

Scaffolding, in the way it is used here, has three major characteristics:

- ◊ It is **temporary** help that assists a learner to move toward new concepts, levels of understanding, and new language.
- ◊ It enables a learner to know **how to do something** (not just what to do), so that they will be better able to complete similar tasks alone.
- ◊ It is **future oriented**: in Vygotsky's words, what a learner can do with support today, he or she will be able to do alone tomorrow.

Scaffolding is therefore teacher support in action, and is at the core of learning and teaching for autonomy (Mariani 1997).

We learn and develop new ideas through ... collaborative talk. Vygotsky argues that this external dialogue with others is gradually internalized and becomes "inner speech," creating our personal resources for thinking. It follows, then, that the conversations learners have at school impact on how well they develop ... high-quality thinking.

Implicit in these ideas is the idea of high challenge (tasks we cannot do unaided) accompanied by high support (the scaffolding that enables us to complete these tasks successfully).

Excerpted from Pauline Gibbons on Scaffolding in ENGLISH LEARNERS, ACADEMIC LITERACY, AND THINKING: Learning in the Challenge Zone: Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Emphasis by J. Spielman. Center for Educational Options.

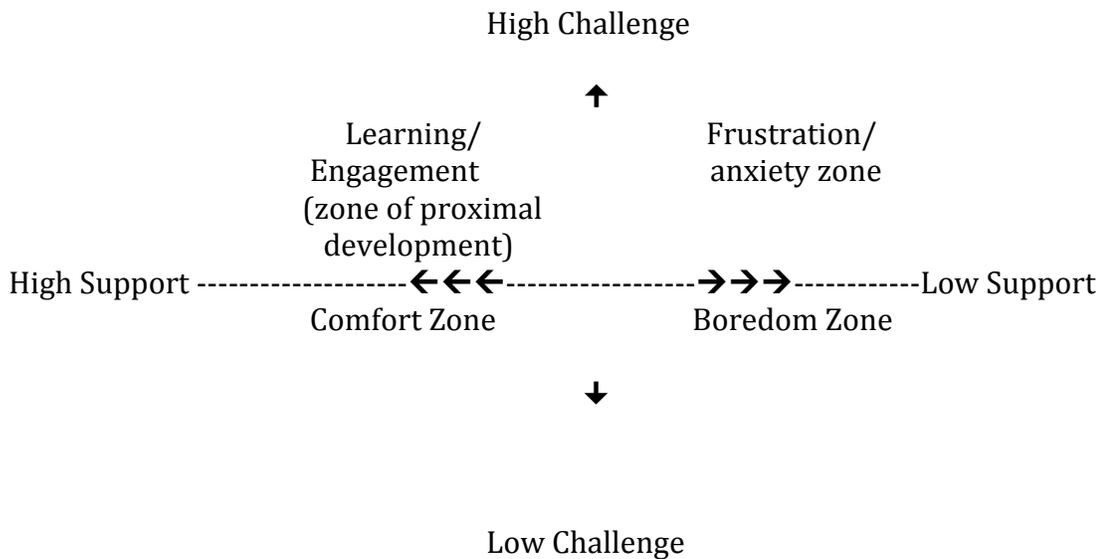


Figure 1.1. Four Zones of Teaching and Learning (adapted from Mariani 1997)