Pigeonhole Questions/Comments
Paper 6 Wolf & Lopez

Q: First retell, second retell (scaffolded), third retell – what part(s) of this three-step approach do you see as the assessment proper? How do you try to capture/represent these?

A: The incorporation of scaffolding into assessment tasks may provide test takers with opportunities to show knowledge and abilities that are usually invisible to traditional, single-score assessments that do not make use of scaffolded tasks. The use of scaffolded tasks provides an opportunity to elicit more responses with an increased number of data points. In this approach we are trying to assess whether the test taker can complete the task with or without support, and whether the test taker cannot complete the task even with support. So we developed rubrics or scoring rules for the first retell, scaffolded (step-by-step) retells, and second retell items; each response is scored separately. Another possible approach of scoring the first retell, scaffolding, and second retell items is to use one holistic scoring rubric with a description about whether the student perform better with scaffolding. In both approaches, results can provide teachers with more detailed levels of information about EL students' abilities and could provide score reports with more nuanced information about student performance under different scaffolding conditions. This type of information would be particularly meaningful for teachers and can assist them in making well-informed decisions about the type of instruction their students need.

Q: How do teachers measure the specific amount and/or type of scaffolding or support learners are exposed to? Is there a guideline or measure?

We explored different ways to incorporate scaffolding into assessments based on a review of literature on EL scaffolding in instructional settings. Some articles we would recommend include the ones written by Gibbons (2002), Vogt & Short (2004), Walqui (2006), and Zwiers (2006). In particular, Walqui's article lays out general principles for the use of scaffolding for EL students, including the type and amount. But the principles in the literature needed to be adapted for an assessment setting. For the tasks we showed in this presentation, the scaffolding was embedded between the first and second opportunities to retell the story. The specific type of scaffolding offered involved breaking down the story or what happened in the classroom into smaller segments, providing a set of guiding questions to assist students in completing the retelling of the entire story or all of the events in the classroom. In these tasks, all of the students received the same type of scaffolding for the purpose of establishing a standardized setting for the assessments.

Another approach we used in this project was to not embed the scaffolding directly into the task; that is, the scaffolding was optional, contingent upon each student's needs. In this case, the scaffolding would only be offered if the student was unable to complete the task successfully (sort of like a "Help" button). This "Help" button is intended to provide students with opportunities to expand and elaborate on their initial responses by answering additional questions. The framing of the optional prompting questions were also standardized for consistency.

Q: Do these technology-based assessments with scaffolding lend themselves to other task types besides retelling? Have you created tasks that measure other language abilities?

We developed 32 scenario-based tasks across grades K-12 to be delivered on tablets and computers, measuring various language abilities. We had different task types and incorporated various levels of scaffolding into all of them (e.g., listening to a teacher talk about a topic in class and then discussing with other students; writing in response to something that has been read or heard in class). Additional examples of how specific language abilities were measured in some of these tasks are:

- *Listening — following directions; understanding details*
- *Speaking — describing pictures; explaining and providing details; giving an opinion*
- *Reading — identifying key information; comprehending details*
- *Writing — describing a picture; summarizing information; writing a short essay*

Q: How do you provide the information gleaned from the interaction with scaffolding from the assessment back to the teacher? What does the score report look like?

The scope of the project did not include a provision for score reports for teachers. This will have to be a future study. However, as responded to in the first question, we envision that a score report will include descriptive information about how the students performed on each task along with the degree and types of scaffolding that may have been needed.

Q: How does the final report give the teacher access to the nuances of the information obtained as a result of the scaffolding?

The use of scaffolding provides more information about the students' language proficiency. Teachers will know whether a student can complete a task with or without support, or whether a student cannot complete a task even with support. As mentioned above, the amount and types of scaffolding given to students will be useful information for teachers. Along with this information, a final report, for example, could provide the following additional details to teachers to make the results more actionable for their instruction:

- *background information about the student (e.g., home language, length of time in the U.S., educational background/experiences);*
- *proficiency levels (in different areas, e.g., receptive and productive language abilities, literacy skills, overall proficiency);*
- *performance descriptors for different categories (e.g., The student can actively listen to oral presentations by answering basic questions without prompting or support);*
- *and other areas for improvement (e.g., The student needs support in applying basic understanding of how different types of texts are organized)*

Q: **How does the use of the scaffolded task impact length of time spent testing?**

Adding scaffolding questions do make the time to complete the tasks a little bit longer. On average, each scaffolding question took about 30 to 90 seconds. But even though the scaffolding tasks require additional time to administer, they provide an opportunity to elicit more responses, increasing the number of data points, and offer a more detailed level of information about the test takers' abilities.

Q: Does a limited understanding of content interfere with language production? Is the data skewed by the students' more or less developed outside knowledge?

In theory, yes. It is thus critical that the assessment tasks be carefully designed. In our tasks, we focused on school settings because our assessment was intended to measure students' language abilities when performing in school settings and situations. Moreover, we hypothesized that school settings would be accessible to students in terms of their background knowledge. Our tasks were also designed in such a way that students could learn new information by reading and listening to the given passages integrated into them.

Q: Will there be any changes in the use of scaffolding strategies in the classroom without technology?

We do not anticipate that there would be any major changes in the use of scaffolding strategies in the classroom without technology because the tasks we developed simulate authentic contexts in academic English-medium settings, including replicating an actual classroom where students have access to support from the teacher when needed. The only difference is that without having it be a part of the technology, the scaffolding would need to be provided by the teacher.

Q: Is scaffolding, in some cases, clarifying expectations of quality response?

It may be so, and in fact it is one of the purposes for scaffolding in classrooms for English language learners. However, the tasks we demonstrated had a different objective in that young students might be overwhelmed with a first retell and so would need some support to be able to demonstrate their retelling abilities.

Q: Is the sequencing strategy (first-second-third) the only way of scaffolding in your project?

No, as mentioned in response to previous questions, there are other examples of scaffolding besides just sequencing. Some other scaffolding strategies we incorporated into our tasks include: Sentence starters; Word banks; Model responses; Graphic organizers; Repetition or rephrasing of prompts; Repetition of stimulus material.

Q: Would it be better if the students see the action and hear the audio at the same time in terms of scaffolding?

This will be an empirical question that we may want to explore in the future. Some students may prefer to focus on one thing at a time.