USING SCAFFOLDING TO ENHANCE ESL SPEAKING MOTIVATION AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

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Abstract— *Many studies have revealed that in the Asian context, undergraduates have lower competencies in writing and speaking when the four components of English as a Second Language (ESL) is concerned (Perera, 2010; Lile, 2002). In comparison to writing, the students have less proficiency in ESL speaking as they are exam oriented from school level (Perera, 2010). Canagarajah (1993) explains how students' desire for learning only grammar in a product-oriented manner enables them to be detached from cultural alienation while being examination oriented to pass the course and fulfil a socio-economic necessity. Since the exams focus mainly on writing and reading skills, the students lack chances of being exposed to speaking and listening. When speaking is concerned, students aren't only de-motivated in the classroom but are anxiety driven and taciturn at all spheres. Many instructors have expressed their frustrations to find the reasons for the reticent behaviour and work out suitable strategies to help students (Soo & Goh, 2013). "Scaffolding" is introduced as a solution to this problem as it allows the students to get rid of their frustration and fear in expressing the language in front of the class among their peers and teachers. It facilitates student-centered learning by motivating the students to work together by deviating from the teacher-centered learning environment. Bruner's Scaffolding Theory is incorporated in the research as it addresses the positive impact that is brought out via scaffold assistance provided by a peer or a well-known other to master ESL when socializing and interacting in ESL while interactively engaging in the tasks. It can be applied to enhance language motivation in the ESL classroom. The main objective of the research is to discuss how Scaffolding can improve language learners' motivation and speaking confidence in the ESL classrooms andhow the eclectic method can be used in ESL learningThe positive and negative effects of scaffolding and its impact on the undergraduates'communicationconfidence in the Asian context will be analysed by incorporating other literature.*

Keywords: Scaffolding, Motivation, ESL learning and teaching.

I. INTRODUCTION

English is considered as a global language and the tool of acquiring new knowledge. The competency in "English language is required to achieve scholastic goals of a person in an education arena" (Siriwardhana, 2012). Siriwardhana (2012) further highlights in research that "This phenomenon is also common to Sri Lanka and owing to this situation; Sri Lankan higher education institutes including some universities have introduced English as the medium of instruction". Even though the local students are introduced to ESL since primary school, it is not a hidden fact that even by the time they reach undergraduate level, their proficiency in the language is rather low (Wijetunge, 2016). Perera (2010) mentions that the local undergraduates lack in their speaking skills when the 4 ESL skills(reading, writing, listening and speaking) are concerned. The undergraduates are less motivated, more anxiety driven and reticent towards the language when it comes to oral skills in ESL. It has been identified from the researches done around the world that the act of being silent, reluctant to participate or speak using the target language has always been considered the main source of frustration and failure for both instructors and students (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Jackson, 2002; Zhang & Head, 2009).

Suggestions have been made by researchers to overcome this anxiety in the language. Using Task-Based Teaching Methods (TBTM) is introduced as an important way of improving motivation in the students in the ESL classroom (Sanchez, 2004; British Council website 2009). While being involved in TBTMs', this research suggests that the scaffolding assistance provided by the peers and teachers through constructive criticism, suggestions and Q and A sessions, help the students to overcome their sense of embarrassment and frustration in using ESL when speaking. If necessary action is not taken to reduce this oral anxiety at undergraduate level, it "adversely results them to be incompetent in their employment performance and social interaction as skilled graduates making them be less competent in communication and interaction when using English for their work purposes" (Perera,2010).

II. THEORY OF SCAFFOLDING AND THE USAGE

J. Bruner explains that "Scaffolding refers to the steps taken to reduce the degrees of the freedom in carrying out some tasks so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skills, he or she is in the process of acquiring". (Bruner, 1978, p.19). As Bruner explains, scaffolding does not have to be applied only to a child's learning process but to any leaner. The early studies that described scaffolding, be they descriptions of parent-child interactions (Greenfield, 1999) or classroom interactions (Langer and Applebee, 1986), and they were observational rather than interventionist studies. The notion of scaffolding is increasingly being used to describe the support provided for students to learn successfully in classrooms (Kafai&Carter, 1994).When a student with 'scaffolding assistance' masters the task, the scaffolding can be removed and the student will be able to complete the task alone.

The theory is discussed by a variety of researchers and each hashis/ her unique way of explaining it. Some of them are as follows.

"Scaffolding is a form of adult assistance that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (Wood, Bruner, and Ross cited in Capello and Moss (eds.), 2010,p. 182).

According to an explanation by Bergin and Bergin (2011, p.113), "Scaffolding occurs by breaking down the skill into small units and guiding performance to a higher level"

Blake and Pope(2008) mentions that "scaffolding, small groups, cooperative learning and group problem solving" can be utilized in the classroom when teaching ESL to the students(pp.63).

According to Busyteacher.com (2016) **"**In construction terms, scaffolding is the additional structure built onto another to make some improvement or repair possible". When teaching languages in the present context, Task-Based Activities (TBA) are considered as a very efficient and effective method. The acquisition rate and the retention of the language is proven to be higher via TBAs' when compared to the traditional teacher centered classroom methods (Ellis,2003) . Many researchers have proven this fact through their research and it also reveals that Communicative Task-Based Activities (CTBA) enhance the speaking ability of the learners(Lee,2002).

In the ESL learning environment, scaffolding assistance becomes a huge advantage as it allows the students to move a step further in the language with the necessary support provided to them by a teacher or a peer. When speaking is concerned, students must be shown their errors and the errors must be corrected by acknowledging them so that the same mistakes will not be made in the future (Touchie, 1986). CTBAs assist the ESL learning process as they allow many chances for the students to get rid of their nervousness and frustration in using the language to communicate and be engaged in individual and group activities while involving in the collaborative learning process, in front of their peers. Prepared speeches, dialogues, role-plays, dramas and group presentations (Nunan, 1991) allow the students to step in front of the classroom and engage in ESL speaking. Constructive criticism offered by the teachers or peers during and after a CTBA, peer scaffolding assistance during CTBAs and Q and A sessions after CTBAs are introduced as scaffolding methods which enhance speaking motivation in the students

III. IN -COOPERATING SCAFFOLDING TO IMPROVE ESL SPEAKING

A. *Constructive Criticism*

Constructive criticism or feedback is pointed out as a form of scaffolding assistance which could be offered to the students via a teacher, a well-known other or a peer. "Teachers' scaffolding allows reticent students to perform tasks slightly beyond their capabilities without repetitive guidance" (Talley, 2014). Constructive criticism should be offered to the students', based on their performance. If the students need improvement in their presentation skills, speaking skills, audibility, stage performance or expression, it is the responsibility of the observing party to offer feedback with hope for improvement in the task. The criticism offered to the students/ learner should not be taken negatively but strictly as 'constructive criticism*(*Weaver, 2006*)*.'.

Hyland (2001) mentions in his research how the "teachers should encourage students to take more responsibility for their own work, by allowing them to make their own decisions about their use and sources of feedback". According to the Scaffolding Theory, this will allow them to overcome their anxiety levels and uplift their confidence while being more responsible the next time they focus on speaking tasks.

Hyland (2001) describes how "we consider this feedback in terms of its functions as praise, criticism, and suggestions". Speaking confidence can be enhanced while providing self satisfaction to the students through "Praise" which is" the most frequently employed function in the constructive feedback, but this is "often used to soften criticisms and suggestions rather than simply responding to good work". While offering constructive criticism, the observers must also provide suggestions or advice to improve in the task in the next attempt.

ESL public speaking improvement organizations such as 'Toastmasters International' strictly adhere to this rule of constructive criticism. In Toastmasters' "every prepared

speaker is assigned an evaluator who identifies speech strengths, and offers suggestions for improvement" (Toastmasters, 2016). This in other words, is the scaffolding assistance provided to the speaker to enhance his public speaking ESL skills and overcome glossophobia.

B. Peer feedback
Peer scaffolding is a means of improving language skills, where the learner is made to feel free and comfortable in the presence of their peers while being assisted and supported in ESL speaking. The honest feedback, guidance by their counterpart and the support offered to each other while being engaged in a TBA, allow the students to alleviate their anxiety and boost the confidence in the ESL speaking activity. The friendly, cooperative environment where the undergraduates don't feel hesitant in expression, nervous in speech and anxiety driven to voice their opinions, help the students to be motivated towards the ESL speaking. It motivates the students to come forward, express their view points and be less embarrassed when in the presence of their peers.

Peer scaffolding assistance is in-cooperated while the students are involved in this process or while they are getting prepared to present the TBA in front of the classroom. When the students are learning collaboratively, the peers can find and correct the mistakes of their colleagues before the presentation. As this is a cooperative learning environment, when a student makes presentation errors, language mistakes or lacks in confidence, the scaffolding support offered by the peers allows them to overcome their anxiety in the presentations and the speaking task. Nguyen (2003) mentions how the students discuss among themselves and brain storm ideas and they are generally mentally relaxed among their peers where it becomes much easier for them to correct each other. As the students are able to find out their own mistakes and errors from their peers while getting ready to perform in front of the audience, they receive the chance to automatically correct their faults and succeed with the assistance of their peers.

According to Wijetunge (2016) "even when discussing situation specific language related activities such as role plays, the students are able to learn from their peers, get feedback from the teachers and expand their language horizons". The students have the opportunity to brain-storm with their peers and learn new vocabulary, expressions and terminology when focusing on the situation specific activity. Boudreault (2010) mentions how activities such as dramas and role-plays "increase facility to meet changing or unknown stimuli with immediate responses in the students". He further mentions how improvisation leads to a blending as the students create the personality traits as he/she simultaneously identifies with the characters as it

evolves. The peer scaffolding automatically motivates the students and improves ESL speaking as their anxiety towards language expression is lessened in the presence of peers.

C. Q and A sessions
Asking and answering questions based on presentations, or any TBA allows the students to be more prepared in their speaking, After a TBA session, the students should be asked questions by their peers or teachers. The preparation process itself is a means of improving ESL speaking. As the undergraduates do not like to be criticized, embarrassed or nervous in front of the others, they prepare themselves in advance to ask and answer questions which could be possibly aimed at them. This preparation process and practice is a great way to enhance ESL speaking motivation. When the students are prepared to answer any question thrown at them, they take special attention when answering practically and making as fewer mistakes as possible.
Ko, Schallert and Walters (2003) mentions how a Q and A session after a story telling task, allowed the students to be motivated and workout solutions, for their problems in language more competently, beyond the teacher's influence. Their responsiveness was more and the responses revealed that several scaffolding factors, contributed to storytelling in the students. Therefore, it is evident that scaffolding through Q and As' improve motivation and language competence in the learners.

IV. DISCUSSION
When scaffolding theory is concerned, it can be inculcated into any learning process for any learner, regardless of age and subject area. When enhancing ESL speaking motivation, scaffolding can be utilized in order to improve not only the language speaking ability and capacity but also motivation as well. It will allow the learner to overcome the embarrassment in communicating in the language while getting rid of their nervous tension while conversing in their second language.
Since ESL has become the main tool of communication when the employment market is concerned it is necessary that the students improve their speaking fluency at undergraduate level itself (Kossoudji, 1988; Crystal, 1997). As Crystal mentions "In the last years of the 20th century English has established an unprecedentedly powerful position, which has even grown stronger since the more circumspect evaluation of its position by McCrum et al. 1986". English language has become the language of communication, business, trade and the world's most widely used common language. Therefore, many Asian countries have begun to use solely English as the 2nd language for education and employment purposes. As a result, many international schools are becoming rapidly spread across South Asia and

within the country. The competition between the local and international school leavers is getting significantly high as they both target for employment opportunities in the public or the private sector. Having sufficient on the job knowledge in English will give the undergraduates higher recognition and pay (Sharma, 2016). The fluency in the English language becomes a well recognized factor during this time as it creates a huge gap between the local and the international school children while giving a higher recognition to the international school leavers. If the local school children do not make an attempt to improve their ESL speaking confidence during their higher education level, the gap between the local and the international school children will be so high that it will leave the local school leavers be unemployed and recluse as graduates(Sunday Times, 2013; Ariyawansa,2011; Gunasekere,2013).

When using scaffolding in the universities is concerned, it can bring out better results as undergraduates prefer working alone and being independent amongst the same aged group people (Johnson and Johnson, 1986;Chickering, 1987). As students at the adolescent ages (while being undergraduates), do not prefer to be criticized, embarrassed and laughed at for their actions, scaffolding becomes a means of self-improvement as it comes out as constructive criticism (Nunan, 2002). The teachers would not be embarrassing the students nor affecting their ego, while offering feedback and peer feedback is concerned as supporting each other in harmony while involved in group activities. When advice is offered through friends while being engaged in CTBAs, they learn from each other and from their own mistakes while lending a hand to the students to move a step forward correctly (King, 1990).

Q and A sessions will boost the motivation of the learners while they will be given an opportunity again to prepare, brain-storm and come up with solutions to their own problems arising for the tasks (King, 2002). While trying to find the answers for possible questions after CTBAs, the students will try to assist each other and work in harmony(Rau, 1990). Therefore, scaffolding will engage the learners in the activities, minimize the frustration to perform in front of the class and with the assistance of the peers and improve motivation in learning the language.

But, there are disadvantages which have been discovered through the researches based on scaffolding, which have shown the negative results that can be visible within the classroom. According to GabrialPeters on ehow.com,scaffolding is "disadvantageous for teachers, because it necessitates giving up control to allow learners to learn at their own pace". He also mentions how time-consuming scaffolding is and as a result, the activity will be incomplete as it will not be able to keep pace with the given time.

Peters further declares how important it is to offer proper training to the teachers while scaffolding is concerned. When giving instructions and constructive criticism, the teachers must be direct and straight forward and make sure that the students learn from their mistakes and correct themselves in the ladder of learning. Peters (2007) mentions that the attitude the student has towards the learning environment, the teacher, the material, and towards him/herself all affect this level of motivation in learning and that a student will find it difficult to perform in a stressful environment.

V. CONCLUSION

The lack of motivation to speak in ESL has become a matter of concern for researchers. Finding suitable methods to utilize in the ESL classroom to enhance motivation in undergraduates to overcome this anxiety has encouraged many researchers to come out with applicable solutions. The theory of scaffolding introduced by Bruner (1978) can be incorporated into the language teaching process together with 3 components following it. The research gives out evidence on this and mentions how effective constructive criticism of teachers, peer scaffolding via collaborative learning and Q and A sessions are when improving English speaking competence in undergraduates.

Since the undergraduates will pass out of the universities after the completion of their degrees as skilled graduates, it is necessary that they process the relevant standards in language and comprehend the required tasks which are often worded in ESL. Therefore, the knowledge in communication skills as competent speakers and fluent leaders ensues as a necessity.

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