



# A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH (SCAFFOLDING) IN TEACHING WRITTEN TRANSLATION

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## Abstract

This article examines the pedagogical significance of the step-by-step approach (scaffolding) in teaching written translation. The study explores the theoretical foundations of scaffolding and analyzes its role in developing students' written translation competence. Particular attention is given to the stages of scaffolded instruction, including pre-translation support, guided translation practice, and independent translation performance. The article argues that gradual instructional support helps students overcome learning difficulties, improve translation quality, and develop professional skills such as critical thinking, revision, and learner autonomy. The findings provide practical recommendations for integrating scaffolding strategies into written translation classes in order to enhance the effectiveness of translator training.

**Keywords:** Written translation, scaffolding, step-by-step approach, translation teaching, translation competence, learner autonomy, guided practice, translator training.

## Introduction

In the contemporary system of translator education, increasing attention is being paid to learner-centered approaches that promote the gradual development of professional competence. One of the most effective pedagogical models in this regard is the step-by-step approach, commonly referred to as scaffolding. In written translation instruction, scaffolding enables students to move from guided practice to independent performance through structured support provided by the teacher, peers, or instructional materials. Such an approach is particularly relevant because written translation requires not only linguistic knowledge, but also



analytical thinking, decision-making, and the ability to apply translation strategies in diverse communicative contexts (Vygotsky, 1978).

The concept of scaffolding originates from socio-cultural learning theory, especially the idea of the Zone of Proximal Development, which emphasizes that learners can perform more complex tasks with temporary assistance before mastering them independently (Vygotsky, 1978). Later studies expanded this idea and defined scaffolding as a process in which support is gradually reduced as learning gain competence and confidence (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). In the context of written translation, this means that students first engage with simpler texts, guided terminology tasks, model translations, and collaborative activities before progressing to more complex and autonomous translation assignments.

Teaching written translation often presents a number of methodological challenges. Many students experience difficulties in text comprehension, terminology selection, stylistic adaptation, and preserving the communicative purpose of the source text. If learners are asked to complete complex translation tasks without sufficient preparation, the quality of their output may decline and motivation may be negatively affected. A scaffolding-based approach helps address these issues by dividing the learning process into manageable stages and by offering continuous feedback at each stage of development (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

Furthermore, scaffolding contributes not only to the improvement of translation quality but also to the formation of translation competence as a whole. It develops students' ability to analyze source texts, justify translation choices, revise drafts, and reflect on their own performance. These skills are essential for future translators working in professional environments where accuracy, adaptability, and autonomy are highly valued (Kiraly, 2000).

The aim of this article is to examine the pedagogical significance of the step-by-step approach (scaffolding) in teaching written translation, to analyze its theoretical foundations, and to identify practical ways of implementing it in the classroom. The study also explores how scaffolding can enhance students' written translation competence and improve the overall effectiveness of translation instruction.



## 1. Theoretical Foundations of the Scaffolding Approach in Written Translation Teaching

Scaffolding is widely recognized as an instructional approach that supports learners in performing tasks that would be difficult to accomplish independently. The concept is grounded in socio-cultural theory, which views learning as a socially mediated process. According to this perspective, students develop higher-level cognitive skills through interaction, guidance, and collaboration before they are able to perform tasks autonomously (Vygotsky, 1978). In written translation classes, this principle is especially significant because translation is not a mechanical transfer of words, but a complex cognitive activity involving interpretation, problem-solving, and linguistic reformulation.

In translator education, scaffolding creates a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Students are first introduced to key concepts such as equivalence, translation strategies, text typology, and functional adequacy. These concepts then become the basis for guided translation activities in which the teacher models procedures, explains choices, and demonstrates problem-solving techniques. As learning progress, support is gradually reduced, encouraging independent decision-making and professional confidence (Kiraly, 2000).

Another important theoretical dimension of scaffolding is formative learning. Rather than evaluating only the final translated product, scaffolding emphasizes the process of learning through feedback, revision, and reflection. This approach allows students to understand their errors, improve strategies, and refine their translation performance over time (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

## 2. Stages of Scaffolding in Written Translation Instruction

The effectiveness of scaffolding depends on the systematic organization of learning stages. In written translation teaching, support should be provided progressively, moving from simple guided tasks to complex independent translation.

### 2.1. Pre-translation Support Stage

At the initial stage, students require substantial support before beginning translation. This may include vocabulary pre-teaching, terminology glossaries, background information about the text topic, genre analysis, and discussion of



potential translation difficulties. Such preparation helps learners understand the source text more effectively and reduces cognitive overload during translation (Nation, 2001).

For example, before translating a medical text, students may be introduced to key medical terms, common collocations, and stylistic conventions of medical discourse. As a result, they approach the translation task with greater confidence and awareness.

## **2.2. Guided Translation Stage**

At the second stage, learners engage in translation tasks with active guidance from the teacher. The instructor may model how to translate specific sentences, think aloud while making translation choices, or lead collaborative discussions about possible solutions. Pair work and group translation tasks are also useful forms of scaffolding at this stage because students learn from peer interaction and shared reasoning (Donato, 1994).

Guided translation enables students to observe professional decision-making processes and apply theoretical concepts in practice. They gradually learn how to justify lexical, grammatical, and stylistic choices rather than relying on literal translation.

## **2.3. Independent Translation Stage**

Once learners gain sufficient experience, support is gradually withdrawn and students are expected to complete translation tasks independently. At this stage, they analyze the text, solve translation problems, revise their drafts, and defend their decisions with minimal teacher intervention. Independent practice is essential because it prepares students for real professional contexts where translators must work autonomously (Kiraly, 2000).

However, independence does not mean the complete absence of support. Teachers may still provide delayed feedback, post-task reflection, or targeted consultation when necessary.

## **3. Practical Benefits of Scaffolding in Written Translation Classes**

The step-by-step approach offers several practical advantages in translation pedagogy. First, it reduces student anxiety by breaking complex tasks into manageable steps. Translation can be intimate for beginners, especially when



dealing with specialized or culturally complex texts. Scaffolding creates a supportive environment where learners build competence gradually.

Second, scaffolding improves translation quality. Because students receive structured guidance, they are more likely to produce accurate, coherent, and contextually appropriate translations. They also become more aware of text function, audience expectations, and stylistic consistency.

Third, scaffolding promotes learner autonomy. Although the support is initially strong, its gradual removal encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. They learn to use dictionaries effectively, evaluate alternative solutions, revise drafts critically, and monitor their progress (González Davies, 2004).

Finally, scaffolding fosters collaborative learning. Peer review, group translation, and class discussion help students exchange ideas, compare strategies, and develop critical thinking skills. Such interaction reflects authentic professional translation environments where teamwork and negotiation are often required.

#### **4. Challenges of Implementing Scaffolding and Possible Solutions**

Despite its advantages, scaffolding in written translation classes may present certain challenges. One common difficulty is the diversity of student proficiency levels. In mixed-ability groups, some learners may need extensive support while others progress more quickly. To address this issue, teachers can differentiate tasks, provide flexible grouping, and offer optional support materials.

Another challenge is the time required for scaffolded instruction. Step-by-step teaching often demands more classroom time than traditional task-based translation. However, the long-term benefits of deeper learning and improved competence justify this investment.

Teacher preparation is also crucial. Effective scaffolding requires instructors to diagnose learner needs, design progressive tasks, and provide timely feedback. Therefore, teacher training in translation pedagogy should include methods for scaffolded instruction and classroom adaptation (Kelly, 2005).

#### **5. Implications for Translation Pedagogy**

The integration of scaffolding into written translation teaching reflects a shift from product-oriented instruction to process-oriented learning. Instead of focusing only on the final translation, teachers guide students through the stages



of comprehension, drafting, revision, and reflection. This pedagogical shift aligns with modern competence-based education, where the goal is not merely to complete tasks, but to develop sustainable professional abilities.

Therefore, scaffolding should be considered an essential methodological principle in translator training programs. By combining structured support with increasing independence, it enables students to become confident, reflective, and competent written translators.

### **Conclusion**

This article has examined the pedagogical value of the step-by-step approach, or scaffolding, in teaching written translation. The analysis has shown that scaffolding is an effective learner-centered methodology that helps students gradually develop translation competence through structured and temporary support. Since written translation requires linguistic accuracy, analytical thinking, strategic decision-making, and contextual awareness, students benefit significantly from instruction that moves from guided practice to independent performance.

The study has demonstrated that scaffolding can be effectively implemented through several stages, including pre-translation preparation, guided translation activities, and autonomous translation practice. Each stage contributes to reducing learning difficulties, strengthening theoretical understanding, and improving the practical application of translation skills. In this way, scaffolding not only enhances the quality of students' translations but also increases their confidence and motivation in the learning process (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Furthermore, the findings indicate that scaffolding promotes important professional abilities such as critical thinking, self-assessment, revision skills, and learner autonomy. These competencies are essential for future translators who are expected to work independently while maintaining high standards of accuracy and communicative effectiveness (Kiraly, 2000).

In conclusion, the step-by-step approach should be regarded as an important methodological principle in written translation pedagogy. Its integration into translation classes can make instruction more systematic, supportive, and outcome-oriented. Therefore, educators are encouraged to incorporate scaffolded tasks, continuous feedback, and gradual responsibility transfer in order to prepare students for the complex demands of professional translation practice.



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