

Scaffolding Books through Predictions (Pre-School/Lower Primary)



theory behind scaffold...

Introducing books in any class can seem daunting, especially when we know the attention span (or rather lack thereof) of our students. Giving our students the chance to interact, make predictions, use critical thinking skills and visual clues, can augment their enthusiasm for reading from the outset. Combining this scaffold with a task-based (communicative) approach will help students interact with the book in dynamic, relevant and meaningful ways.

Neurologically speaking, predicting - directing thoughts to an unknown outcome - has direct and expansive influences on cognitive functions, including*:

- perception
- decision making
- mind, motor and perceptual processing

The act of predicting leads the student to a faster recognition of facts later on, and so the ability to more quickly react, process and assimilate information. With regard to predetermining the possible meanings of visual cues (images), there are modulations in the brain when it is stimulated by imagery that is unique. When those images are later clarified, the brain is able to confront the information heuristically**, and so more efficiently.

This scaffold was created for a teacher I worked with, who suffered from traditional, teacher-centred training. Though very willing to introduce dynamic activities for his students, he did not know how to put his enthusiasm into practice, so, when a visitor entered his classroom, all the students were most likely sitting at individual desks, heads down, trying their best to understand the pages of a book they were expected to read, react to on their own, and all of this silently. If you were to ask one of the students what the pages were about, though they may have looked completely immersed in their reading beforehand, they would have had to admit that they had very little understanding either of the text or the overall concept of the book.

Here is how this very eager and well-intentioned teacher made just a few modifications to help his students to understand and appreciate the books he has assigned. It will work for you as well!

The examples given here are from the graphic story [The Dot](#) by Peter H. Reynolds. Behind this ostensibly simple illustrated story is a powerful lesson in self-expression, compassion, hidden talents, high expectations, believing in a person's best version of her/himself, and possibilities.

* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2904053/>

** A heuristic is a mental shortcut that allows people to solve problems and make judgments quickly and efficiently.

Step by Step...

1. Copy and paste all or the principal images from the book, video, or song that you are about to begin, into a PPT.

Example...images from Peter H. Reynold's heart-opening book [The Dot](#):



2. Have the corresponding sentences from the book available to you so you can read them aloud.

Example:

Vashti's teacher smiled. Just make a mark and see where it takes you.

Vashti grabbed market and gave the paper a good strong jab. There!

Her teacher picked up the paper and looked at it carefully. 'Hmmmmm!' she thought.

She pushed the paper toward Vashti and quietly said, 'Now, sign it!'

'Hmmp. I can make a better dot than that', Vashti thought.

Vashti even made a dot by not painting a dot.

Vashti painted more dots. She painted and painted. Blue dots, green dots, red dots, yellow dots, purple dots.

3. Make a large set of these cards for a pair or group of students as well for later use.

4. Ask students to look at the image, whisper to their partners anything they think about it, and one of the students from each pair verbalizes what they've agreed to say (colours, clothes, emotions, action, etc.)
5. Next, show two or three of images together and ask student which probably comes first in the story. Make sure they understand that there is no one correct answer, just anything they can explain clearly.
6. Ask them to predict what the story, video, song might be about. They again have a whispered conversation with their partner and one of the students in each pair has the opportunity to share their conclusions. If possible, encourage them to mention anything that was said before. This will encourage them to listen to their classmates and feel heard as well.
7. Next, once more, show one image at a time, and this time read two or three of the sentences you've prepared. Ask students which sentence most likely corresponds to the image you're showing. You can do this part as a whole class.
8. Give pairs/groups of students the set of images you've printed out and they create a visual map of what they believe the plot of the story is by pasting the images in a certain order.
9. They mount these visual maps on the wall of the classroom or present them to the other groups.
10. As each pair/group presents, the other make mental notes of their impressions of the other groups' visual maps. They take turns making positive comments on these map (always using the [Four Rules of Respectful Feedback](#).)

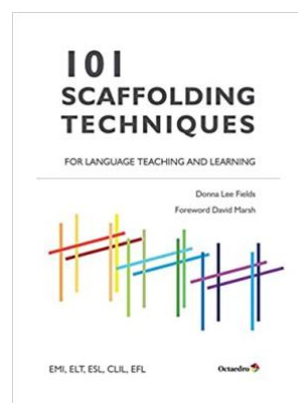
Example:

Student 1: 'Thank you for sharing. We like the connections you made, but we connected the girl at her desk with the hand and the paper.'

(Yes, we know that this seems very sophisticated for your L2 speakers, but we can always have high expectations and it's never too early to learn connecting words ('but', 'however', 'though'!!!))

11. *Formative assessment:* Show images from other parts in the book that you didn't include in the activity. Students negotiate (whisper to each other) if these images might confirm or contradict their conclusions about the plot of the story they've imagined.

12. *Reflection:* Students draw an illustration of some part of the book, song, video they believe they'll see, or the best part they have already seen.



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