



CHAPTER III

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3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to investigate the scaffolding strategies that the English teacher uses to help students overcome their difficulties in reading comprehension. A qualitative approach is appropriate when the central aim of the research is to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and practices within their naturalistic contexts, and when the phenomena under investigation are complex, contextually situated, and not reducible to numerical measurement (Creswell, 2013). Since this study seeks to understand how and why the teacher makes specific scaffolding instructional decisions in response to students' reading difficulties, qualitative inquiry provides the interpretive depth and methodological flexibility necessary for such an exploration.

More specifically, this research adopts a case study as its qualitative tradition. Yin (2018) defines case study research as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly distinct. This design is well-suited to educational research because it allows the researcher to examine the complexity of instructional practices as they occur within a specific institutional environment, capturing the nuances of teacher decision-making that broader survey-based approaches would likely miss.

In this study, the bounded case is defined as the English reading comprehension instructional practice at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Banjaranyar, Bojonegoro, with the English teacher at that school constituting the primary unit of analysis. This case-based framework enables the researcher to generate contextually rich insights meaningful both for the institution under study and for the broader EFL educational landscape in Indonesia.

3.2 Research Subject

The research subjects of this study consist of two groups: the English teacher and 30 Students of eighth-grade (Grade VIII) at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Banjaryar, Bojonegoro (Muhammadiyah Junior High School 1 Banjaryarr, Bojonegoro Regency, East Java). The English teacher serves as the primary research subject because of their direct professional role in designing and implementing scaffolding strategies in reading comprehension instruction. The eighth-grade students serve as the secondary research subjects, providing data on their responses to and perceptions of the scaffolding strategies employed by the teacher in the classroom.

Because this study is a single bounded case rather than a sample drawn from a wider population, the participants were not selected through a probability or purposive sampling procedure. Instead, both groups were included as the complete case under study, the English teacher who teaches eighth-grade reading comprehension at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Banjaryar and the intact class of 30 eighth-grade students she teaches, chosen because of their direct relevance to the research questions and their capacity to provide rich, informed data on the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative case study research, the goal is not statistical representativeness but the depth and quality of insights that the participants can contribute.

3.3 Research Data and Source

The primary source of data in this study is the English teacher at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Banjaryar. The teacher constitutes the primary unit of analysis because they possess direct professional knowledge of reading comprehension instruction and firsthand experience with the scaffolding strategies employed in response to students' difficulties. Their responses across the interview and questionnaire form the core of the qualitative dataset.

The secondary source of data consists of the eighth-grade students at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Banjaranyar. The student questionnaire data provide complementary perspectives on the scaffolding strategies experienced in the classroom, enabling the researcher to examine the relationship between teacher practice and student response. Together, data from both the teacher and the students ensure a more complete and triangulated understanding of the instructional phenomena under investigation.

To strengthen the credibility and completeness of the findings, the researcher applies data triangulation by cross-checking responses from the teacher interview with patterns emerging from the teacher questionnaire and the student questionnaire. Triangulating across three instruments substantially strengthens the interpretive validity of the analysis (Creswell, 2013).

3.4 Research Instrument

The research instruments in this study consist of an observation checklist, a semi-structured interview guide, and a student questionnaire. These three instruments are designed as complementary tools that together produce a comprehensive and triangulated picture of teachers' scaffolding strategies and students' responses to them in reading comprehension instruction. The selection of multiple instruments is grounded in the inherently dynamic and interactive nature of scaffolding itself. As Van de Pol et al., (2010) emphasize in their decade-long review of scaffolding research, scaffolding is a complex, context-dependent process characterized by three interrelated key features: contingency, fading, and transfer of responsibility, none of which can be adequately captured through a single data source alone.

Accordingly, the observation checklist documents scaffolding behaviors as they occur in the naturalistic classroom setting; the interview guide explores the teacher's reasoning and scaffolding decision-making; and the student questionnaire captures learner perceptions and responses.

As Cohen L et al., (2018) explain, employing multiple data collection instruments in qualitative research strengthens validity and enables the researcher to corroborate findings across different sources, reducing the risk of reliance on any single data point. The combination of observational, verbal, and written data therefore enhances the depth and reliability of the overall analysis.

3.4.1 Intersectional Analysis Framework

The observation checklist serves as the primary instrument for documenting the scaffolding strategies enacted by the English teacher during reading comprehension lessons. Structured classroom observation enables the researcher to capture teacher behavior as it occurs in its naturalistic setting, providing direct empirical evidence of instructional practice rather than relying solely on self-reported data (Merriam, 2016). This approach is especially important in scaffolding research because, as van de Pol et al. (2010) note, scaffolding is a highly situation-specific and dynamic process that must be observed in real interaction to be fully understood.

The checklist is theoretically grounded in the scaffolding framework proposed by van de Pol et al., (2010), which distinguishes between scaffolding means (how scaffolding is provided, such as feeding back, hinting, instructing, explaining, modeling, and questioning) and scaffolding intentions (what is scaffolded, such as students' metacognitive activities, cognitive activities, and affective engagement). Drawing also on Walqui's (2006) taxonomy as applied by Arlinda (2020) in an EYL classroom study, the checklist covers six scaffolding strategy types: modeling, bridging, contextualizing, schema building, re-presenting text, and developing metacognition.

Additionally, scaffolding behaviors identified by Ahmadi Safa & Rozati (2017), including extracting information by asking questions, providing clues and directions, waiting for the learner to respond, co-constructing meaning, and confirming correct answers, are incorporated as observable indicators of implicit and explicit scaffolding acts. For each

observed lesson, the researcher records the presence, frequency, and sequential application of these scaffolding behaviors, as well as contextual notes about student responses and classroom dynamics. The observation checklist also tracks evidence of the three key scaffolding characteristics identified by Van de Pol et al., (2010): (1) contingency (whether the teacher adapts support to the student's current level), (2) fading (whether the level of support is reduced over time), and (3) transfer of responsibility (whether increasing autonomy is gradually returned to the learner). This scaffolding-specific structure ensures that the checklist captures not only what strategies are used, but whether they meet the defining conditions of genuine scaffolding as distinguished from routine instruction.

In its concrete form (see Appendix 1), the observation checklist is formatted as a structured table completed separately for each of the three observed meetings. Each meeting sheet opens with a header recording the respondent, school, date, lesson/class, topic, and observer, followed by a table with four columns: the scaffolding strategy category, the specific observable indicator being rated, a Yes/No column marking whether the indicator was present, and a Notes/Remarks column where the researcher records concrete contextual evidence, such as the teacher's exact words or the specific activity used, for each indicator observed. The checklist contains 26 observable indicators organized under eight categories: the six Walqui (2006) scaffolding strategy types (Modeling, Bridging, Contextualizing, Schema Building, Re-presenting Text, and Developing Metacognition), the five scaffolding means identified by van de Pol et al. (2010) and the implicit/explicit strategies identified by Ahmadi Safa & Rozati (2017) grouped together as Scaffolding Means (questioning, hinting, confirming, waiting, and co-constructing meaning), and the three Key Characteristics of contingency, fading, and transfer of responsibility. Under Modeling, for example, the checklist rates whether the teacher thinks aloud to model reading processes, demonstrates how to identify keywords or text structure, and reads a portion of the text aloud while verbally interpreting its meaning; under Key Characteristics, it rates whether the teacher adjusts support to individual or group response, gradually reduces guidance as competence increases, and explicitly shifts

task ownership to students. Completing one checklist per meeting across the three observed lessons allows the researcher to track, indicator by indicator, whether and how each scaffolding behavior changed as the unit progressed from teacher-led to student-independent work.

3.4.2 Interview Guide

The semi-structured interview guide serves as the secondary instrument for exploring the teacher's instructional thinking and scaffolding strategy use in depth. Semi-structured interviews are widely employed in qualitative inquiry because they combine the thematic focus of predetermined questions with the flexibility to probe participants' responses further (Merriam, 2016). This format allows the researcher to address specific themes while remaining open to unanticipated insights. Compared to fully structured interviews, the semi-structured format yields richer, more nuanced data; compared to unstructured interviews, it maintains greater thematic consistency across sessions.

The semi-structured interview guide serves as the secondary instrument for exploring the teacher's instructional thinking and scaffolding decision-making in depth. Semi-structured interviews are widely employed in qualitative inquiry because they combine the thematic focus of predetermined questions with the flexibility to probe participants' responses further (Merriam, 2016). This format is particularly appropriate for scaffolding research because, as van de Pol et al. (2010) observe, the contingent nature of scaffolding means that teachers constantly make real-time decisions about what support to provide, when to fade that support, and when to transfer responsibility to the learner, reasoning that cannot be captured by observation alone.

The interview guide is organized around four thematic domains aligned with the key dimensions of scaffolding: (1) the teacher's conceptual understanding of scaffolding and how it relates to students' reading comprehension difficulties; (2) the specific scaffolding strategies the teacher employs and the rationale underlying their selection, referencing strategy types such as modeling, bridging, contextualizing, and questioning as identified by Walqui (2006) and Arlinda (2020); (3)

how the teacher determines when to provide, maintain, reduce, or withdraw scaffolding support, in other words, how contingency and fading are enacted in practice; and (4) how the teacher perceives students' responses to the scaffolding provided, including evidence of growing learner independence. In addition, the guide includes questions that invite the teacher to reflect on challenges faced in implementing scaffolding in EFL reading contexts, drawing on findings from Muhammad et al., (2025), who identified practical constraints such as mixed proficiency levels, large class sizes, and limited resources as barriers to effective scaffolding in Indonesian primary schools. Follow-up probing questions are incorporated to elicit elaboration, specific examples, and critical reflection on teaching decisions. Each session is audio-recorded with the participant's explicit permission and is expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes.

3.4.3 Student Questionnaire

The student questionnaire serves as a supplementary instrument designed to systematically document eighth-grade students' perceptions of and responses to the scaffolding strategies employed by their English teacher during reading comprehension lessons. As Cohen L et al., (2018) explain, questionnaires are effective in qualitative and mixed-method research for capturing structured, consistent self-report data that can be used to corroborate and contextualize findings from other data sources. In this study, the student questionnaire consists of both closed-ended items using a Likert scale to indicate the frequency and helpfulness of specific scaffolding strategies, and open-ended items that invite brief written responses about students' learning experiences.

The questionnaire items are organized around scaffolding dimensions derived from the literature and structured to elicit three types of student response. First, students are asked about their awareness of specific scaffolding strategies used by the teacher during reading lessons, including modeling, guiding questions, visual aids, think-aloud demonstrations, vocabulary pre-teaching, and graduated task support. These strategy categories reflect both the scaffolding typology proposed by Walqui (2006) and the observable scaffolding behaviors catalogued by

van de Pol et al., (2010) in their framework distinguishing scaffolding means and intentions. Second, students are asked to indicate the perceived helpfulness of each scaffolding strategy for their reading comprehension, using a four-point Likert scale ranging from “not helpful” to “very helpful.” This dimension is informed by findings from Muhammad et al., (2025) and Ahmadi Safa & Rozati, (2017) both of whom document positive student responses to scaffolding and highlight how scaffolded learning environments raise engagement and confidence.

Third, open-ended items invite students to identify reading comprehension areas they continue to find difficult despite the scaffolding provided, and to describe in their own words what kinds of teacher support they find most and least beneficial. These responses are used to assess whether students perceive evidence of the key scaffolding characteristics such as contingency, fading, and transfer of responsibility, in their teacher’s instruction, and to surface any gaps between intended and experienced scaffolding. The instrument is administered in written form after classroom observations have been conducted to ensure that students respond based on their actual classroom experience. Responses are used to triangulate, verify, and supplement the data generated through the observation checklist and teacher interview.

In its administered form (see Appendix 3), the questionnaire contains 22 closed-ended Likert-scale statements plus two open-ended questions, all scored on a four-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree) and analyzed by frequency count across the 30 respondents. The closed-ended items are grouped into four sections that mirror the three types of student response described above and the scaffolding characteristics from van de Pol et al. (2010): Section A, Awareness of Scaffolding Strategies Used by the Teacher (Items 1–7, covering vocabulary pre-teaching, visual aids, prior-knowledge questions, read-aloud modeling, guided questioning, and explicit text-structure teaching); Section B, Perceived Helpfulness of Scaffolding Strategies (Items 8–13, asking how far each strategy, such as pre-teaching, prior-knowledge activation, visual aids, think-aloud modeling, and guiding questions, helps students understand the text and feel confident); Section C, Student Perception of Learning Independence

or Transfer of Responsibility (Items 14–18, asking whether students feel more capable, need less help over time, are given opportunities to try tasks independently, and notice support being gradually withdrawn); and Section D, Perceived Reading Difficulties and Ongoing Challenges (Items 19–22, asking about remaining difficulty with vocabulary, main idea identification, and inference despite scaffolding, and overall motivation to read). The two open-ended items ask students, in their own words, what type of teacher support they find most helpful and why (Question 23), and what reading tasks remain difficult even after the teacher’s support (Question 24), providing the qualitative detail that complements the closed-ended scores

3.5 Research Procedure

Data collection proceeds in three sequential stages corresponding to the three research instruments. In the first stage, the researcher conducts systematic classroom observations using the observation checklist. Prior to the observation sessions, the researcher explains the study’s purpose and procedures to the participating teacher and obtains written informed consent. Observations are conducted across multiple reading comprehension lessons to ensure sufficient data on the range and consistency of the teacher’s scaffolding strategies.

In the second stage, the researcher conducts the semi-structured interview with the participating teacher. The interview is audio-recorded with the participant’s explicit permission to ensure accurate and complete data capture. In the third stage, the student questionnaire is administered to the eighth-grade students in written form. This sequencing ensures that the questionnaire does not prime or constrain the teacher’s verbal responses during the interview, and that students respond based on their accumulated classroom experience rather than a single lesson.

Following data collection, the interview audio recording is transcribed verbatim. The transcript is reviewed against the recording for accuracy and is then organized alongside the observation checklist records and questionnaire responses in preparation for thematic analysis.

All data are stored securely and treated with strict confidentiality in accordance with research ethics protocols.

3.6 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis follows the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) a widely recognized and methodologically rigorous approach for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. This framework is appropriate because it enables the researcher to move systematically and transparently from raw data to well-grounded interpretive themes. The analysis proceeds through six iterative phases:

Phase 1: Familiarization with the Data

The researcher reads and re-reads the interview transcript, observation checklist records, and questionnaire responses to develop thorough familiarity with the data. Initial impressions, recurring ideas, and potential patterns are noted before any formal coding begins.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Meaningful units of data, such as words, phrases, or segments relevant to the research questions, are identified and assigned descriptive codes capturing their essence. Codes are applied consistently across all three instruments. Initial codes may include labels such as “vocabulary pre-teaching,” “scaffolding sequence,” “student non-response,” or “teacher modeling of inference.” A codebook is maintained throughout this phase to ensure consistency and transparency.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Related codes are sorted and grouped into broader candidate themes. Thematic maps are constructed to visualize relationships between codes and emerging themes. Anticipated theme areas include the rationale

for scaffolding strategy selection, implementation processes, student engagement patterns, and teacher adaptation to classroom challenges.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Candidate themes are reviewed at two levels: first, whether data within each theme form a coherent pattern; second, whether the thematic structure accurately represents the dataset as a whole. Themes that are too broad, insufficiently supported, or conceptually overlapping are revised, merged, or discarded.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Each finalized theme is formally defined in terms of its conceptual scope and relationship to the research questions. Themes are assigned clear, analytically precise names, with sub-themes identified where needed to capture additional layers of meaning.

Phase 6: Producing the Report

The thematic analysis is woven into a coherent narrative addressing the research questions and engaging critically with the literature. Direct quotations from the interview and relevant observation and questionnaire data anchor the analysis in empirical evidence, moving progressively from description to interpretation and broader implications.

To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher applies four criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985): (1) credibility, through member checking and cross-instrument triangulation; (2) transferability, through thick, contextually rich descriptions; (3) dependability, through an audit trail of coding decisions; and (4) confirmability, through sustained reflexive awareness of the researcher's own positionality throughout the analytic process.