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IOE Academic Writing Seminar Series

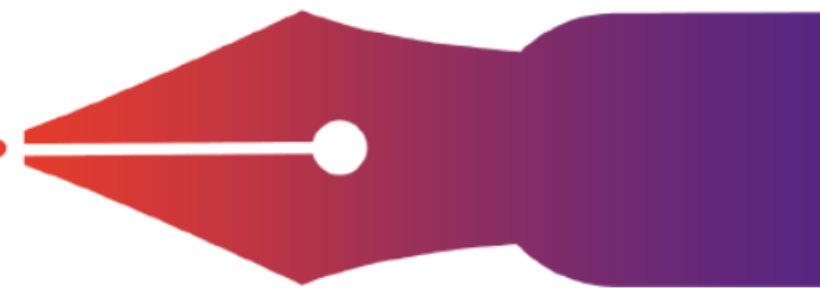
**#IOEWritingSeminar**



# The transformative role of scaffolding in academic writing tutorials

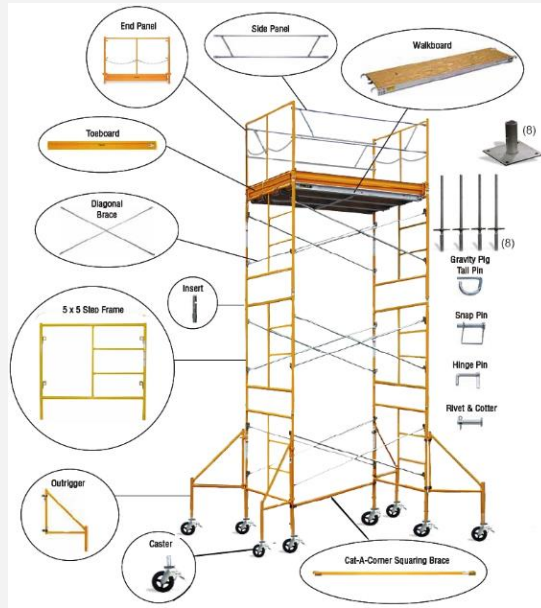
Cathy Morand

#IOEWritingSeminar



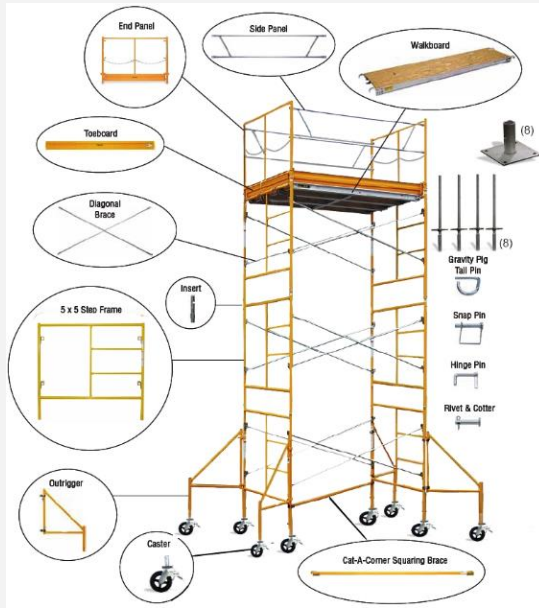
# The transformative role of scaffolding in academic writing tutorials





# Today

1. What is an academic writing tutorial ?
2. Why are they important?
3. What does scaffolding look like in the context of tutorials?
4. The transformative role of scaffolding
5. Thoughts and implications
6. Q&A



# 1. What is an academic writing tutorial ?

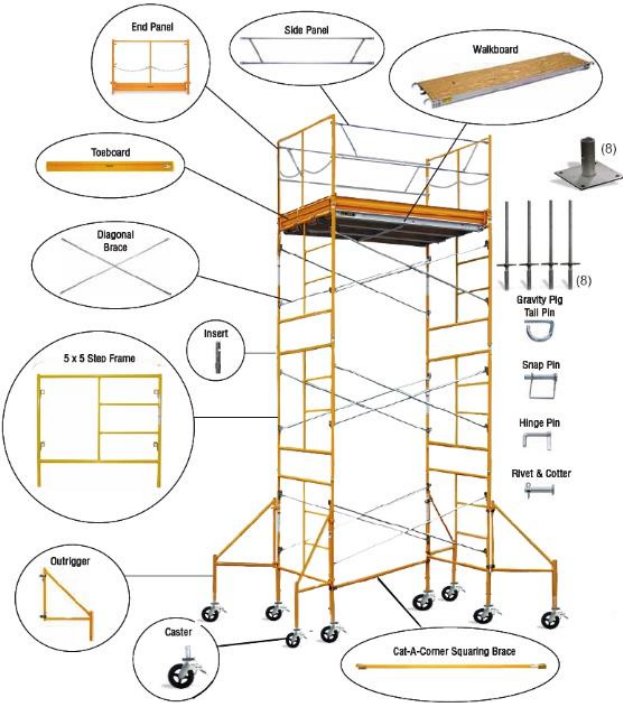
# What is an academic (writing) tutorial?

- Lab / conference/ one to one
- Non-compulsory
- Academic literacies / EAP / academic socialisation (Lea & Street)
- Delivered synchronously online by experienced teachers

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. At the top, there are navigation icons for 'Comments', 'Catch up', 'Editing', and 'Share'. Below this is a toolbar with icons for 'Editor' and 'Designer'. The main content area is a document editor with a 'Header' section. The document text is partially visible and includes phrases like 'argument and good', 'line effect', and 'UNICEF, 2022'. On the right side, there are two chat messages from 'Morand, Cathy'. The first message asks: 'Did you try the keyword approach from session 1 using this title?'. The second message asks: '1. What is the main focus of this paragraph? If you could sum up the main idea in one simple sentence'. Both messages have a 'See more' link and an '@mention or reply' input field.



# 2. Why are tutorials important?



# Why do tutorials matter? Why should we care?

1. Highly personalized / individual intervention.
2. Support for all stages of students' academic journeys (planning, notetaking, drafting etc.)
3. Generally, student driven.
4. Private and not assessed, safe and brave space for students.
5. Place where students can be pushed, challenged , questioned, listened to in relation to their work.
6. Students are increasingly heterogeneous.
7. Courses and assessments are increasingly diverse.
8. No university wide focus on academic communication ( unlike First Year Writing in US).
9. Important bridge between departments and students.
10. Help with academic socialization and transition .





# Why do tutorials matter? Student voices

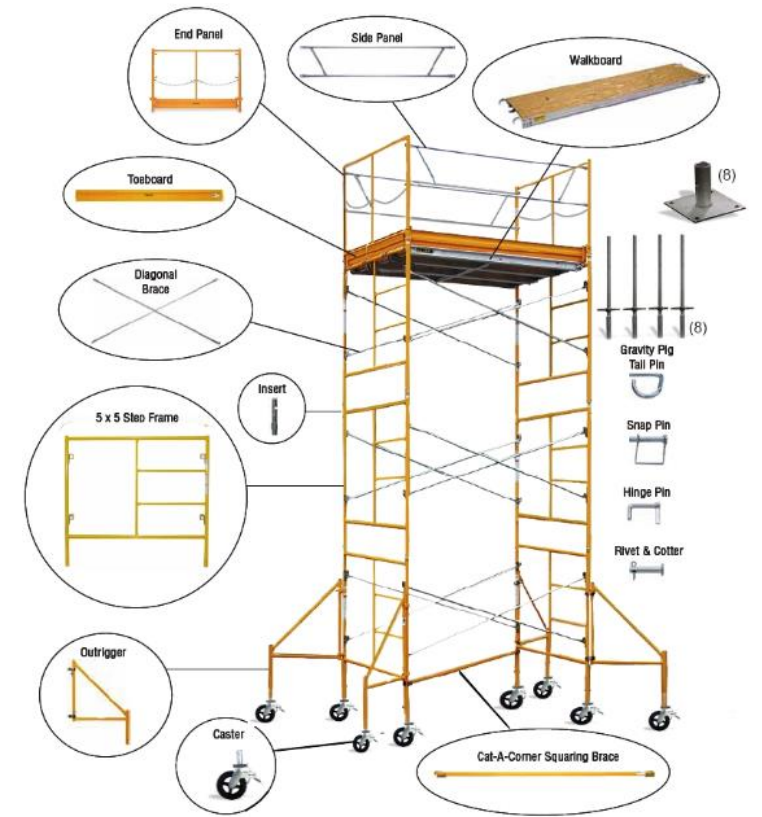
*“I think it’s **better than my expectation** because the session did not just tell me what can be written better it is more **how to write it again and write it better**. That makes me feel like I **can use that in my future writing** other than someone correcting my grammar and then don’t’ telling me what is the right thing to do.”*

*“ ( the tutor) helped me to justify my sentences and explain why and **this is something I’ve always struggled with.** ”*

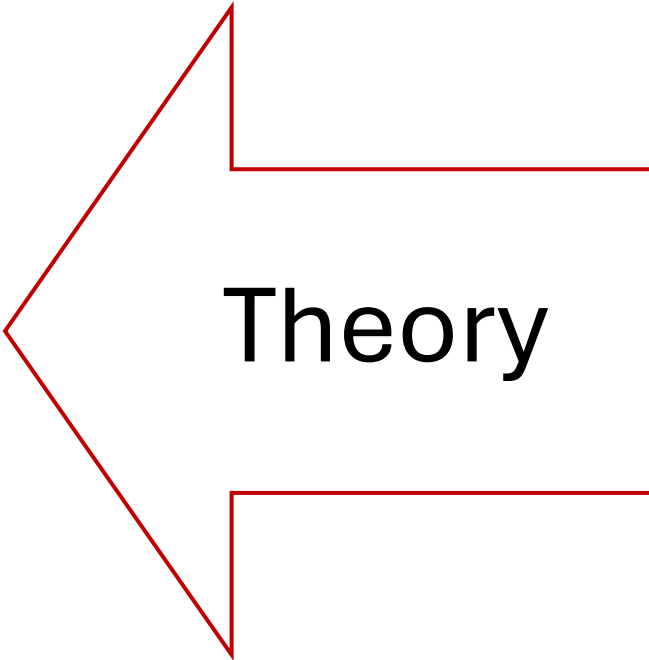
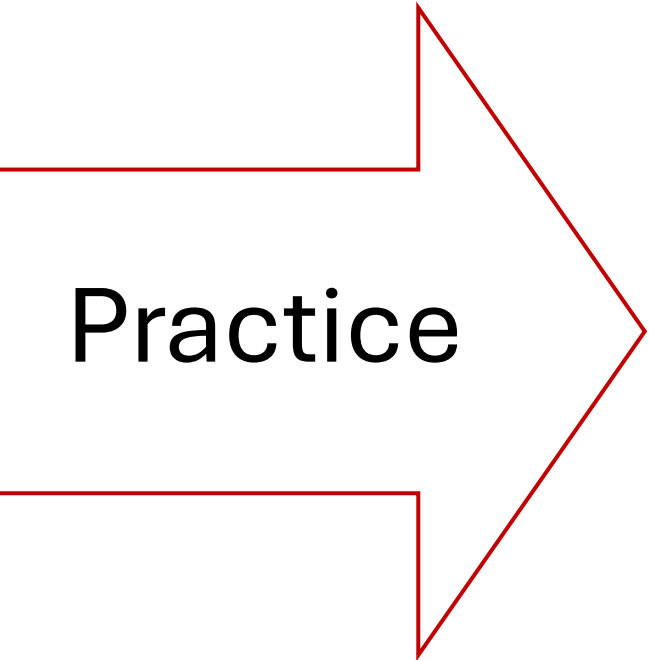
*“I found some of the things we spoke about ... very insightful and it made me feel **a lot more confident in my writing.**”*

*“The tips we looked at have been really helpful, **I kept referring to them...I will definitely implement for all my writing**”.*

3. What does scaffolding look like in the context of tutorials?



# What's happening here?



# Current study

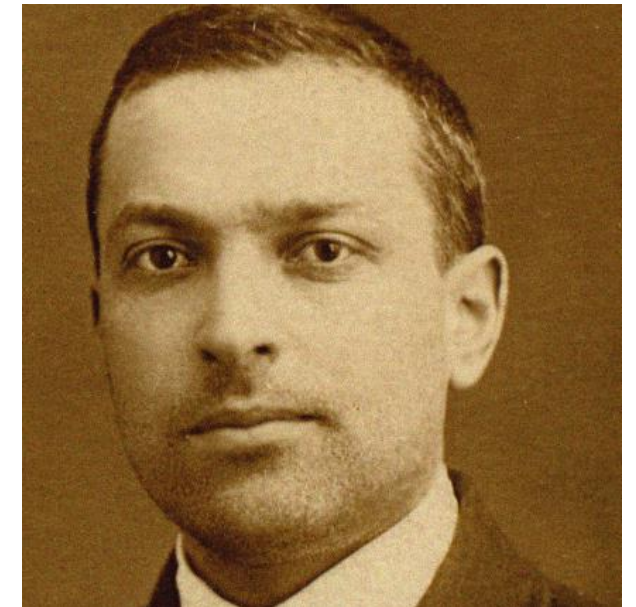
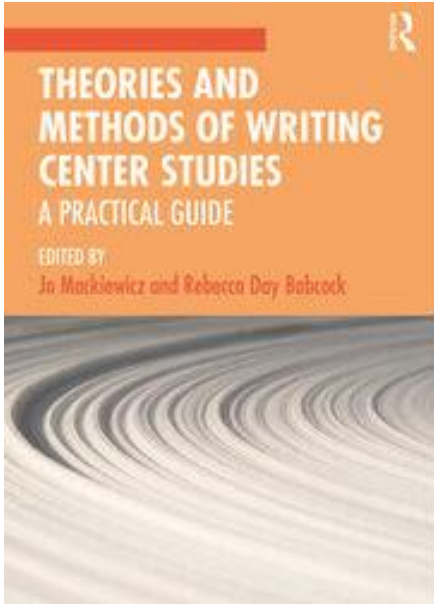
Macro



Micro

- Ethnographically grounded, emic perspective
- Focus on three “ typical”, “satisfactory” 30-minute tutorials with PG students ( one NS, two NNS) from STEM faculties
- Data
  - **Pre- tutorial** ( booking information, pre-tutorial emails, work samples, shared documents with written tutor comments)
  - **During tutorial** ( tutorial recording, observation notes)
  - **Post tutorial** ( semi-structured interview with students and tutors, stimulation recall, access to post tutorial emails and shared resources)
- “Key episodes” identified and coded using conceptual framework

# Socio cultural theory, Vygotsky and tutorials

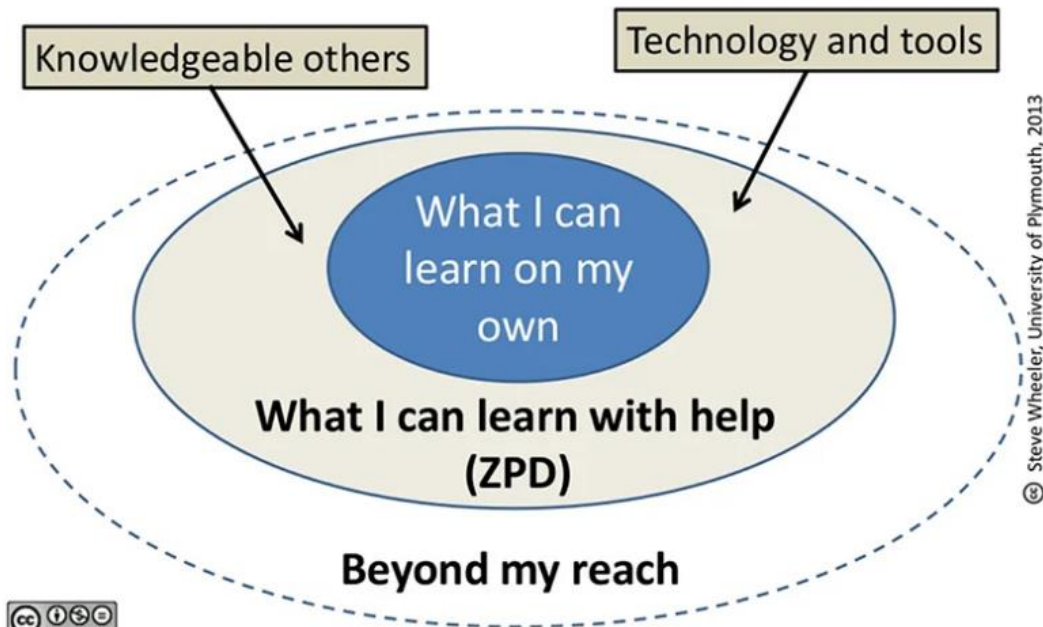


(Lev Vygotsky, 1978) 13

# Zone of Proximal Development and Tutorials

*“...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.”  
(Vygotsky, 1978:86)*

## ZPD and scaffolding



Knowledgeable other

# Scaffolding in tutorials



(Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2018)

## **Instruction**

Telling  
Suggesting  
Explaining and exemplifying

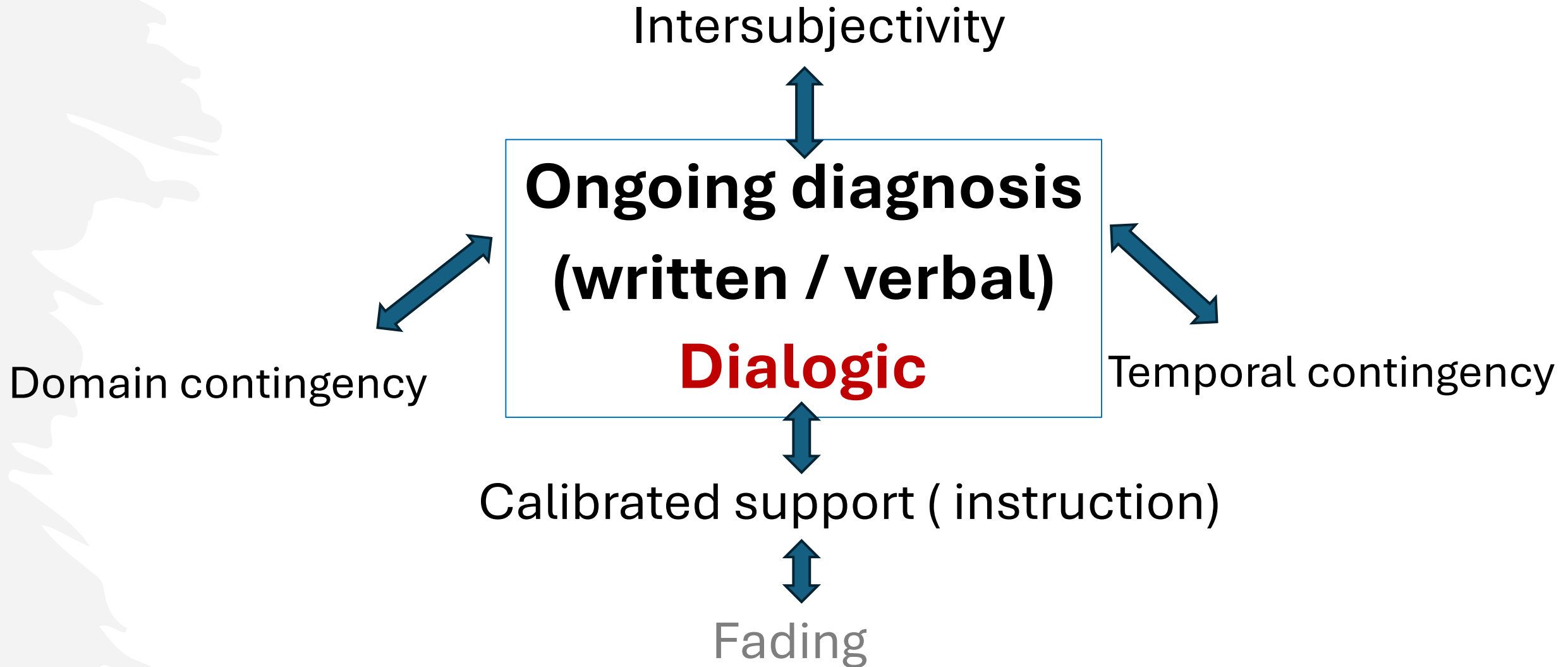
## **Cognitive Scaffolding**

Pumping (open ended questions)  
Reading aloud  
Responding as a reader or listener  
Forcing a choice  
Prompting and hinting  
Demonstrating

## **Motivational Scaffolding**

Showing concern  
Praising  
Reinforcing student writers' ownership and control  
Being optimistic and use of humour  
Expressing sympathy or empathy

# Tutor roles in scaffolding





# Dialogic element

Use of questions  
Student initiated  
Tutor initiated  
**Topic engagement questions**

**Ongoing diagnosis  
(written / verbal)  
Dialogic**

**“Negotiatory  
Information”  
question (NIQ)**

Tutor uptake within IRF (initiate, respond, feedback)  
Follow up and expansion of student contributions

**“Known  
information”  
question (KIQ)**

# Scaffolding

1. Intersubjectivity
2. Ongoing diagnosis ( temporal & domain)
3. Dialogic (use of questions NIQ and KIQ)
4. Calibrated instruction
5. Fading

## Pre-tutorial

- Students book (not-drop in).
- Information on Moodle prior to booking.
- Tutor sets up appointment & requests work selection (500 word) , rubric, marking criteria, previous feedback & questions / focus.
- Tutors return work with inserted comments as a shared doc.
- Students take action ( or not).

## During tutorial

## Post-tutorial

# Scaffolding

1. Intersubjectivity
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## During tutorial

- **Opening** e.g. introductions, reestablishing aims, sharing written sample.
- **Teaching** e.g. prioritising what to focus on , answering questions, addressing areas in written sample, discussion, collaborative writing, telling, giving advice.
- **Closing** e.g. tutor asks student to sum up, articulate how they might apply strategies, plan next course of action, additional questions.



## Post-tutorial

- Email sent with tutorial summary and / or useful resources.

## pre- tutorial

**Outlining purpose of written comments:** *“These comments are in the form of questions. Some questions are about your phrasing, and some questions are designed to make you think about possible additions / changes to the content. If you have time, please think about / write down your answers before the session. We will use these questions and your answers as a springboard for our discussion tomorrow.” (S)*

### **Responding as a reader to summarise and check**

**Open NIQ:** *“cost for who?” “What specific changes in healthy eating behaviour and lifestyle behaviour change will be observed?”*

**Restricted NIQ** *“Should this be a non-randomised controlled trial or a randomised control trail?”*

### **Alternating between open NIQ and restricted / Y/N**

**NIQ:** *“What type of interview will this be?”*

*Structured? Semi-structured? How many questions will be asked? What is the rationale / justification for your choice?”*

### **Suggesting resources specifically linked to sections of writing:**

*justifying methods - “Would any of the phrases on this page be helpful to you:*

<https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/describing-methods/>?”

**Key:** NIQ = negotiatory information question, Y/N = yes /no, KO = knowledgeable other



## during- tutorial

**Reestablish tutorial focus:** *“what are your key concerns?”*

**Addressing chosen areas of focus** *“in what way has this been an issue”, “have you received feedback on X before?”*

**Showing understanding and empathy:** *“Yeah, I’ve used it as well ... I think sometimes like you say you’re kind of stuck in the middle , aren’t you?”*

**Demonstrating writing processes via collaborative writing in the shared document:** T eliciting response from student and tutor writes in the shared doc.

**Providing encouragement:** *“fantastic. Just keep going...the important thing is that you’re getting down what you want to say”*

**Reinforcing student ownership of writing:** *“Imagine I’m not here and you’re recoding your voice” ,“is that what you want to say?” (T checking with S after collaborative rewrite)*

**Switching tutorial focus through transition words:** *“so we’ve done x...let’s quickly move to ...”*

**Explicitly handing over role of KO** *“I don’t know the answer to this...do you need to ...”? “what does xxx mean to you?”*

**Responding as a reader: Open NIQ** *“what is the focus of this paragraph?” “what do you mean by x?”*

**Restricted NIQ:** *“What is problematic, is it motivations or is it behaviour?”*

**Illustrating and modelling resources via screen sharing** e.g. using additional slides to highlight paragraph structure

**Checking by application:** *“how can you apply x to this section?”*

## pre- tutorial

Student did not look at tutor comments pre-tutorial.



- 1) *“How to improve the structure and make a more convincing argument? 2) Did I ask the question fully? Critically assess any critiques / counterarguments to these*
- 3) *Sufficient support though evidence from the literature”*

Work sample had already been submitted as summative coursework.

## during- tutorial

**Suggesting (stronger or weaker):** *“ I wonder whether you could have...” “maybe as well you could...” “... would make it easier to process”. “You could ...”*

**Telling direct:** *“ you need to...” “I think...would make this clearer”*

**Hinting:** *“OK, it **is** quite long”* (emphasis in bold)

**Praising formulaic:** *“ yeah, mmm, nodding” “ right...ok” “ good”*

**Responding as a reader with a check at the end:** *“ I could see what you were doing, you present two opposing views, don’t you?”*

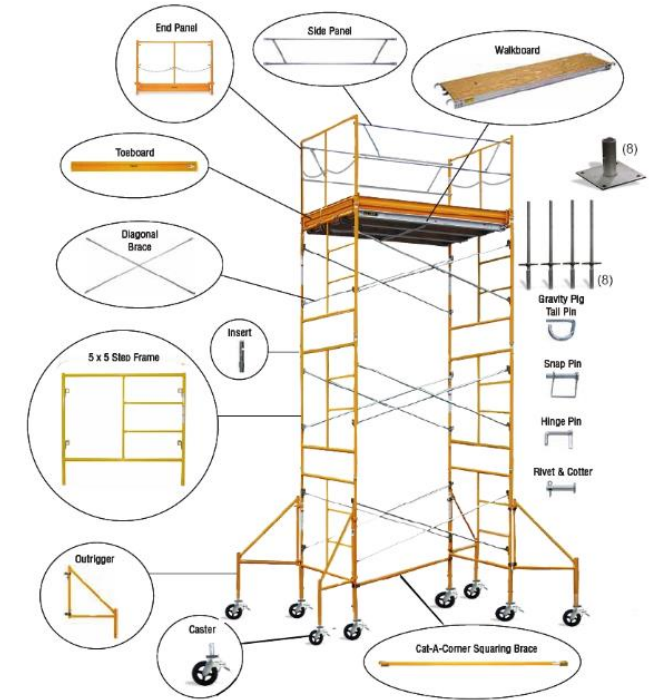
*“( T reads silently)... yes, I mean that makes sense to me” “I can see the basic argument in this section”*

**Summarising student’s writing with a check:** *“.....is that correct ?”*

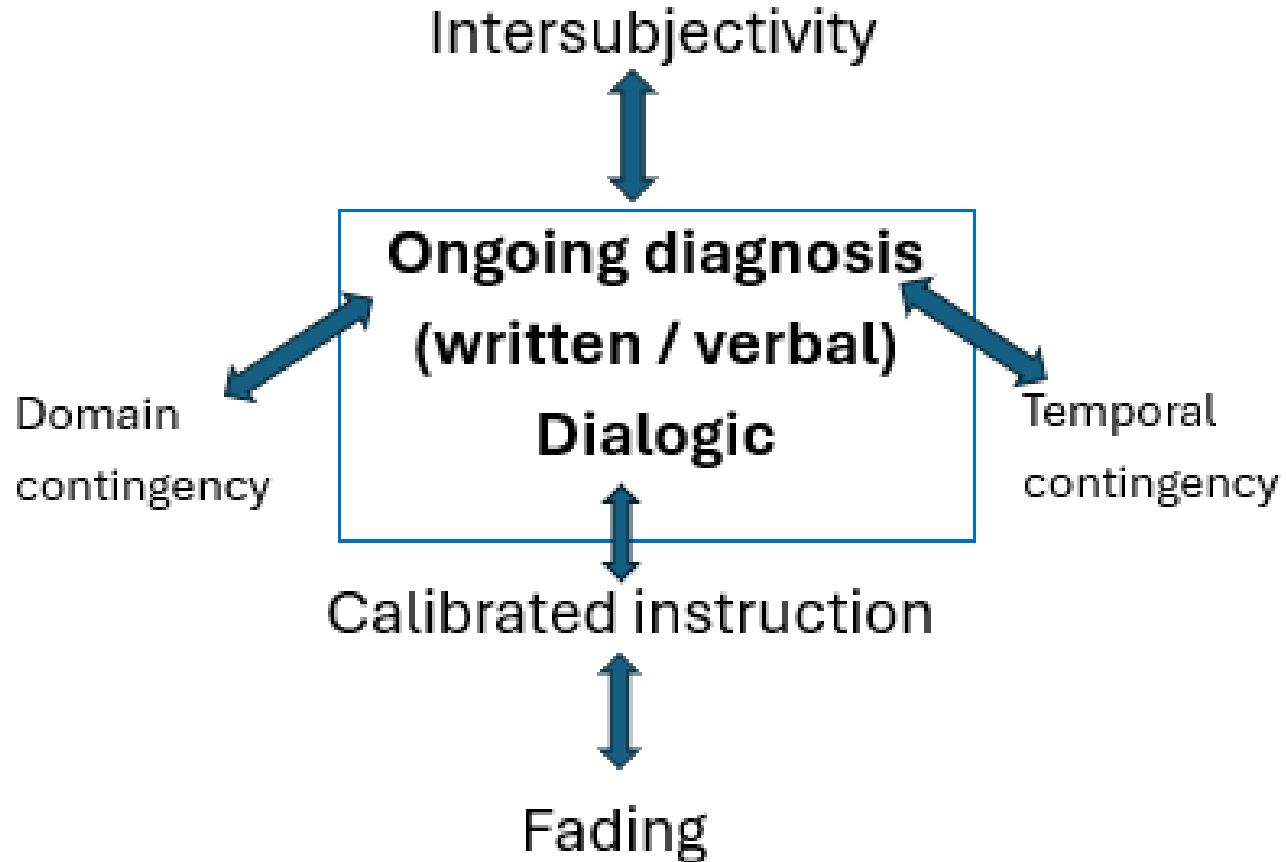
**Checking formulaic:** *“ does that make sense... do you see what I mean.. do you understand ?”*

**Checking by application:** *“what are you going to take away and use from this session?”*

# 4. The transformative role of scaffolding



# Transformative Scaffolding



*“knowledgeable of the skills, strategies, and processes required for effective learning” (Puntambekar & Hübscher, 2005:2).*

# Strategies in transformative scaffolding

## 1. Pre-tutorial stage:

Shared document to facilitate intersubjectivity, ongoing diagnosis ,and instruction, use of NIQ, use of exemplification

## 2. During tutorial stages:

### Intersubjectivity

Screen sharing

Maintaining student ownership throughout

Building trust

Targeted praise

Reestablishing tutorial goals from student and tutor perspective

### Ongoing diagnosis

Potential influence of writing stage e.g. draft, immediate deadline

### Temporal

Body language / facial expression / levels of frustration

### Domain

Checking what students do and don't know and understand- ZPD ( Use of NIQ , positioning student as knowledgeable other , dialogic environment, listening)

### Instruction

Calibrated

Use of explanations and demonstrations

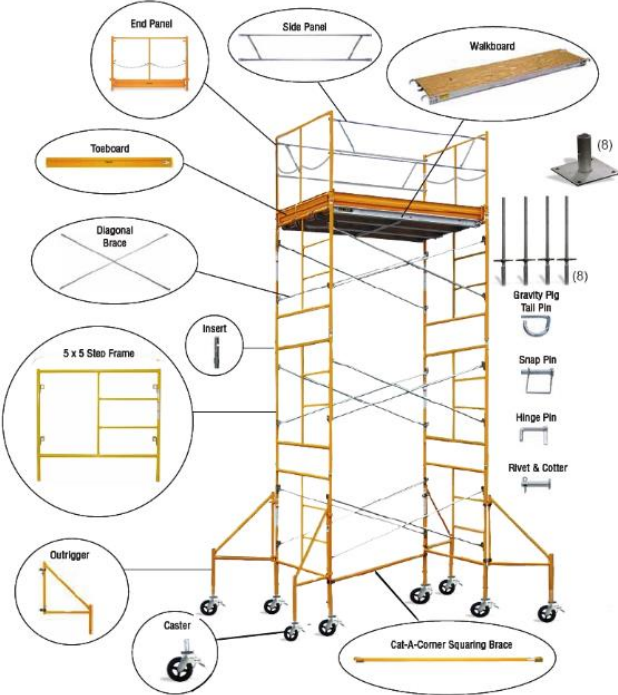
Awareness of fading, checking how students might implement relevant instruction

## 3. Post tutorial:

Sending students tutorial summary / shared document / resources

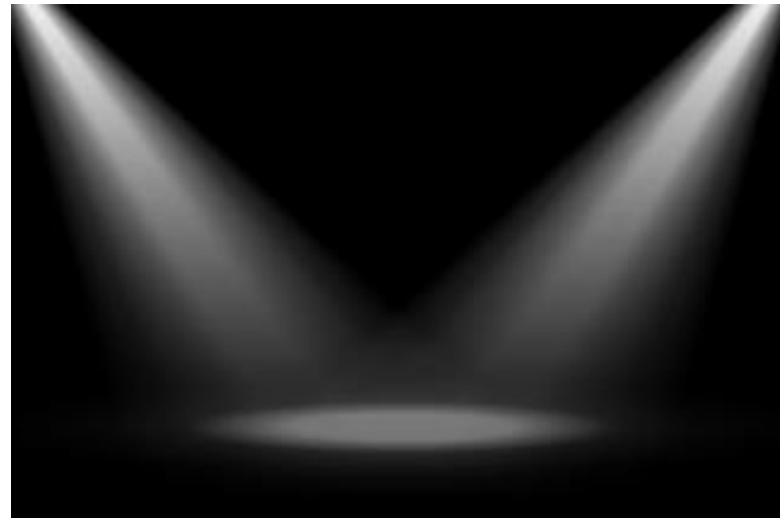


# 5. Thoughts and implications



# 5. Thoughts and implications

Practice



Theory

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**Thank you.**

C.Morand@ucl.ac.uk