

# Scaffolding learning

## KEY IDEA

- Scaffolding involves using a range of conceptual, material and linguistic tools and technologies to lead students towards understanding

Scaffolding is the process by which teachers use particular conceptual, material and linguistic tools and technologies to support student learning. Scaffolding can be used at any point of interaction between teachers and students – at the point of providing inputs and explanations, through to modelling, interacting and assessing.

Scaffolding might include:

- explaining a new concept through a concept map
- making deliberate comparisons with the first language and culture
- focusing on particular words to develop a metalanguage
- providing and explicating fruitful examples; asking students to notice particular aspects/features
- highlighting patterns, choices
- elaborating on an initial explanation
- using questions to probe students' conceptions and prompt them to describe their interpretations and challenge their opinions
- using various ways of representing ideas and concepts (eg visuals, diagrams, organisers, highlighting, various media and technologies)
- feedback that relates to improvement.

Through interactive talk, ongoing dialogue, rich, formative questioning, and careful listening and reading, teachers constantly judge what kinds of scaffolds are appropriate and how much scaffolding is appropriate for individual learners. Teachers monitor student responses and find ways to ensure that students *make personal meaning* of their experiences and develop a fuller understanding. This dialogue and questioning not only involves teacher-to-students and students-to-teacher interaction, but also peer discussion. The teacher's role is to encourage students to try to answer questions, ask more of their own and *listen* carefully to and build upon the responses of peers.

Scaffolding is also an important aspect of diagnostic assessment. By providing assistance through scaffolding, teachers are able to gauge what it is that students can do independently and what they can do with particular kinds of assistance. (See also the section on Formative Assessment.)

### Questions for reflection

- 1 What kinds of scaffolds do you provide learners with when setting up tasks, explaining a new concept, examining visual texts, or engaging in ongoing interactive talk? What evidence do you have that they work?
- 2 Audio-record a segment of one of your classes. Review it in terms of (1) the way you use questioning and your own responses as a form of scaffolding and (2) the way you invite students to add to, elaborate, clarify, challenge the input and responses of another student.

## Technologies in language teaching and learning

### KEY IDEAS

- Communication and information technologies are integral to teaching and learning
- Technologies enable teachers and students to access contemporary materials and globalised communication interactions
- Technologies facilitate participation in the target language and with its communities
- Technologies increasingly provide students with personalised, flexible, asynchronous and networked learning opportunities

Information and communication technologies have become significant in social and economic development and increasingly important in education. As educators, we are faced with selecting and using appropriate technologies from an ever-increasing range. We know that technologies have the capacity to transform our teaching and our students' learning. We know that different technologies can change the ways our students learn and mediate the learning differently. We seek to make our use, and our students' use, of technologies integral to the whole language learning process and not an add-on to teaching or a replacement for teaching. We know that when we do this, our pedagogies engage students, enhance achievement, create new learning possibilities and extend interaction with local and global communities.