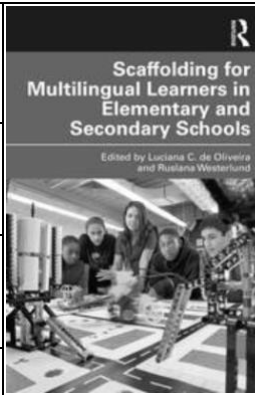


## Scaffolding for Multilingual Learners in Elementary and Secondary Schools

February 2024 – Volume 27, Number 4

<https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27108r2>

|   |  |              |
|---|--|--------------|
| Scaffolding for Multilingual Learners in Elementary and Secondary Schools |  |              |
| <b>Author:</b>  | de Oliveira, L.C., & Westerlund, R. (Eds.). (2022) |              |
| <b>Publisher:</b>   | Routledge  |              |
| <b>Pages</b>  | <b>ISBN-13</b>                                     | <b>Price</b> |
| Pp. 238   | 978-1-03-202047-1 (paper)                          | \$42.36      |



Within the K-12 school setting, multilingual learners (MLs) face many challenges related to understanding and learning critical content knowledge. Because K-12 content requires highly advanced and technical vocabulary, academic discourse, and strong writing skills, the material can be complex for MLs to grasp and master fully. Unfortunately, teachers sometimes underestimate MLs’ abilities in school and purposefully simplify content to help them comprehend classroom material more expediently (Pettit, 2011). These simplifications may impact their ability to learn higher-order thinking skills or their overall academic progress. To address the need to make content both accessible and challenging, teachers may consider using appropriate scaffolding techniques, such as incorporating students’ home languages and visual supports that value MLs’ contributions to their classes and enable them to grow academically.

Luciana de Oliveira and Ruslana Westerlund lay out an important foundation for using scaffolding in K-12 contexts in their recent volume, *Scaffolding for Multilingual Learners in Elementary and Secondary Schools*. This edited volume is an articulate and informative compilation of chapters written by various scholars of multilingual education seeking to address the misconceptions and misunderstandings of what scaffolding looks like practically in the classroom. The volume also offers theoretically grounded and practical applications of

scaffolding in effective instruction. This timely book provides teachers and teacher educators with the tools that they need to deliver efficient scaffolding for MLs. As the book's title suggests, the content is designed for both elementary and secondary students, primarily in US-based schools with possible applications to global settings in K-12 content area classrooms.

This volume is organized according to three critical topics for educators working with MLs: understanding the theoretical underpinnings of scaffolding, applying scaffolding in diverse classroom contexts, and enhancing teachers' scaffolding techniques. Section 1 (Chapters 1-5) lays a theoretical foundation with sociocultural theory and explores the history of scaffolding and its application for MLs. This section discusses equitable participation in various subject areas and dual language bilingual education. For example, in Chapter 4, Wilfrid and Molle describe the importance of equitable instruction for MLs in content area classrooms while drawing upon sociocultural theory, which explains how content instruction can support students' participation and agency in the classroom.

Section 2 (Chapters 6-10) offers practical insights through case studies and examples from actual classroom scenarios, demonstrating diverse scaffolding practices. For instance, in Chapter 6, Barko-Alva, Masyada, and Norez discuss the implementation of a dual language bilingual education (DLBE) program in a secondary social studies classroom. The scaffolding techniques that were used helped to improve students' biliteracy, bilingualism, and intercultural communication. The authors in this chapter also include scaffolding strategies that promote civic engagement, social justice, and disciplinary literacy. In another example in Chapter 7, Walqui discusses incorporating scaffolding in virtual learning environments while including both synchronous and asynchronous support to MLs using visuals and multimedia. In addition, Walqui describes various curriculum models that can be used to teach in the virtual learning space. Another case study presented in Chapter 9 describes how a bilingual kindergarten teacher scaffolded students' learning by using visual support and students' home language, Spanish, to promote meaning-making. In addition, the teacher made use of written and oral language, gestures, drawings, and other visuals to support students' literacy development.

The final section (Chapters 11-13) shifts focus toward professional development, providing guidance for both pre-service and in-service teachers in developing and enhancing their instructional strategies for MLs. This structured approach provides a comprehensive understanding of scaffolding, from theory to practice. For example, in Chapter 12, Chu and Hamburger examine the development of effective curriculum materials for scaffolding mathematics instruction for MLs. This chapter also focuses on teacher development as instructors cater to the linguistic needs of MLs and assess students' learning as they determine how to offer appropriate visual and linguistic support. In another example, in Chapter 13, Bunch and Lang describe a year-long combined MA and credential program to prepare pre-service teachers to serve MLs. The authors debunk misconceptions about scaffolding often held by these pre-service teachers and invite these students to consider what scaffolding means practically and theoretically. Through this program, the teachers gained a more nuanced understanding of design principles of scaffolding informed by sociocultural theory. Additionally, pre-service teachers in this program had the opportunity to practice scaffolding as learners and to reflect on this process.

The book has a number of notable strengths that may help teachers improve their pedagogical practices. For one, the various authors give in-depth background information and resources on

scaffolding. Scaffolding is described not as a linear process but as a dynamic one that responds to individual student needs, challenging the idea that all students must progress at the same pace and that scaffolding is a one-way transmission of knowledge. The book also offers a variety of approaches grounded in the concept that scaffolding must extend beyond basic assistance, tailored to the specific language needs of students. For example, Chapter 6 describes how educators can help students explore their linguistic repertoires and strengthen their critical thinking and analytical skills in a DLBE social studies program. Likewise, Chapter 10 illustrates how exemplary teachers can use interactional scaffolding, or in-the-moment adjustments in teaching, to sustain students' engagement with challenging English texts, thus facilitating both language development and content comprehension. Furthermore, the book's focus on professional development and teacher training targets the teaching needs of pre-service and in-service teachers of MLs. For example, Chapter 11 discusses scaffolding teacher learning by emphasizing some of the same principles as with multilingual learners: agency, leadership, and collaboration. This chapter prepares teachers to implement proper scaffolding techniques in their own instruction.

While *Scaffolding for Multilingual Learners* is an insightful resource, it is limited in the scope of the K-12 subjects covered. Three examples of content areas included are social studies, mathematics, and science. Perhaps in a future companion piece, there could be more coverage of English language arts or humanities classes, as these content areas are often tested on high stakes exams and assessed in the college admissions process. Another recommendation is to balance the K-12 content more equally with attention to both secondary and elementary levels. Chapter 5 provides some segments of interspersion with K-12 content, offering information related to scaffolding that applies to all different grade levels collectively, while considering various science curricula. However, only one elementary-specific lesson is presented about translanguaging in a bilingual kindergarten in Chapter 9. Much of what is emphasized in the book is content related to the secondary and professional levels and teacher candidates.

To conclude, *Scaffolding for Multilingual Learners* provides educators with a resourceful guide on the intricate process of scaffolding in multilingual settings. While robust in its theoretical foundation, the book offers practical applications, making the content both accessible and actionable. Overall, it will be an essential read for educators who are teaching multilingual learners in content areas in K-12 classrooms, teacher educators, and pre-service teachers.

### **To Cite this Review**

McKee, J. & Zheng, H. (2024). [Review of the book *Scaffolding for Multilingual Learners in Elementary and Secondary Schools* by de Oliveira, L.C., & Westerlund, R. [eds]]. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ)*, 27 (4). <https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27108r2>

### **Reference**

Pettit, S. K. (2011). Teachers' beliefs About English language learners in the mainstream classroom: A review of the literature. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 5(2), 123–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2011.594357>

### **About the Authors**

**Jared McKee** is a doctoral student in ESOL/Bilingual Education at the University of Florida. His research interests include multiliteracies, scaffolding for reading comprehension, character

education for multilingual learners (MLs), and reflective practice. <jared.mckee@ufl.edu>  
ORCID ID: 0009-0004-5734-6093

**Han Zheng** is a doctoral student in ESOL/Bilingual Education at the University of Florida. His research interests include the teaching and learning of academic language in content areas, teaching multilingual learners (MLs) at the K-12 levels, teacher education for MLs, scaffolding practices for MLs, along with culturally and linguistically responsive instruction. <zhenghan@ufl.edu> ORCID ID: 0009-0002-7999-5620

Copyright of articles rests with the authors. Please cite TESL-EJ appropriately.