

Given that both methods are rooted in the same theoretical framework, it is perhaps unsurprising that they yield similar results. Both methods provide the necessary support to help learners reach higher levels of performance, emphasizing the importance of social interaction and collaboration in language learning (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Moreover, the interpersonal dynamics between peers, such as their

relative language proficiency and willingness to cooperate, can influence how effective peer scaffolding is in a given context. In contrast, teacher scaffolding is generally more consistent, as teachers are trained to provide appropriate support regardless of the learner's individual differences.

5. Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that speaking performance was considerably enhanced by scaffolding from peers and teachers. Interestingly, there was no discernible difference in the effects of teacher and peer scaffolding, indicating that both strategies are equally successful in improving L2 learners' speaking skills. This research highlights the adaptability and effectiveness of scaffolding in language acquisition.

Scaffolding, as a pedagogical strategy, plays a crucial role in supporting L2 learners by providing temporary assistance that gradually fades as learners gain independence. This support can come from teachers or peers and can take various forms, such as modeling, questioning, feedback, and collaborative learning. Each method can be tailored to meet the specific needs of learners, providing them with the appropriate level of support at different stages of their language development (Van de Pol et al., 2019).

The study highlights that the positive impact of scaffolding on speaking performance is rooted in its alignment with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). By offering the necessary support within the ZPD, scaffolding enables learners to achieve higher levels of performance than they could independently (Lantolf & Poehner, 2018). Therefore, incorporating both peer and teacher scaffolding into language instruction can create a comprehensive and effective learning environment that promotes significant improvements in L2 speaking proficiency.

Given the findings of this study, further research could explore several related areas to deepen our understanding of scaffolding in language learning:

Longitudinal Studies: Future research could examine the long-term effects of teacher vs. peer scaffolding on speaking skills. It would be valuable to investigate whether one type of scaffolding leads to more sustained improvements in speaking ability over time.

Task Complexity: Further research could investigate how the complexity of the speaking tasks influences the effectiveness of teacher vs. peer scaffolding. For instance, teacher scaffolding might be more effective for complex tasks that require a higher level of linguistic accuracy, while peer scaffolding could be more beneficial for tasks that emphasize fluency and creativity.

Learner Characteristics: Another area for future research could be the role of individual learner characteristics, such as age, proficiency level, and learning style, in determining the effectiveness of teacher vs. peer scaffolding. Understanding how these factors interact with scaffolding types could help tailor scaffolding strategies to different learners.

Cultural Context: Since this study was conducted with Iranian EFL learners, it would be interesting to investigate whether the findings hold true in different cultural contexts. Research could explore how cultural norms and expectations regarding teacher-student and peer-peer interactions influence the effectiveness of scaffolding.

Technology-Enhanced Scaffolding: With the increasing use of technology in language education, future research could examine the effectiveness of digital platforms that provide scaffolding through teacher or peer interactions. This could include online discussion forums, collaborative writing tools, or language learning apps that facilitate scaffolding.

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