SCAFFOLDING AND THE ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD) IN
EFL TEACHING

by

Franz Esteban Quintero Dorado

Submitted to the Faculty of Human Sciences

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for

The degree of B.A. in the

Linguistics and Languages Department

English and French Program

University of Nariño

November 2006

ABSTRACT

Traditionally, English language schools have used mainly behaviorist techniques that leave no room for students to thing for themselves. The aim of this paper is to provide the reader a background about what communicative techniques should be used in today's English classrooms. This paper also focuses its attention on Scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which are two of the main ideas of Vygotsky's sociocultural learning. Moreover, this research intends to prove through a pre-test, a treatment and a post-test the effectiveness of a more sociocultural way of teaching a language in our settings. The most relevant experiences obtained along the research and the results obtained from the post-test will be used to provide suggestions for further implementations of this revolutionary technique in an EFL setting.

RESUMEN

Tradicionalmente, las escuelas de enseñanza de Inglés han utilizado principalmente técnicas conductistas que no dejan espacio para que los estudiantes piensen por ellos mismos. El objetivo de este trabajo es dar al lector una retrospectiva sobre que técnicas comunicativas deberían ser usadas en los salones de la actualidad. Este trabajo centra su atención en Scaffolding y la Zona de Desarrollo Próximo (ZDP), las cuales son dos de las principales ideas del aprendizaje sociocultural de Vygotsky.

Además, esta investigación pretende probar a través de un pre-test, un tratamiento y un post-test la efectividad de un método de enseñanza más sociocultural en nuestro contexto. Las experiencias más relevantes obtenidas a través de esta investigación y los resultados obtenidos en el post-test serán utilizados para hacer sugerencias para una futura implementación de esta revolucionaria técnica en un contexto de Inglés como lengua internacional

Content

Introduction

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a revolutionary theory of learning and has far-reaching implications for the instructional communication and educational fields, Howard, (1995). Vygotsky's sociocultural development and cognitive development theories have been taken into account when teachers look for more useful and practical ways to provide students with assistance in their language learning. The major concern of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Besides, Vygotsky was not interested in children's intellectual abilities at a particular point, but in the learner's potential for intellectual growth Seng, (1997). Vygotsky believed that life long processes of development depend on social interaction and that social learning actually leads to cognitive development. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is one of the social development theories that may actually lead to a more successful learning. According to Feldman (1998) the zone of proximal development is the level at which a child can almost, but not fully, comprehend or perform a task on her or his own. The main goal of this paper is to highlight the most relevant points of ZPD as well as its theories and

researchers involved in its implementation. It will also highlight the most significant concepts about scaffolding, which will provide further correlated supporting instruments to establish and clearly understand the close relationship existing between ZPD and   scaffolding. The most important advantages and limitations of this theory will be examined as well.

1. Technical-scientific aspects

Topic

Scaffolding Constructivism and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Title

Scaffolding and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) in EFL teaching

Problem Statement

Traditionally, schools may have not offered adequate environments in which learners play an active role in their own education process taking advantage of their more knowledgeable peers. Besides, teachers have been seen as the main source of information within a classroom without taking into account that within the classroom there are students that may act as teachers since they have background knowledge that can be shared with their peers.

Justification

Having knowledge sources within a classroom other than the teacher could improve a student's learning process since the student will not only be exposed to the teacher's knowledge but to his more knowledgeable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Feldman (1998) the zone of proximal development is the level at which a child can almost, but not fully, comprehend or perform a task on her or his own, i.e., the more knowledgeable peers may be the ones who take the first step in the learning process of another student. The first step could mean only the basis to begin the learning of a certain topic. The more advanced steps could be provided by the teacher in further opportunities. Students must be seen as a real learning "tool" for his/her classmates rather that just the member of a big class who shares questions and doubts about a topic, incapable of sharing knowledge with others to improve and make the Zone of Proximal Development bigger.

General Objective

To identify the effect of constructivist teaching of English speaking scaffolding and (ZPD) on students' oral skill.

Specific Objectives

To determine students' oral proficiency when they have not been exposed to a constructivist teaching of speaking.

To determine the oral proficiency of learners after having been taught constructively the speaking skill.

To collect the information of learners' oral proficiency before and after being exposed to the constructivist teaching of speaking.

To establish whether the constructivist teaching of speaking is useful in an EFL setting such as Pasto or not.

Hypothesis

Constructivism has been adopted as the new revolutionary method used to teach several subjects around the world. Constructivism was born due to the need of a method that let students create their own knowledge instead of assuming the behavior the teacher assumed (Behaviorism). According to various positive results obtained by teachers of several subjects around the world, constructivism has shown excellent results when teaching any subject. Constructivism lets learners construct their own knowledge

instead of repeating. When a learner creates knowledge, he/she feels more confident about what was produced, making the experience of discovering something unforgettable an meaningful for his/her further education.

Taking into account the information above the current study is identified with two specific types of hypothesis.

H_1= *Applying scaffolding and ZPD tasks has positive effects on ESL students oral production*

However, this research is classified as an experimental study. In consequence, the final results are tentative making possible the application of a second hypothesis:

H_0= *Applying scaffolding and ZPD tasks has negative effects on ESL students oral production*

Variables

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
The use of Scaffolding and ZPD	Oral Proficiency

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework

Research on (ZPD) and scaffolding

Before going over the theory and theorist concerning the beginnings of the ZPD implementation, it is rather appropriate to provide a definition of the two concepts that will be explored along this paper, which are ZPD and scaffolding. According to Vygotsky, (1978), cited by Morris, (2004) "the zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual level of development as determined by independent problem solving [without guided instruction] and the level of potential development as determined by problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers". Additionally, Scaffolding has been interpreted in a wide sense as "a form of support for the development and learning of children and young people" (Rasmussen, 2001, cited in Verenikina, N. D.). The definitions for ZPD are highly diverse and at the same time moderately unassertive, that is the reason why it is precise to explore additional definitions since this profound analysis will help us have a broader view of concepts, thus, considering the fact that all of the definitions provide supplementary information and that diversity suggests more points of discussion, the most

highlighted differences will be a matter of discussion. For instance, the definition of Vygotsky of zone of proximal development emphasizes on the fact that the level of development is determined by independent problem solving circumstances (without guided instruction). He claims that learners should be able to solve any type of problem without any type of external aid, even if it consists of providing a good environment in which it is much easier to solve a problem than other scenario in which either outer guidance is provided. Vygotsky proposes that learners cognitive abilities are enhanced through natural exposure to information that remains within the child's zone of proximal development, i.e., all types of input that make part of the learner's ZPD must not be set on purpose in order for learners to develop their abilities, but input should be part of natural, non-modified and random circumstances that will contribute to the natural improvement of the learners capacities. Also, Feldman (1998) highlights an important point on his definition of ZPD, which is the inability to fully perform a task. By this, he claims that belonging to a complex, in terms of adequate input, zone of proximal development does not guarantee that all your abilities are going to be fully enhanced to the point that you become and independent

learner and the mastering, with no help, of any task.

Guoxing, (2004) points out that the zone of proximal

development primarily defines those functions that have not

yet matured, but are in the process of maturation;

functions that will mature tomorrow, but are currently in

embryonic state. Guoxing thinks these functions could be

termed the buds or flowers of development rather than the

fruits of development. The zone of proximal development

involves many other theories that provide complementary

concepts to support its main principles. That is the case

of Wertsch, (1991), cited by Marty, P., (N. D.) who affirms

that the ZPD theory must have three requirements to

successfully be applied in the social life of an

individual. The first requirement is the adequate genetic

knowledge of the individual. The idea of Vygotsky about the

comprehension of the nature of mind took him back to the

essence of human beings, that is, his/her genetics.

Vygotsky showed himself attracted to the experimentation

with humans and apes in order to establish differences in

the problem-solving procedures they used to accomplish a

simple task. The second requirement is the elementary and

higher mental functioning, which claims that mental

development results from social interaction. Vygotsky

considered higher psychological functions, genetic

structure, actions, behavior, in short, anything pertaining to humans, as social Wertsch, (1991). The third requirement refers to the mediation that must exist between individuals and their environments. This mediation is highly facilitated by other human beings and by surrounding objects. The zone of proximal development has a tight relationship with the scaffolding process. This relationship is due to the importance of optimal instruction (scaffolding) that should be provided within the learner's zone of proximal development in order for the learner to grow intellectually. Wells, (1999) cited by Verenikina (N. D.) referred to scaffolding as "a way of operationalizing Vygotsky's concept of working in the zone of proximal development". Wells identified three important features that give educational scaffolding its particular character: 1) the essentially dialogic nature of the discourse in which knowledge is co constructed; 2) the significance of the kind of activity in which knowing is embedded and 3) the role of artifacts that mediate knowing. The relationship between these two linked theories goes beyond the simple relation between scaffolder and scaffolded. That is, if a learner belongs to the cognitive weakest side within the zone of proximal development, that is the instructed individual, that learner with learning

disabilities may also play the role of an instructor since in the zone there is a big number of individuals with different cognitive levels that may possibly need scaffolding, which afterwards will serve as a mediator between knowledge and the less knowledgeable other.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning emphasizes that human intelligence originated in our society or culture, and the individual cognitive gain occurs first through interpersonal processes (interaction with social environment) rather than through intrapersonal ones (internalization) Miller, (1995), cited by Hsiao, (N.D.). Even though Vygotsky's theory seems to have a few potential and practical problems, there is one very important issue when applying any of his theories, either ZPD or scaffolding. These last two sociocultural real-life and classroom-life theories depend highly on the disposition to contribute emotionally and academically with himself and with others. Additionally, students are expected to be surrounded by optimum learning conditions, that is, ideal social contexts provide opportunities to invite learners to interact and initiate an active thinking. Vygotsky's theoretical framework is based on the assumption that all action is mediated and that it is inextricably connected to the social context where it is happening Marty, (N.D.).

Vygotsky's theory of social development proposes an interaction between child's social world and his cognitive development. He emphasizes on the culture to which the learner belongs and on the effect of the constructive role of peer interaction and relationships. Vygotsky's conceptions contrast with Piaget's since the latter affirms that the main unit in the learning process is the individual himself. Vygotsky's perception of society in facilitating learning is that the social part of cognitive development plays a "critical" role in the learner's development Seng, (1997). For Vygotsky, the development process is best understood as the result of ideal social interaction with more capable or knowledgeable peers who are able to provide support (or scaffolding) to solve eventual problems mutually. When all of these conditions are naturally given, the learner begins to work intellectually on his own as an individual due to, largely, the assistance provided by others in his social environment. Moreover, Vygotsky, (1978) states the existence of innate abilities that are obtained when the child is born. These abilities are attention, perception and memory. The input collected from the natural environment of the child, in the form of interaction with more skilled peers, will be used to model the innate

abilities into more complex, higher cognition order functions and superior abilities. As an assertive judgment, it can be said that Vygotsky has firmly argued about the real effectiveness of static and individual procedures. Vygotsky's social development theory and its complex implications stress the inherent social nature of all human activity Smagorinsky, (1995). As an asserted conception it could be stated that Vygotsky emphasized considerably on the importance of others when aiming to achieve a satisfactory level of any kind of knowledge, but primarily when achieving communicative knowledge such as human sciences and more precisely any spoken or written language. In other words, Vygotsky felt that the intellectual ways of knowing the world that a student displayed were not primarily determined by innate factors, that is, inherited intelligence or mental abilities. Instead, Vygotsky thought of patterns and levels of thinking as products of the activities practiced in the social institutions of the culture in which the individual was immersed Morris, (2004). Various Vygotsky's adherents and supporters of the theory of social development agree on the importance of considering language as a social process that can be best developed being encircled by optimal learning conditions, which are provided by those who have a higher degree of

knowledge. Smagorinsky, (1995) supports these assertions by saying that "the sociocultural theory that emerged from the work of Vygotsky raises issues that challenge the appropriateness of the purity metaphor in social science research. Vygotsky's developmental theory and its complex implications stress the inherent social nature of all human activity. From a neo-Vygotskian perspective, data are social constructs developed through the relationship of researcher, research participants, research context (including its historical antecedents), and the means of data collection." As can be seen, the importance of interaction in both acquisition and learning of any language plays a fundamental role when building solid cognitive bases for further information collection, which leads us to a higher social and cognitive stage. Moving from one level to another, as it has been mentioned previously, depends highly on the more knowledgeable others that make part of your zone of proximal development. In order to comprehend Vygotsky's theory on ZPD, it must be understood another very relevant Vygotsky's principle; the more knowledgeable other (MKO). According to Galloway, (2001) the MKO is somewhat self-explanatory; it refers to someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task,

process, or concept. Although the implication is that the MKO is a teacher or an older adult, this is not necessarily the case. Many times, a child's peers or an adult's children may be the individuals with more knowledge or experience. (For example, who is more likely to know more about the newest teen-age music groups, the "raddest", skateboarding skills, how to win at the most recent Nintendo game, or how to correctly perform the newest dance craze, a child… or his parents?!) it can be seen that researchers agree on the fact that actually being on the need of learning a new task means looking for more capable peers in order to take advantage of what they know, no matter whether they scaffold you intentionally or not. Galloway, (2001) also believed that the MKO need not be a person at all. Some companies, to support employees in their learning process, are now using electronic performance support systems. Electronic tutors have also been used in educational settings to facilitate and guide students through the learning process. The key to MKOs is that they must have (or be programmed with) more knowledge about the topic being learned than the learner does.

The zone of proximal development is possibly Vygotsky's most well-known idea, although it may not be his most influential. This is due to the early death of

Vygotsky, since it meant he left very few solid bases along with additional research that can support his theory. However, the zone of proximal development proposed by Vygotsky presents a few obstacles when being applied in any kind of teaching-learning or scaffolding-acquiring processes. One of the main difficulties of ZPD is the fact that the learner is going to center his/her attention in the area in which s/he feels weaker. Thus, paying less attention to his other areas of cognition, which leads us to the problem that the learners will have to come back to those weaker areas and begin a scaffolding process again. This process may be repeated on countless opportunities until learners feel the need to focus their cognitive development in one or many specific areas depending on their life style and cognitive needs. Concerning this last concept, authors and researchers believe the scaffolding process within the zone of proximal development has limits, different from the general interpretation that has been attributed to the concept. That is, numerous authors and researchers as well believe that ZPD and scaffolding may be used to teach everybody everything. To this, Leong, D., Badrova E. (N. D.) says, "The zone of proximal development reveals the limits of the child's development at any specific time. The ZPD is not limitless; a child can not be

taught anything at any given time. Assisted performance is the maximum level at which a child can perform today. Children cannot be taught skills or behaviors that exceed their ZPD. "Teresa" and "Linda", for example, may not be able to be taught to do handstands on the balance beam on a given day, because that skill is too far above their ZPD. This point of view is very assertive since it has been proved that learners already have a set of cognitive knowledge according to the previous support their scaffolders provided them naturally or intentionally. This is the case of multiple intelligences, which are acquired through social interaction and data compilation; and sometimes are found innate in each learner.

One distinguished advantage of Vygotsky's theory is that it works in both real and pretend world activities. Goncu & Becker, (1992), cited by Seng, (1997) provides a very accurate definition of this term. Real world activities are those in which a child maintains his/her day to day living, such as dressing, solving and arithmetic problem, or making a pancake. These are essential to survive in the sociocultural world. Pretend world activities, on the other hand, are primarily directed towards understanding the dynamics of an activity and mastering the real world activities. Learners can actually

do something new very often in their daily lives, which
will lead them to a higher cognitive level every time, and
by the end, they will be individuals that achieved an
optimal intellectual growth, thus contributing to someone
else's zone of proximal development.

As it has been showed, Vygotsky's theories of social
and cognitive development have had, and still have, a wide
range of application in the teaching of languages. His
theories are broadly applied mainly because of their
practicability in classrooms as well as daily life. His
concern was the organization of instruction with
pedagogical purposes. But his crucial contribution was
giving individuals a real importance for learning process
through communication. Besides, he pronounced human beings
as key social system with the ability to communicate and
provide information that may potentially have consequences
in others to create new forms of thinking.

Conceptual framework

It was said previously that students are used to being
taught using the behaviorist approach and, that this
specific type of learning does not leave room for students
to consider themselves, and others close to them, as part
of an active but unconscious learning-teaching circle to
which they belong. This is why the main purpose of this

research is to give students enough tools to be aware of their inner abilities to play a more active role within a particular context when trying to learn a foreign language and be also aware of their peers' learning momentums that can be appropriately used for educational benefit.

Contextual framework

Language center of the University of Nariño

The Language Center of the University of Nariño had its origin in the "Departamento Electronico de Idiomas" according to resolution N. 12 of October 24th 1961. Its primary objectives were to encourage language learning using modern systems, and offer both students from the university and public in general the possibility of learning foreign languages in a fast and efficient way. The languages offered to be taught were English, French, Italian and German.

However, due to the lack of commitment on the part of students, the institute was going to disappear. The solution was an entire restructuration; therefore, a number of high school teachers joined the institute and started working on the creation of the Department of Modern Languages as a unit of the "Faculty of Educational Sciences."

The functions of the emerging department were to present the modern languages curriculum as the specialty of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, offer its services to other dependencies form the university, and offer cultural expansion courses. In 1969, the Department of Modern Languages is approved in conformity with resolution N. 0049 of January 15th of the "Ministerio de Educación Nacional." In 1991, the Faculty of Education is restructured and the Department of Modern Languages becomes part of the Faculty of Human Sciences, with English-French and English-Spanish programs. The services to students form other faculties and public in general remain, applying a communicative approach to language learning. In 1993, a new building at Panamericana Avenue was constructed by the administration in order for an extension of the Department of Modern Languages to operate with two groups composed by people from the general public. This extension was then called "Language Center." It was ascribed to the Department of Modern Languages, which changed its name to "Department of Linguistics and Languages" in 1995. With new and appropriate facilities, the educational community gradually increased. To date, the Language Center offers its services to around 2000 students from the public and other programs at the University of Nariño. The number of students is

divided into 72 groups of students from the university and 37 of people from the public and counts on the services of a total of 66 teachers.

Nature of the Language Center

The Language Center is a unit of academic support in the Languages Area ascribed to the Department of Linguistics and languages. Its objective is to offer foreign languages courses to students from different faculties at the University of Nariño and public in general. In addition, the Language Center will serve as a Research Center to carry out innovative pedagogical projects in the languages area.

Vision of the Language Center

The Language Center at the University of Nariño will be an academic unit for the search of pedagogical advancements through research and methodological experimentation. Its aim is to give students an excellent academic level of knowledge of foreign languages and broaden their social, literary and cultural horizons.

Mission of the Language Center

The mission of the Language Center is to promote learning of foreign languages to contribute to the scientific and intercultural formation based on a

continuous investigation and methodological

experimentation.

III CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Population and Sample

This research had as the main core of study 12 students at the Language Center at the University of Nariño. The age of the students ranged from 16 to 22 years and they belonged to a fourth-level course of communicative English in the Language Center of the University of Nariño.

Design

Provided that this study's main objective is to determine the results of the application of ZPD and scaffolding techniques to a specific population, as well as analyzing the future results, an experimental design was used. In order to achieve the purpose of the present study, first of all, the participants were administered a pre-test in the form of an oral interview which would allow us to diagnose their level of proficiency and decide on the scaffolding activities to be used in the treatment. Finally, a post test was applied to check progress and draw conclusions. The type of research can be described with the following graphic:

$G= \quad O_1 \quad X \quad O_2$

Research Type

All the resulting information of this research was collected, analyzed and interpreted statistically to fulfill each objective set at the beginning of this process. All the procedures mentioned previously make it a quantitative research. Taking into account that the development of the process as well as the results obtained were widely characterized and presented, it is then accurate to classify this paper as descriptive.

Data Gathering Procedure

In order to gather the information necessary to fulfill the aim of the present research, it was necessary to administer a pre-test and a post-test which were the tools to determine the progress of the participant group regarding the speaking skill. An oral pre-test was also applied to students after having used communicative tasks. The communicative tasks used during the first part of the course were mainly based on the usefulness and convenience of using authentic material, charts and teaching materials of the same nature to aim a high class interaction.

Another oral test was used as the data-gathering tool for the post-test stage. The results of this test will be compared with the pre-test results and the grades will be

the main point of comparison for the analysis on how

students reacted to the treatment.

Data analysis

The aim of this paper is establishing whether the

implementation of some Scaffolding and ZPD activities

contribute to improving the teaching/learning process in an

EFL setting such as Pasto.

Expectations are mainly focused on students' oral

production. Besides, a mutual learning is also sought

through Vygotsky's principles that claim that individual

learning becomes more efficient when there is someone who

has a higher level of specific knowledge near, so that

students can have different interpretations and reinforce

what has been previously learned by using feedback.

The information gathered in this study will initially

be taken from the grades resulting from a pre-test which

consists of an oral examination whose purpose is checking

student's overall proficiency. Afterwards, the grades which

were the result of the post-test will be compared to those

results of the pre-test and analyzed for further drawing of

conclusions on the effects of a constructivist teaching of

speaking though scaffolding and ZPD.

This research was carried out with a single classroom

of twelve students who belonged to a fourth-level course of

Communicative English in the Language Center of the University of Nariño. This served as the experimental group that contributed to the process of verifying and confirming the goals set prior the experimental phase.

Pre-test analysis and results

In the pre-test, general accurate language production was intended. There were six different questions in which a specific grammar topic and functions were required to complete the task successfully. Students were asked to take the test in couples as a principle of scaffolding and ZPD. No scaffolding and ZPD activities were used before or during the pre-test. Some examples were used as a means of support to give the reader a clearer idea of what was carried out and what where students' reactions during the three different stages of this research. There is to point out that in some citations some examples contain some mistakes and errors which will be included as a part of the validity of this study. The score criteria used to assess both the pre and post oral test was ranked from 1 to 5, being 5 the highest grade and 1 the lowest.

Chart1:

Question N. 1 - Agreeing/Disagreeing
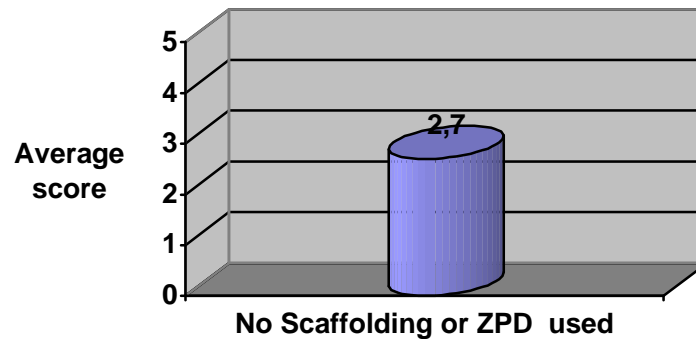
In question number one, it can be observed that nearly half of the students got an average score of 2.7. In this first question one of the students was required to provide personal information about him so that student number two would agree or disagree about his personal information depending on what he likes, does, has done or will do by using the functions:

So do I	Neither do I
So am I	Neither am I
So have I	neither have I
So will I	Neither will I

In question number one, the results were rather unsatisfactory as in many opportunities students did not use the structure intended and mixed tenses in the same sentence. Some of the inaccurate answers produced and that are worth revising were: Student1" I am not jealous".

Student2 answers: "neither I am not". Another example that

could call the attention of the readers is the following:

Student1:"I don't go to the church". Student2 answered:" I

don't too". Evidently the L1 (Spanish) has a lot to do in

the construction of the English functions. This is probably

due to the comparison or rule-relation that students tend

to make and that eventually has opposite effects to the

ones students expected at the beginning. This first

language influence may become so strong that sometimes

comparisons are made every class all class long which

somehow affects the normal development of a class. Spanish

has more to do with this specific agreement/disagreement

function because of the big difference between these two

languages. In this way most students took Spanish as the

basis of comparison when learning an English function. Some

phrases included thoughts such as: "why is English so

complex and you need auxiliaries for everything, in Spanish

we only say "yo tambien or yo tampoco and that's it, why

English can't be the same?" this constant comparison lead

students to inevitable mistakes. This type of continuous

inaccurateness may have a source in a deep process of

leaning functions that was not successfully fulfilled and

that would have presumably been successful if ZPD and

scaffolding had been used as a means to give students more support regarding the learning of functions.

Chart2:

Question N. 2 - Indirect Questions
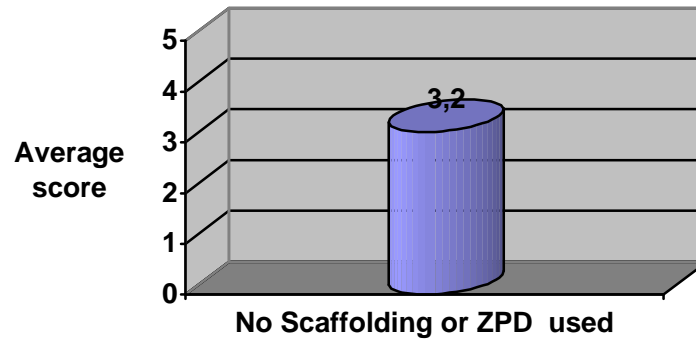
In question number two students barely surpassed their average score in question number one. The average grade was 3.2. In the second question of the test the teacher is a student's old friend from long ago and the students want to confirm personal information about him. This exercise intended to find out how students figured out the usage of tag-questions in a real-life situation. Improvising was another important element of the conversation since it makes it more difficult to hear a sentence and immediately change it into a tag-question without previously having had time to think and fix the sentence as required. The test was administered in couples but students took it separately. All the conversations held along the development of this question had a quite similar flow and

grammar usage but one in particular might summarize the others into one as the example that follows:

S: Hey! Your name is Franz, <u>isn't it</u>?

T: that's right

S: and you work in the University, <u>no</u>?

T: Yes, I do. I've been working there for a couple of years.

S: That's very good. I've been working in a very prestigious institution as well. So...you still live in the same neighborhood, <u>don't you</u>?

T: No. Actually I moved to a bigger apartment. I got married and I have a kid. Hey! Are you still with Kathy?

S: Yes. We'll get married on December. We have planned the wedding since last year and of course you will receive our invitation.

T: But I remember that you broke up not very well with her, <u>didn't you</u>?

S: Yes but we could solve the problem on time. We went to "couple therapy" and our relationship is excellent since then.

T: Well, I'm so glad I ran into you!

S: Oh I guess that's your train, <u>yes</u>?

T: It is. Thanks. Bye.

As it can be seen, the overall target grammar used in this exercise can be considered as inaccurate. In most cases, specially when the tag-question ends by any form of the verb to be, the L1 had a big influence that causes a deep grammatical interference which is later reflected in the grammar functions and in the end in student's grades. Generally speaking, it could be said that the L1 is a constant influence for students when learning any type of function. Is this question, again, the L1 influenced in students' performance as well in their grades. Scaffolding activities aim to dissipate those kinds of misunderstandings through the implementation of strategic vocabulary about a specific function. This means, by using scaffolding activities students have a previous idea of what the function is going to be about, making it less tricky when they are asked to create examples using the target function.

Chart3:

Question N. 3 - Late/Make
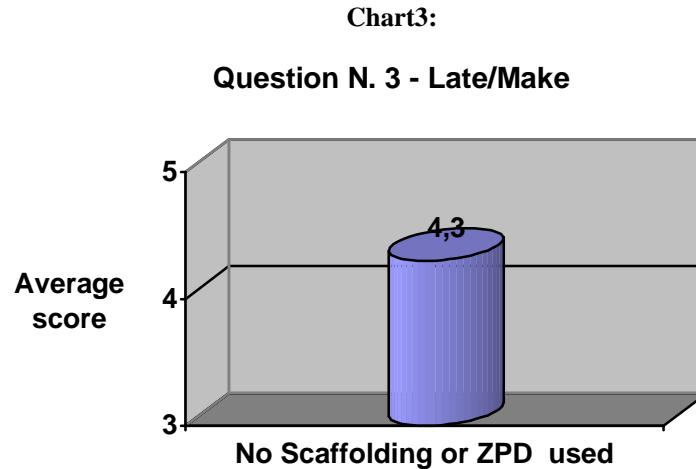
In question number three students did better in their average score. A relatively higher number of students improved considerably in comparison to the other score got in the initial two questions. In this function the pragmatic aspects of language are the main goal. The difference between let/make and their usage should be established. Students seemed to have assimilated the function as well as the usage through the examples given in the textbook used along the course. Students achieved a quite accurate usage for let/make and it could be said that little scaffolding and ZPD tasks were needed. For instance, the majority of students gave correct examples of their personal lives. Some of the most notable models were: Student1: "My mom doesn't let me have piercing because I am still a little girl", Student2: "On weekends, my father always makes me go with him to buy the groceries". With

these two examples it can be observed that scaffolding was

not really indispensable for a successful learning of the

target function. As a conclusion resulting from the last

exercise it could be said that there are some functions in

English that are said to be easier than other and it could

be added that for these activities no complex scaffolding

would be necessary, unless students seem to be having

difficulties with a specific function.

Chart4:

Question N. 4 - Embeded Questions
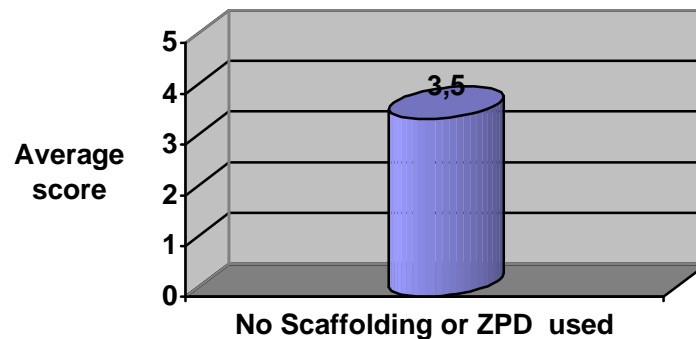
In question four, a more interactive activity was

chosen. Apparently students kept the same average line of

scores that they had been getting during the first three

questions. In this particular question one of the two

students should play the role of a Colombian business man

while the other student was an English random pedestrian in

the streets of Colombia. The purpose of this task was to

make an accurate use of the functions belonging to the

indirect question in a more realistic conversation. Near half of the students answered correctly and the rest of them answered with inexact utterances that sometimes were influenced by the L1. Some of the most attention-grabbing examples were chosen mostly due to their lack of grammar basis and also due to their amusing nature quite likely to happen. Here are some examples: Student1: "Excuse me Sr. can you tell me where is the nearest hospital?". This is a typical case of L1 interference. This word order confusion occurs because in the L1, in our case Spanish, the verb to be in the interrogative form is placed after the wh-questions. Students usually overlap words individually based on the L1 grammar structure until they complete the whole word. In some other occasions students simply "slip" because of common nerves or carelessness. Let's take a look at the next example. Student1 "Excuse me old lady, do you have any idea where I left my pants?". In this specific case a slight of sense of humor was used. The example we just went through has the perfect balance between the two language items that most teachers expect from their students, i.e. correct grammar usage and the fact that learning is actually taking place through creative productions.

Chart5:

Question N. 5 - Second Conditional
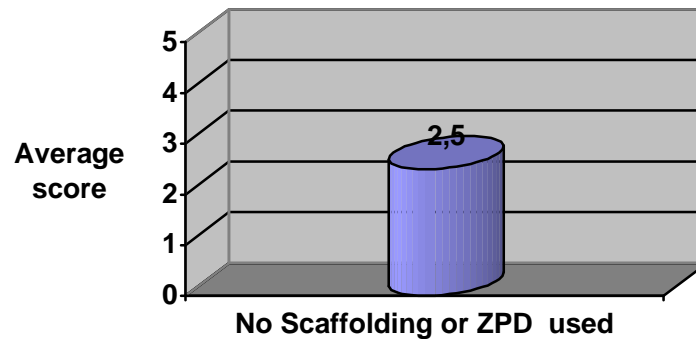
Going on with the individual analysis of the oral pre-test exercises, we will move on to number 5. Exercise 5 was considered as a good indicator to measure a specific function of the English language such as the well-known second conditional. In this exercise nearly half of the students did not do well when creating accurate examples using the second conditional. In this exercise students were asked to describe their personal lives and say what they would do if they had the chance to live life over again. All students knew in advance the different forms of conditionals since they had previously been given a quite complete material designed specifically to highlight the main differences among the four main different conditionals. Students assimilated the overall structure of the second conditional and put it into practice inefficiently with many basic mistakes. To quote some we

found: "If I <u>would can</u> live again, I <u>would not be me</u>", "I
<u>would not</u> make the same mistakes <u>if I have</u> the chance to
live once again". It could be concluded that students were
not able to assimilate and use effectively the target
function. Presumably, students would have felt more
confident of using the second conditional if a peer
activity had been incorporated within the lesson plan or a
number of scaffolding questions had worked as the
introduction for this new moderately confusing function. As
a conclusion it can be said that the second conditional
needed an extra assistance in order for it to be more
easily assimilated by the students of fourth level.

Chart6:

Question N. 6 - "Wish"
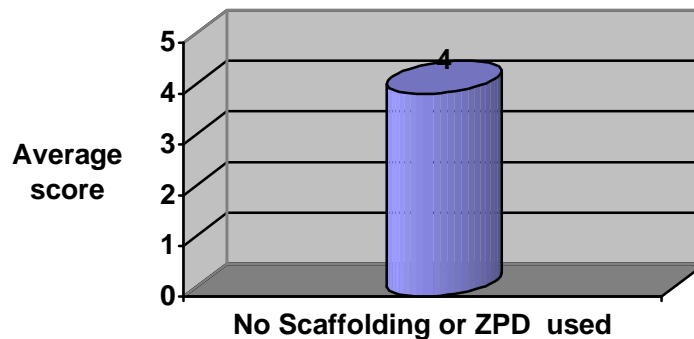
In the final exercise of the pre-test an often-
required function was used to continue with conditionals
assessment proposed by the textbook. This time the function

used was "wish". The majority of students seemed to have little difficulty dealing with this new function since they had already shown positive results in the previous in-class exercises. At the time of reporting the activity, the teacher said he was a genie who was released from a magic lamp and could grant five wishes in return. Students made use of their imagination and gave some accurate yet amusing examples such as the following: Student1: "If I were invisible I would go to your room to see the English test and then hit you". From the point of view of accuracy and pragmatics the structure was successfully used by the slight majority of students. A general score of four is not a really bad grade taking into account that there are very few students who actually surpass the final average score of 4.4. It could be said that most likely students would have got a higher score if either scaffolding or ZPD had been use as complementary tasks to strengthen students' basis on this particular English function.

Chart 7:

Pre-Test:Group's average grades for each question
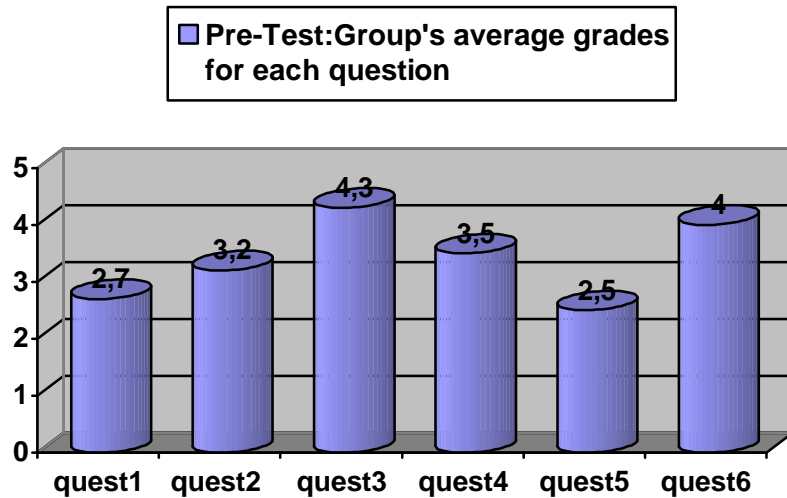
The table above shows the overall grades individual manner. The grades were obtained after implementing the pre-test. This individual presentation of data would hopefully help the reader have a more global and at the same time more specific idea about students' performance in the initial stage of this project through each question. Post analysing detailedly the results obtained from the pre-test, the reader will be able to compare them with the results obtained from the post-test stage by means of a similar chart that will show general-specific result for an easier comprehension of the data shown in the charts.

Chart 8:
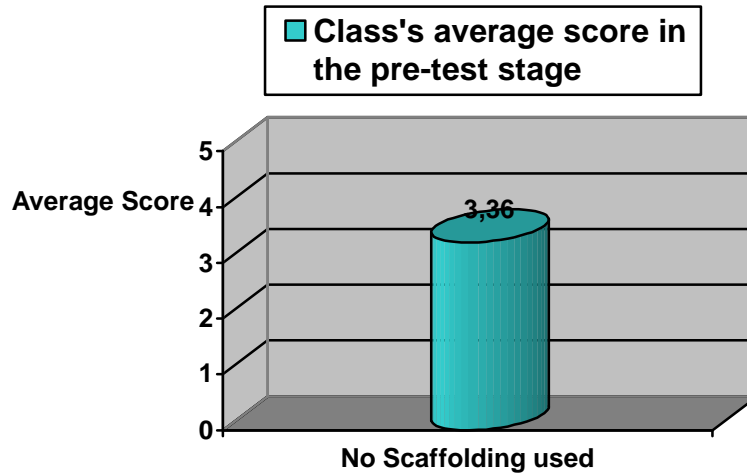
The table above shows the class' average score in the pre-test stage. This grade was obtained from the application of the pre-test as a means to obtain a global idea of students' general performance in oral English without using any scaffolding instruction.

Treatment

For the treatment stage, Vygotsky's most influential teaching/learning principles were taken into consideration. For instance, Vygotsky, (1978) claims that giving a learner previous support for further knowledge building enhances highly the chances of leaning faster and more significantly. Due to this fact diverse scaffolding and ZPD activities were used as a means for students to initially get used to the new teachings methodologies. The lesson plans used along the treatment changed its overall appearance in terms of pre, during and after class tasks. Tasks development within classes was rather unknown to them making it an abrupt and out-of-the-ordinary method that eventually students assimilated pleasingly.

During the treatment process, all classes had a very similar flow. However, all the principles of a lesson plan varied depending on whether scaffolding or ZPD were used as the main core to build a lesson plan. For instance, in most scaffolding classes three main stages were used as a means to make the class easier to be identified within a scaffolding model: Pre-stage, during and post-stage. Pre-stage refers to all the necessary support (scaffold) that students need before starting to do a task. This scaffold may be presented in the form of useful vocabulary that

could be used all class long. To cite a specific case, in one of the classes the topic to be studied was "technology and both positive and negative effect on modern life". The first pertinent step to be taken was to ask students how much they knew about technology by doing a brain storm and writing the given vocabulary on the board so the less-knowledgeable students could take notes and increase their vocabulary about the specific topic to be discussed. The fact of presenting the target vocabulary before starting the actual class gave room for less-knowledgeable (with very little motivation or even distracted) students to give it a shot and use some of the words which were in the board to speak their minds up. When a few students who generally did not participate often decided to take the risk and express their ideas, some other introverted classmates adopted this attitude and began giving undemanding and straightforward ideas about the topic (that was a good start though). As the class was carried out, much more confidence was observed in the overall classroom. Those who did not like at all to be an active part of the class began to participate actively and actually became part of the class. Introducing students the target vocabulary before starting the class seemed to be a good strategy to awaken

and strengthen their confidence for further oral production tasks.

Immediately after introducing all the useful vocabulary to the class, the instructor begins introducing the actual class by asking triggering questions about the topic, technology was the first topic to be tackled in this specific class. Triggering questions consist of a set of questions that help students obtain a broader view of the topic about to be discussed. Eventually, these questions tended to be more specific in terms of making students more aware of their position towards the topic being discussed in the class. Such initial scaffolding process included yes/no, open and opinion questions. Some of the questions used were: what is your personal concept of technology? What is the society's concept about technology? What is technology for? Does technology make our lives easier or even more complicated? What is your position towards technology: against, for or neutral?

Most of the student's answers were used to create new questions as a follow-up (feedback) process which helped students go into deeper questions. For instance, one of the students answered that technology is necessary for the modern life style but it will eventually become something harmful for us humans. The resulting question from this

answer was: "do you think that technology will become independent enough to think by itself and somehow have some sort of control over humans?". Students gave several answers to this question based on diverse, both negative and positive, personal points of view about the relation between human life and intelligent technology in the near future. Every time an answer was given, the tutor's job was to use that answer as part of the next question. This process makes part of scaffolding questions as a means to somehow "recycle" all that outstanding oral material provided by students and which is constantly underestimated by most teachers. This type of lesson plan outline used along the treatment stage intended to achieve the main goal of this paper, which is establishing weather carrying out an EFl class using mostly components and principles of Scaffolding and ZPD will help students be more aware of their oral production, and if so, being able to correct each other or even being able of correcting themselves as a part of the ZPD principles.

In other occasions students unconsciously made use of the Zone of Proximal Development principles to give one another basis about a very specific topic or reinforce the previous background they had about it. That is, the more knowledgeable other (MKO) played the role of the teacher by

providing explanations about any topic seen in class. The more knowledgeable others were actually quite successful when giving the less knowledgeable ones explanations concerning the oral target topic. Apparently, this fact occurred because students made use of a different "classmate jargon" when clarifying English functions as part of language identity. Therefore, explaining a rather complex English function such as third conditional (If I hadn't come to class today, I would have taken a nap instead) usually becomes a quite tough task for some teachers since they are forced to use a "teacher speech" due to their personal need -and institution's policy as well- to maintain the student's respect by using formal speech in their explanations. Through scaffolding, instructions were given by using a straightforward set of vocabulary so students could figure out the function more easily than if specialized (the most used) speech had been used.

According to the information above Jones (2002, quoted by Latoya 2002) affirms that scaffolding is a process that requires direct teaching and monitoring by an adult. To be successful with this teaching strategy, the teacher must provide all information that a student needs to complete a given task. Detailed directions and an appropriate control

of the student's attention make students aware of the
importance of the class activities, which are essential for
students' abilities to handle themselves adequately within
the scaffolded teaching environment. Jones also states
that, gradually, with scaffolding, learners are able to
direct their own attention, plan further tasks and are also
able to control their activities in such a way that they
will eventually work with less instruction on the teacher's
side until they unconsciously figure out they became more
independent learners. All lessons within the scaffolding
and ZPD instruction should cover similar mixed skill
components in terms of lesson planning and goals for each
specific lesson. That is, all and each lesson plan used in
the classes along the treatment as well as the actual
development of the class require having the same outline to
be develop and scaffolded along with the learners. During
this phase, especially the first two classes, students
seemed to wonder why all this sudden change in the
methodology used in the classes. The explanation provided
was that they were about to face a new and better teaching
process foreseeing further tests, which will be mainly
focused on more communicative skills. Latoya (2002)
suggests a quite appropriate lesson plan for scaffolding
purposes. This lesson plan differs from other more

traditional lesson models in the sense that several pertinent scaffolding activities are included in the pre-, during and post- stages of the lesson. In this way one of the most important principles, such as the PPP (presentation, practice and production), one of the general lesson planning principle is fulfilled through scaffolded tasks mainly focused on oral production from both the teacher and students' side. For Latoya lesson plan template see Appendix 1.

This research is focused on students' oral production rather than the other essential abilities. In Latoya's sample of lesson plan, it is important to say that the tasks used make part of activities that are not frequently used by traditional teachers (who are luckily fewer now than not long ago in our local setting) and this fact should strongly be considered as a means to develop students oral proficiency as an important part of our current and further syllabi and curriculums.

Post-Test analysis and conclusions

Final Oral Test

In the post test phase, an oral final test was used as a device to establish whether scaffolding combined with some ZPD (group tasks)had positive effects on students in an EFL setting like Pasto or not. The procedure of the post test had a quite similar outline and grading criteria as the pre-test. In both the pre and post test three grading criteria were taking into account: Accuracy, fluency and recently-learned vocabulary. All questions had to be reported in couples as a part of the Zone of Proximal Development core principles. For each question a specific and different function was chosen. Students were shown some samples of functions for a short period of time (1 exact minute) in a letter-size page with a reasonably noticeable font type for a better look. These functions made part of the language components that students should know at the end of the course to fulfill the objectives set at the beginning of the course so that they are able to continue to the next level. Students should recognize and remember the function for the immediate activity that was about to take place. It should be said that showing students the target functions seconds before the actual task is part of

the scaffolding theory and working in couples is a tenet of
the ZPD instruction.

To have a closer look of the grid used as the grading
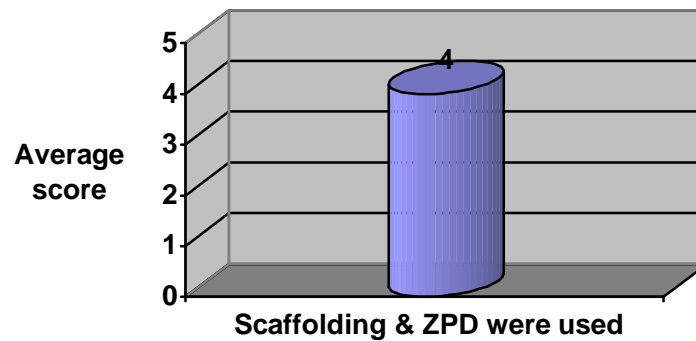criteria for both the pre and post test see Appendix 2

Chart9:

Question N. 1 - Agreeing/Disagreeing
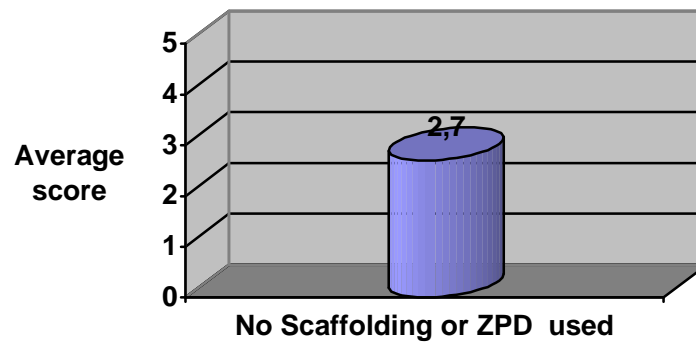
Chart10:

Question N. 1 - Giving Advice

In question number one of the post test stage students
obtained a slightly higher score in average compared to the
average scored obtained previously when no scaffolding or
ZPD instruction was given as a part of the pre-test phase.
At this point of the research students got used to

receiving scaffolding instruction. Students were initially less unreceptive towards this new teaching approach as it was thought prior the research since it was a group conformed in the big majority by teenagers. In contrast, students saw this new approach as something that would help them face more difficult tasks and tests. Another issue that has to be highlighted is the fact that during the observation carried out by the teacher is was detected that students had been working with a very behavioristic approach, making scaffolding and the group tasks of the ZPD theory something appealing for them as a routine-breaker. For the first question of the post-test students should use the functions that are commonly used to give recommendations and advice such as "have you ever tried...", "have you considered...", "It's useful to..." why don't you...", it's a good idea to...." among others. In this opportunity the teacher gave students a set of problems for which they were to find an immediate tentative solution. As the test was taken in couples, student number two was allowed to give the other student some ideas by using English random utterances. Some of the problems provided were: "I lost all my documents during my stay in Africa. I was in the jeep and suddenly I jumped because a lion scared me. My documents fell on the ground and the

lion ate them". For this question several answers both realistic and crackbrained were given. In both situations most students made use of accurate functions as well as a good sense of creativity which would not have any positive or negative effects on the final score. To quote just a few examples we had: student1:"<u>If I were you I would call</u> the Colombian Embassy in this way they give you new documents and some money to survive for some days", student2: "<u>Have you tried hunting</u> the lion and removing the documents from its stomach?". In problem # 2 a friend of mine is in love with two women, he loves both equally and he can't get rid of either of them. One of the students suggested: student1:" you have two girlfriends right?, then <u>why don't you get</u> two jobs!", student2:"<u>It's a good idea to ask</u> them to scratch your back at the same time". In conclusion, students obtained a very good average score in the first question of the post-test, even though some basic mistakes were made such as third person inflexions and some constructions of plural nouns.

Chart11:
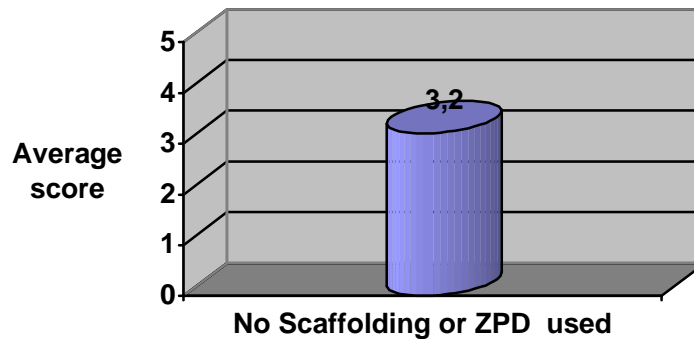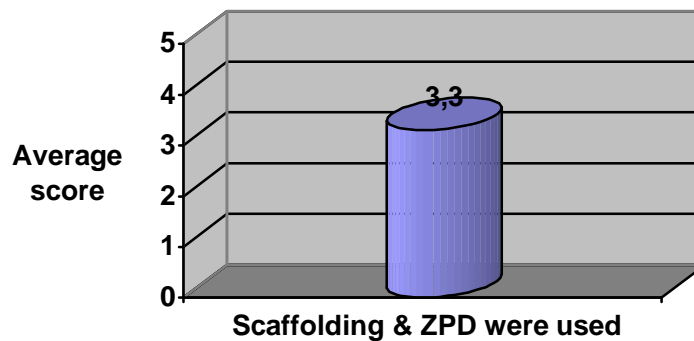
Question N. 2 - Indirect Questions

Average
score

3,2

No Scaffolding or ZPD used

Chart12:

Question N. 2 - Infinitive/Gerund

Average
score

3,3

Scaffolding & ZPD were used

This research is mainly focused on providing students with helpful functions rather than non-sense isolated words. The functions to be assessed in this question involve expression of feeding, healthy habits and personal information as well as recommendations about how to keep in shape. In this exercise students were asked to use some verbs and expressions that are followed by both infinitive and gerund forms, e.g. (I enjoy getting up early; I hope to get up early). This topic is considered by many students

and teachers as one of the most difficult functions to be taught but over all as a tough function frequently used when there is the need of communicate something immediately but you must think about whether it requires infinitive or gerund, which slows down the flow of the conversation making them less natural. Moreover, placing a gerund or an infinitive after a verb does not make part of our mother tongue (Spanish) making students unconsciously less aware of their accuracy when establishing a conversation. Some of the sample expressions shown to the students included:"I usually go to the gym twice a week/fishing once a month", "I try eating low-fat products", "I eat well/badly/balanced", "I avoid smoking as much as possible/canned food", "I get a medical check every six months" among others. For the most part students did not answered quite accurately since apparently this topic was not of their interest. Students largely used their personal opinion and thoughts to express themselves about this issue and gave some very inaccurate but key health insights. Some of the examples given were: "I usually sleep to 7 hours, sleeping minus hours would be dangerous for your health in the future", "I try avoid stressful situations that affect your nerves like to driving downtown", "I enjoy eating slowly because in this way my stomach works better", "I

don't mind drink eight glasses of water a day", "I tend to eat more when I am at school". Students did not have a very positive attitude towards this activity. In the light of these results it can be concluded that the results for this specific function (infinitive or -ing) were rather unsatisfactory despite the various focused activities used and the scaffolding and ZPD principles presented right before the test,. Habitually, the topic of conversation influences somehow the results of a test regardless the significance of it. Apparently, students' interest for a topic is triggered by activities that do not require any type of suggestions or recommendations but rather topics that demand some information about future events (role technology in the near future) or even topic where they can be accurate and over all original in their ideas (second conditional) as when students gave a very accurate and fun model using the second conditional (e.g. If I were invisible, I would go into your bedroom to see the English test questions one day before test and after that I would punch you). It's very likely that the influence of the L1 played a very important and unfortunate role. This is due to the simplicity of this English function in the Spanish grammar, which does not require making a difference either from the point of view of morphology nor semantics, i.e.,

choosing between an infinitive and a gerund would not
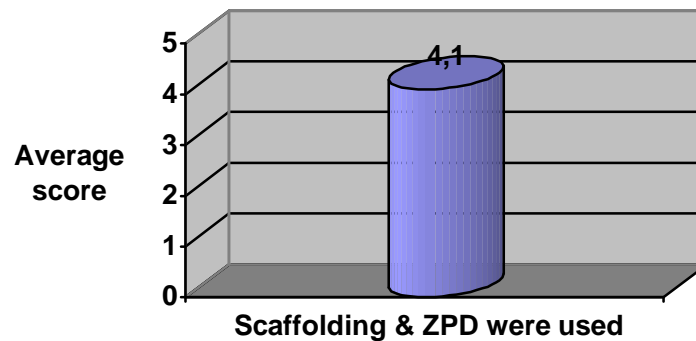
change the actual meaning of the word used.

Chart13:

Question N. 3 - Let/Make
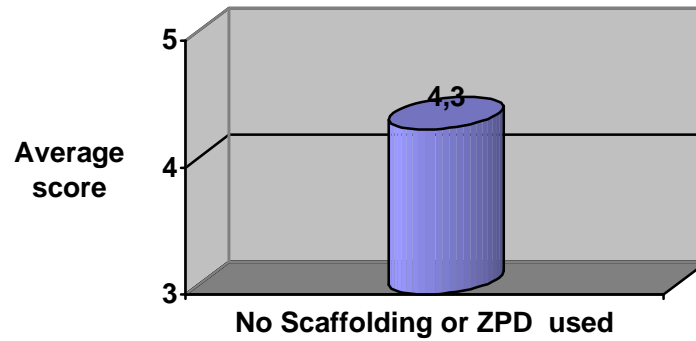
Chart14:

Question N. 3 - Customs

In this part of the post-test the main function to be

evaluated was related to functions commonly used when

someone wants to establish a conversation about his culture

superstitions. This topic about common knowledge and

grammar functions made part of the textbook used along the

course. Therefore, culture functions were considered as one

of the items of evaluation for the post-test stage of this paper. In this particular question students showed a very positive attitude towards this topic and showed themselves very confident talking about culture even though many teenagers do not generally like the social issues. The question students had to face with was: "Tell me about a typical Colombian question and tell me why it calls your attention". As the previous questions in the pre and post-test, some useful information was shown to students one minute before they began the actual solution of the question in an oral manner as part of the scaffolding principles. Some of the vocabulary given was: "Groom, bride bouquet, horseshoe, black moth, mirror, four-leaf clover, salt, sugar, crickets, mattress, and black cat, among others. Additionally to the related vocabulary some expressions were also given as prior support for further language needs. Just to quote a few functions we have: "In Colombia it's the costume to...", Colombians tend to...", "As a superstitious country Colombia has many religious/cultural/sports manifestations such as..."When a person considers himself unlucky he counteracts it by doing...". With this background students felt they now had more chances to begin talking about a specific topic since knowing some topic-relevant functions helped them increase

their confidence, which eventually became an attitude adapted by the other less confident peers. In summary, students showed themselves quite willing to speak about something so typical and personal as it is the countries' customs. There is to highlight that all the students used positive customs rather than unenthusiastic ideas that could somehow interfere with the normal development of the task. i.e., if students had begun talking about something negative, this in some way would have stopped students' inspiration leaving no more room (time)to broaden a good inspired idea by making use of the required functions. As a conclusion it can be said that if students had used negative topics in this questions instead of positive ones, this could have almost certainly affected the overall final results of this question.

Chart15:

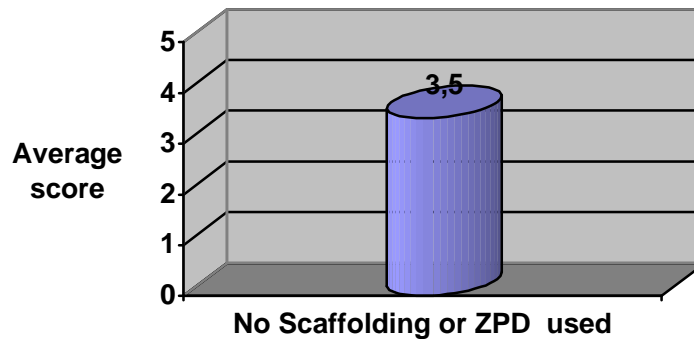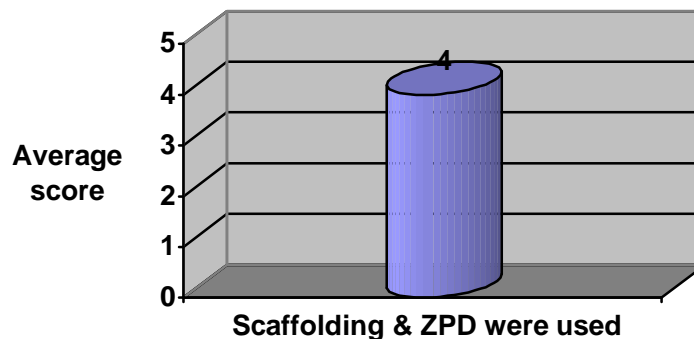**Question N. 4 - Embedded Questions**

Chart16:

Question N. 4 - Phrasal Verbs

In this opportunity students were to face one of the most dissimilar and troublesome functions of the English language when comparing it to students' mother tongue (Spanish). English phrasal verbs have no relation at all with any of the Spanish structures. This fact is actually as helpful as distracting for EFL learners since they are not used to using two words working as verbs that later on will have the function of a single word. Earlier in the treatment stage, students had already had difficulties even

with the use of various introducing scaffolding and ZPD
tasks. It actually took two classes of scaffolding and ZPD
tasks to get students involved with the phrasal verbs due
to the complexity of this English function. The task they
had to complete was related to embarrassing situations they
had had in their lives making use of the phrasal verbs
given. As it was said in previously students' creativity
played an important role when providing appealing examples
with a high level of accurateness, it did not influence the
final score though. The phrasal verbs shown prior the
answer were: break down, come along, come over, get up,
find out, pick up, turn out, step on, get over give up, get
off, get along, put off and turn up. The most appealing
example will be used now as a reference to show students
understanding of the functions as well as their creativity.
E.g. "A long time ago I decided to go to pick up my ex-
girlfriend because it turns out that it's very difficult
for me to get over her and I still visit her. Surprisingly
she asked me to come in the house and have a seat, she even
offered me something to drink!. She broke up with me
because she found out that I had another girlfriend. She
had given me many opportunities but I kept on doing the
same. Finally she gave up giving me more chances and threw

me away. The day I visited her we <u>went out</u> to a bar and made <u>things up</u>. Now we're married and have two kids".

   For the most part students had difficulties at first but it was necessary to reinforce the initial scaffolded instruction with more scaffolding and ZPD tasks. The results show that this particular group of students successfully fulfilled the average score for the goals initially set for this stage of the research. As for the average score and comparing the two charts, it is clearly seen that students had a higher understanding on phrasal verbs that if they had used no scaffolding and ZPD al all. The scaffolding tasks and materials in this specific topic were full of informal jargon, which turns out to be more appealing to students. This fact can be considered as a positive influence for the final results and should be considered for a future introduction to this topic.

Chart17:

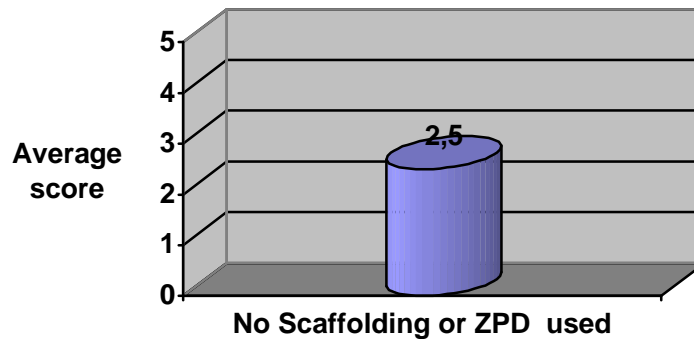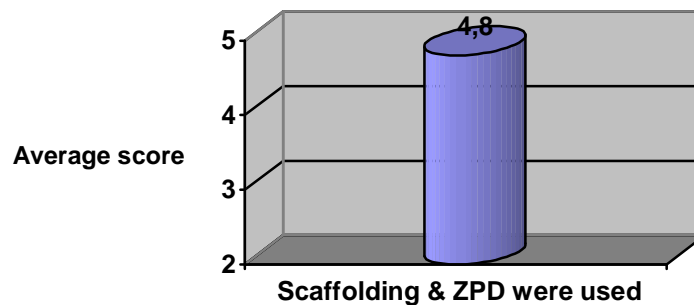**Question N. 5 - Second Conditional**

Chart18:

Question N. 5 - Daily Life Expressions

In the final exercise of the book the functions to be studied were related to the diverse expressions found along the textbook used for the fourth level of EFL. The expressions varied from formal to very informal topics and were mainly related to customary topics such as food expressions frequently used in daily conversations (To mull something over=to rethink, consider something),(half-baked idea=an idea that is not completely pleasing) money expressions (to be broke, to be flat broke=to have no money

at all)and non specific expressions used in varied topics of conversation (I'm up to my eyeballs in work=I have worked too much) (I ran out of printing ink=the printing ink is overt) (I just made my mind up=I just made a decision). Students' task was to use at least five expressions they studied through the book and use them to talk about the advantages and possible disadvantages of technology either from a very personal point of view of based on the inspiring ideas of a sci-fi film. As it had been done in the previous questions, the most attention-grabbing examples will be highlighted. Among the various exceptional examples provided by the couples who took the test the following example could be highlighted: Student1: "I think technology has been important matter in all the history of the human race. Technology has been also a <u>fountain</u> of war, differences among countries and a monster that humans created and that will eventually destroy them and maybe that situation would <u>serve the crazy scientists right</u> because they are too ambitious. My point is that the humans created technology to make the life of persons more effective, faster and less complicated but the reality is that sometimes, many times, apparently technology is like your enemy. You can find technology in many places in the normal life of a person for example at work, in the house,

at school, in the transportation that we use every day. I can't imagine my life without technology at this point of my life because that situation would be very stressing and even more stressing with no technology at all. I imagine you would be up to your eyeballs in work everyday because after a very difficult day of work you have to work from the office to your house. About the technology in these days I can say that it's really necessary for many people depending of their professions. There are some persons that need technology more than others, for example the people who depend of technology, such as computer engineers, cell phone companies, home appliances and all the other secondary indirect workers depend on technology in some way would lose their jobs and create an economic chaos because there wouldn't be breadwinners in most houses. Besides, everything else will collapse like a domino game". Student two added: "In my opinion technology has replaced, still replaces and will replace in bigger numbers the humans in their jobs. This happened with the industrial revolution a long time ago when many workers lost their jobs when the machines replaced them. In these days we can see how cashiers are replaced by automatic machines that receive the money and give you the change. Sales persons are facing a very rainy day since virtual purchases and sales become

more popular every day. This represents a home that will run out of opportunities to grow as a family since they were not used to depending on only one member of the family to obtain the money needed for the expenses. Even though technology is more dependent on humans than humans on technology, the technology needs humans to be created and maintained but humans can surely survive without technology as they have done for all the history". Both the first and second student had a very positive attitude towards these kinds of topics. They set their contrasting positions by making an accurate use of the structures given prior the task. By analysing the two charts, it can be stated that there was an enormous improvement in the fifth question of the post test even though both fourth questions in the pre and post test were relatively evenly challenging from the point of view of the students and teachers. Again, a good combination between a good topic of conversation and a good scaffolding instruction before, during and after a class could lead teacher and students to more successful significant learning.

Chart 19:

Pre-Test:Group's average grades for each question

Chart 20:

Post-Test:Group's average grades for each question
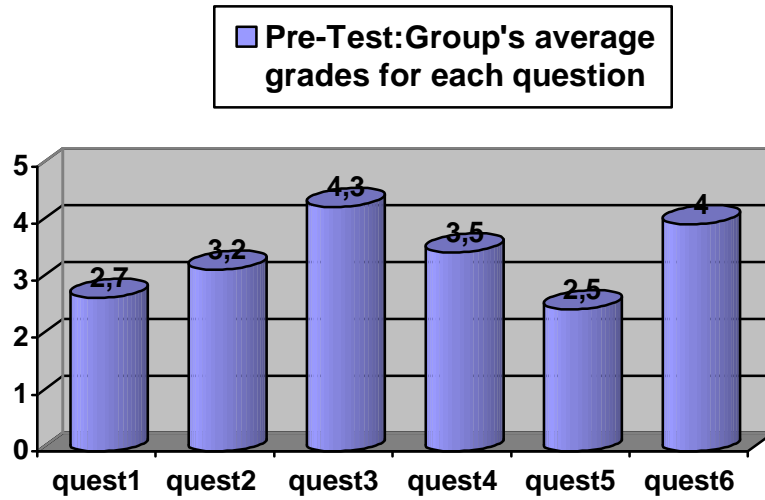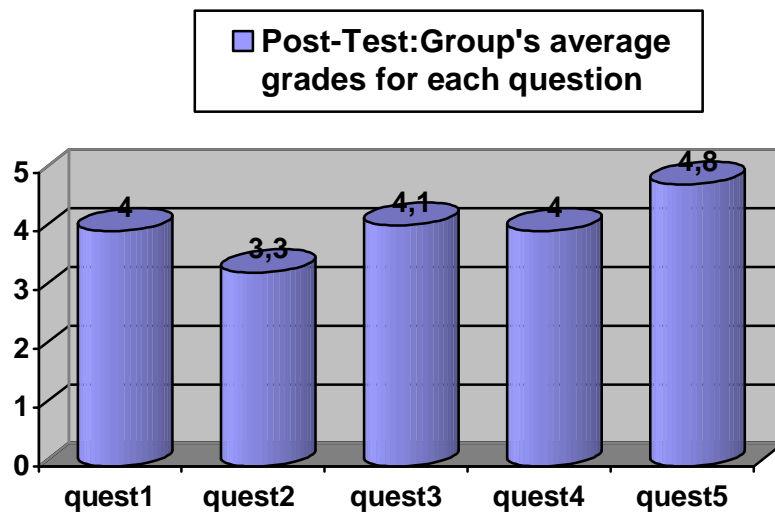
The graphic above clearly shows the overall grades obtained by students in each of the questions that made part of the post test and that were immediately taken after the treatment process. In the light of these positive

grades it could be affirmed that the results were rather satisfactory if we consider the relatively short time available for the treatment stage. Besides this fact, students had to face a very particular and major change in the way they were learning. However, some very few functions that were intended to be taught in the treatment and post test seemed to be a rough path to go on regardless the type of methodology, approach or technique that you decided to use. That was the specific case of the infinitive Vs gerund functions. Students regularly have a really hard time trying to figure out why some verbs require the –ing form and some other the infinitive added to the fact that if they use either of them randomly they risk being misunderstood. For instance the verb "stop". If we use an –ing form after stop we may express that someone decided to stop one activity and not do it again e.g. "Kathy stopped skating in the track because the ground was wet". On the other hand when we use "stop" followed by an infinitive it can be understood that someone stopped one activity to do something else e.g. "Bob stopped to run to ask me something about my mother". This means that Bob decided to stop the exercise to do something else, in this case to ask some personal information".
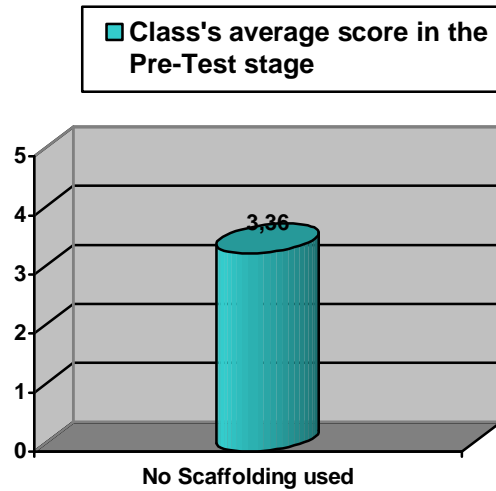
Chart 21:

☐ Class's average score in the Pre-Test stage

3,36

No Scaffolding used

Chart 22:

☐ Class's average score in the Post-Test stage

4,04

Scaffolding & ZPD were used
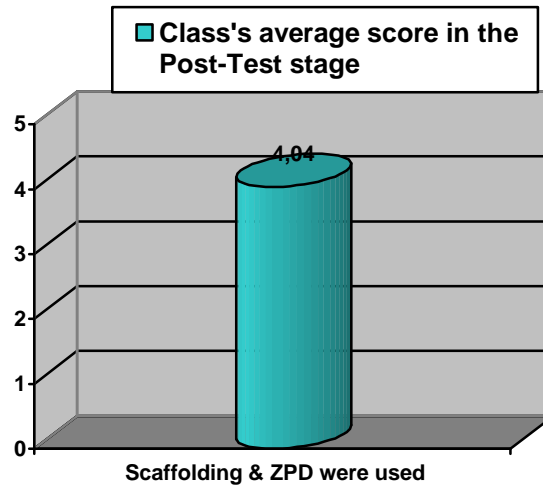
In the chart above it can be observed that the students of fourth level did surprisingly well in most of the questions. The overall average of all the questions was quite satisfactory since in our setting higher grades most of the times mean a higher self-esteem for further classes and levels. There is also a plus when getting a high grade in the institution where the research was carried out, and it consists of giving the students who get high grades the

right to study the next level of English with no cost.
There was one question which lowered the overall score for
the class though, but there was no enormous reduction in
the post-test average. The results shown in the chart also
show that in some cases scaffolding may be used more than
once to first introduce a topic and then reinforce it and
have very little influence in the final results. This
situation may happen due to several fickle variables both
internal and external that affect students very regularly
such as the mood, stress, motivation, family problems and
even love sickness which, believe it or not, is one of the
most distracting issues among teenagers when taking any
test. Sad but true, a break up could be a reason to do
badly in a test and have unfortunate effects in the final
grades of the student involved and in the end affect the
results of a research of this type. Fortunately, that was
not the case for this specific research.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The main aim of this research was establishing whether the implementation of the main tenets of Vygotsky's scaffolding and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) had positive effects on students' oral production after a valid treatment.

Different types of data were collected of both the qualitative and quantitative type. The results were analyzed and used to give uncertain reasons for some notable scores and specific exercises.

Prior this research, a field study was carried out in order to know how students usually learned the English functions and face the oral tests, which are a worrisome issue among EFL learners, especially among teenagers due to the complex stage they are going through. At the beginning students were shocked when a different (constructivist) type of oral test was used to determine their oral proficiency before the treatment. Students did not ask any question though. Students also knew that something new was being implemented and that there was a big and sudden change in the way the first oral exam was used. When taking the first oral exam (Pre-Test) students felt both uncomfortable and anxious about the new assessing procedure. During the pre-test students were asked to take

the oral test in couples as a part of the principles of peer scaffolding and ZPD. This type of cooperative procedure has always been a "relief" for students since they give one another moral support for the test.

As with the pre-test results, students were not administered any scaffolding of any type before the oral pre-test. A normal (usually behaviorist) flow was used for most classes before the treatment. These types of classes were what students were used to taking and apparently learn from. The results obtained were what the researcher had estimated at the beginning of this study. All of the questions were focused on using an English function accurately. The functions corresponded to a function that was proposed by the text book such as giving advice, phrasal verbs, and embedded questions to requests information, among others. The use of functions is considered nowadays by many experts as the alternative for beginning to forget the useless and time-consuming teaching of isolated patters of vocabulary. Some minor but influential issues seemed to somehow affect the grades of the students and eventually the final grade of the class. Among these factors we faced nervousness, tenseness, carelessness, bad memory and even mood. The fact that students were asked to take the test in couples reduced to

some extent the amount of stress and anxiety before taking the test. As with this principle, it can be concluded that giving students the chance of taking the test with someone else reduced the anxiety of facing the teacher, which is frequently seen as the most negative aspect of being administered oral tests.

During the treatment stage students perceived a sudden change in the normal flow of the classes. Students' reaction was neutral at first but some time later they began setting their points of view. Some said it was something nice and should have been adopted before the middle of the course, when the actual treatment began to be administered. For the treatment stage, some brainstorming activities and vocabulary extraction were used as a means for students to be familiar with the topic to be studied. This principle in particular was seen as a "moral and academic" support for those students who did not feel like being part of the class. Again, this principle was a part of the treatment that should be highlighted since students apparently saw it as the biggest and most important positive change when taking oral tests. This fact is due to the teachers' (most teachers) refusals to permitting students have any type of interaction when taking a test.

As a conclusion for the treatment stage it could be affirmed that it was a total success taking into account the positive results, with some very few exceptions, that will be shown next.

In relation to the post-test stage there are several issues that should be highlighted. The final oral test was used as the post-test to determine the validity of the treatment and whether the goals set were not too ambitious for this research. Students were already familiarized with the type of questions used along the post-test, which was something that positively influenced the final results. Anxiety and common nerves to express themselves using a different language were reduced significantly after the first oral test. This was not an initial goal set since the beginning of this study but it was something that fortunately and unexpectedly appeared on the way and was a vital part of the non-academic behaviour but rather a change of attitude. During the post-test, the results got from the treatment were immediately seen in the development of the post-test. As a conclusion it can be said that the results were positive but there was one specific function that students were not able to figure out

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a general recommendation, it can be said that the teacher willing to perform a research of this type needs to have a clear concept of what Vygotsky's scaffolding and ZPD are. Both concepts can be administered and assessed individually but it is recommended the implementation of both at the same time for better results. An open mind is also necessary for this type of approach since it goes against the all the usual (behaviorist) methodologies used by most teacher currently in our setting.

As with the research process, there are several issues, both negative and positive, that should be highlighted for an easier understanding of the reader of this paper. Firstly, it should be said that the application of the pre-test, post-test and treatment had to face some difficulties regarding the number of students, students' attitude towards a new technique and, in a manner, lack of time. The pre-test, post-test and treatment were administered to students whose average age ranged from varied from fourteen to nineteen. Moreover, two groups were clearly identified within the biggest experimental group. Both groups belonged to different socio-economic backgrounds. The first group corresponded to students whose age ranged from fourteen to sixteen. This first group

belonged to a high socio-economic status and corresponded to half of the total number of students. On the other hand, the other half of the experimental group was composed by students not younger than seventeen and not older than nineteen. The second half of the experimental group belonged to a lower socio-economic status in comparison to the first sub-division. The fact of having two groups that belong to different socio-economic status foresaw some difficulties when trying to implement a social-communicative approach where interaction is sought. In the pre-test stage, two students were asked to provide answers in relation to English functions questions. At the beginning, and all of a sudden, an important question came up: "should the researcher choose the two students who will take part in the pre-test at his will for the benefit of the project and the students or on the contrary the researcher should let the students choose the partners who they feel more comfortable with. This dilemma became even more challenging when one of the principles of Vygotsky's ZPD was deeply reviewed: "a learner has bigger chances to learn if a more knowledgeable other (MKO) makes part of the learning circle of the student with less knowledge about a specific subject". The fact of not choosing the couples to perform the pre-test and the post-test would affect, in

theory, the final results due to students' interest (perhaps worry)to choose a partner regardless his level of English which in the long range could benefit or on the contrary hinder their process of "absorbing" knowledge from his surroundings. This means that two students with a high English proficiency are very likely to work together, leaving in this way, no room for those less knowledgeable students to either consciously or unconsciously learn what the rest of the MKO or "good students" have to share with them. In contrast, two students who are friends by casualty, but neither of them has a better English proficiency than the other. This fact would suggest that the exchange of knowledge is a very unlikely process. It is very common today to have in the same classroom the "group that knows more" and the group that is not really interested in the subject. Probably students see this distributions of knowledge in the classroom as a means of "being around those of their type", which makes them feel more confident regardless how much they know or do not know. In this way, students avoid being in a group where everybody knows a lot but him or maybe where everybody seems not to worry about the subject and there is only one student who does (the so called nerd). This behavior is not well seen among teenagers because it seems to violate those

standards, or inner implicit rules, that make part of any group of young learners. In the end of all the paradigm, letting students choose freely their partner to take the pre-test and post-test was the best option due to the great risk of inducing possible behaviour conflicts resulting from social-status differences. Having a well-known or close partner around seems to increase students' confidence, which is later positively reflected on the final grades of the post-test. As a conclusion, it could be affirmed that if there are no conflicts of any type within the experimental group, the researcher should choose the couples making sure that there is one student with a high English proficiency with a students who does not have a high general English knowledge. In this way, the process of information exchange is eased by the appropriate distribution of the MKN, who would give support to those learners in the process of becoming more familiar with the language.

Regarding the treatment process, there are also some issues that need to be highlighted for the benefit of future researches that take this paper as reference. The treatment was carried out for twelve weeks. In this time, students were exposed to a diverse type of constructivist ways of acquiring a new language. Scaffolding and ZPD

activities were given to students twice a week to alternate with the regular classes. As part of the scaffolding technique, students were asked to provide as much vocabulary as they could about a specific subject. For instance, in one class the topic to be studied, through functions, was superstitions around the world. For this activity a brain storm was chosen as the most appropriate means to be more familiar with the topic. Students provided excellent vocabulary items that are used to talk about superstitions around the world (horseshoes, moth, salt, mirror, among others). This activity certainly increased, even in a low percentage, students' confidence and much more their self- esteem since they unconsciously realized that they knew many vocabulary items but unfortunately they had not had the opportunity to show what they really knew. A proof of this is the fact that students jumped and went literally crazy to raise their hands and take this chance to show the class and themselves that they were capable of doing countless tasks. After the brainstorm of vocabulary, students should form a group to talk about what a superstition is, what type of superstitions there are, what the usual consequences of superstitions are and what is the difference between the international and local superstitions. As it was mentioned before, students got

together with those who seemed to have a similar English proficiency (high and low), the ideas resulting from the both groups were quite impressive though. It seems that students enjoy discussion topics that are more related to "unreal things" such as superstitions, ghosts, Bermuda Triangle talks, so that they have the chance to speak their minds up and create some short of controversy. Scaffolding has a lot to do with triggering or follow-up questions, which means that all the material provided by the students in one answer should be used to ask him another question. The recommendations is that these follow-up questions should be clear and not repetitive, two or three questions should be more than enough for making students more aware of the function aimed, otherwise students tend to get bored and upset since all the conversation topic becomes repetitive.

It is recommended then that before beginning the ZPD and scaffolding activities a thorough analysis of the audience should be done. This could help avoid controversies or unexpected parents visits!

So far, some advantages and disadvantages were mentioned about the implementation of ZPD and scaffolding with a group of young learners. But there are some other external annotations that should be made to clarify the

disadvantages and some possible solutions for further implementation of this new technique. Since it is a technique that not many people have heard of, and as it happens with most new approaches, it is susceptible of being in the spotlight for both negative and positive comments. But in most Colombian institutions, we can still find very traditional teacher who use old fashioned techniques as a means to solve some discipline problems. If a ZPD technique, such as the group work were used in such institutions, students would need to get together to perform the task. An activity of this type could be inconceivable for those traditional teachers and therefore, it would not work. Moreover, some principals still have control over the way teachers give their classes. So if a brave teacher comes up with the idea of implementing this revolutionary technique, the director would seriously be affected by this as a way to disobey his authority. The revolutionary and "brave" teacher would think about his economical stability before risking his place "only" for implementing something new.

As it was mentioned before, and to conclude, ZPD and scaffolding activities not only give teachers the chance to have a classrooms where learning takes place but also a classroom where there is more interaction among students.

It is especially peculiar when you realize that some students do not know the names of the partners who are by their side. This means, teacher should provide students with more tools to enhance interaction as another way to give them learning spaces where they can socialize through the process of learning a second language. This is a new goal that teachers and institutions should include in their curricula and syllabi aiming more challenging tasks for a more functionally prepared generation of students of English.

References

Feldman, R. S. (1998). *Child development*. New Jersey.

Prentice Hall.

Galloway, C. A. (2001). Vygotsky's learning theory. In M.

Orey (Ed). Emerging prospectives of learning, teaching

and technology. Retrieved April 15, 2005 from

http://www.coe.uga.edu/epltt/vygotskyconstructionism

.htm

Howard, P. (1995, April). The use of Vygotsky's zone of

proximal development in quantitative research: A

Critical Review. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service

No. 398609) www.eric.ed.gov Database.

Hsiao, W. D., (N. D.). CSCL Theories. Retrieved April 10,

2005 from

http://www.edb.utexas.edu/csclstudent/Dhsiao/theories.

html

Latoya, H. (2002). Educational Concept of Scaffolding.

Retrieved 11 April, 2005 from

http://condor.admin.ccny.cuny.edu/~group4/Henry/Henry%

20Paper.doc

Leong, D., Badrova, E. (N. D.). Vygotsky's zone of proximal

development. Retrieved 7 April, 2005 from

http://naecs.crc.uiuc.edu/opi-nl/volume2/number4.html

Marty, P. (N.D.). Lev Vygotsky. Retrieved April 11, 2005

    from

    http://evolution.massey.ac.nz/assign2/PM/vygsup.html

Morris, C. (2004). Lev Seminovich Vygotsky's Zone of

    Proximal Development. Retrieved April 8, 2005 from

    http://www.igs.net/~cmorris/zpd.html

Seng, S. (1997, November). Zone of Proximal Development and

    the World of the Child. (ERIC Document Reproduction

    Service No. 416957) www.eric.ed.gov Database.

Smagorinsky, P. (1995). Review of Educational Research.

    Retrieved April 17, 2005 from Proquest Database

Verenikina, I. (N. D.). understanding scaffolding and the

    ZPD in educational research. Retrieved April 15, 2005

    from http://www.aare.edu.au/03pap/ver03682.pdf.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society*: The development of

    higher mental processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard

    University Press.

Wells, G. (1999). The zone of proximal development and its

    implications for learning and teaching.

APPENDIX A: Scaffolding and ZPD Lesson Plan Sample

Latoya A. Henry
Adolesent Learning and Development
Dr. H. Hartman
Thursday, November 14, 2002

Aim	What are the elements of a short story? (ELICIT)
Objectives	Students will be able to: 1. Identify the elements of the short story 2. Establish working definitions of the elements of a short story 3. Discuss a well known fairytale 4. Apply elements of short story to the fairytale
Materials	Story board, plot development sheet, "Three Little Pigs"
Do Now (5 minutes)	What is a short story? Explain.
Motivation (5 minutes)	1. Student Responses What are the characteristics that define a short story? (i.e. length, number of characters, time span, well-defined plot, etc.) 2. Questions: How can we use what we have come up with to create a definition for the short story? (The short story is a piece of prose fiction, usually under 10,000 words which can be read in one sitting)
Development/Activities (5 minutes)	1. Read-Aloud "Three Little Pigs" Listen to this short story and write down anything you notice the story having. (i.e. title, introduction, characters, setting, point of view, plot, rising action, conflict, climax, conclusion) 2. Introduce any of the elements that are not mentioned
Medial Summary (10 minutes)	1. Divide into groups each person within the group will be given a different element of the story to change (character, setting, plot, P.O.V.) 2. Group comes together to combine what they have done, to create a new story
Further Development (3 minutes)	What is/are: The setting? The point-of-view? Plot?
Final Summary (5 minutes)	Each element of the story is very important to the whole story. As you can see, changing any one part of these elements can give you an entirely new story.

APPENDIX B: Grid used to assess students' oral proficiency
during the pre-test and post-test.

Oral Test

Name _____ Date _____ Score_____

1. Adequate use of the functions studied   1 2 3 4 5
2. Low/high speed does not interfere with communication   1 2 3 4 5
3. Good use of new vocabulary   1 2 3 4 5