

Teaching in the ZPD

A Guide for Middle School French Language Teachers

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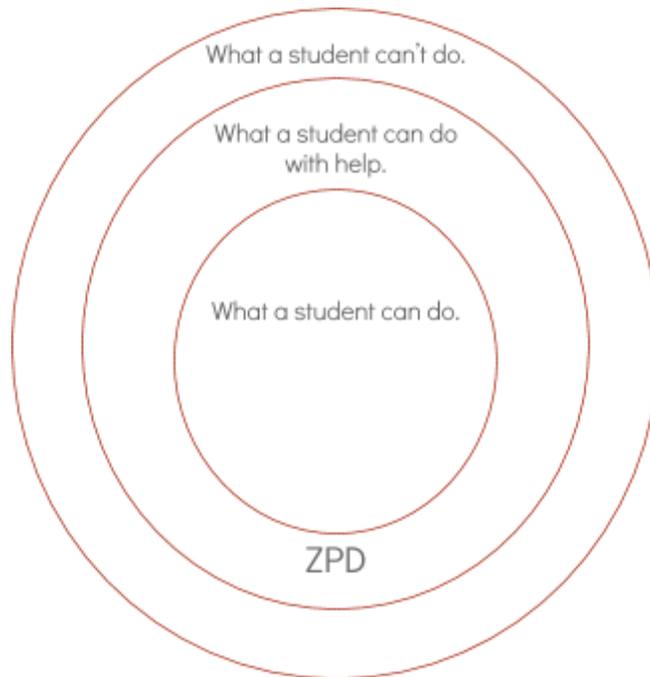


The Zone of Proximal Development

It is important for teachers to understand how to teach in the Zone of Proximal Development. Teaching in the ZPD makes more effective teachers and more engaged students in the classroom. This is a guide that will help middle school language teachers know what the ZPD is, how to find it, and how to teach in the ZPD. At the end, there is a checklist for teachers to use to ensure that they are teaching in their students' ZPDs and, therefore, that their students are receiving the best education possible.

What is the ZPD?

The ZPD is the difference between what a child can do independently and what they can do with targeted learning. It is the sweet spot where students' learning is not too hard or too easy, but just right. Here they can build new skills based on previous knowledge.

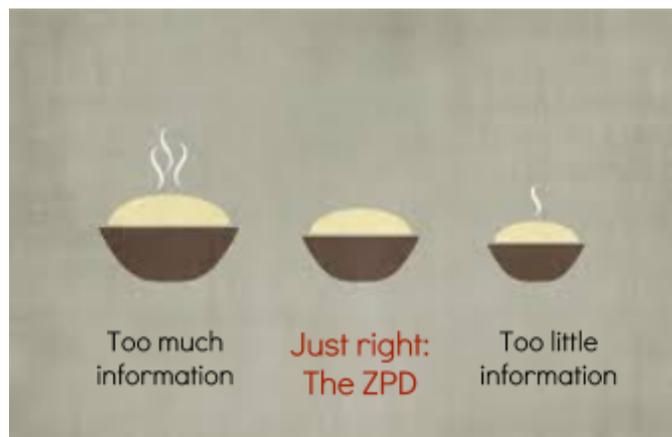


Why is the ZPD Important?

Without the ZPD, it is difficult to tell where students are academically, who needs help, and who needs more challenging information. This makes teachers more effective and ensures that

students receive a better education.

Think of the ZPD as Goldilocks and her Three Bears:



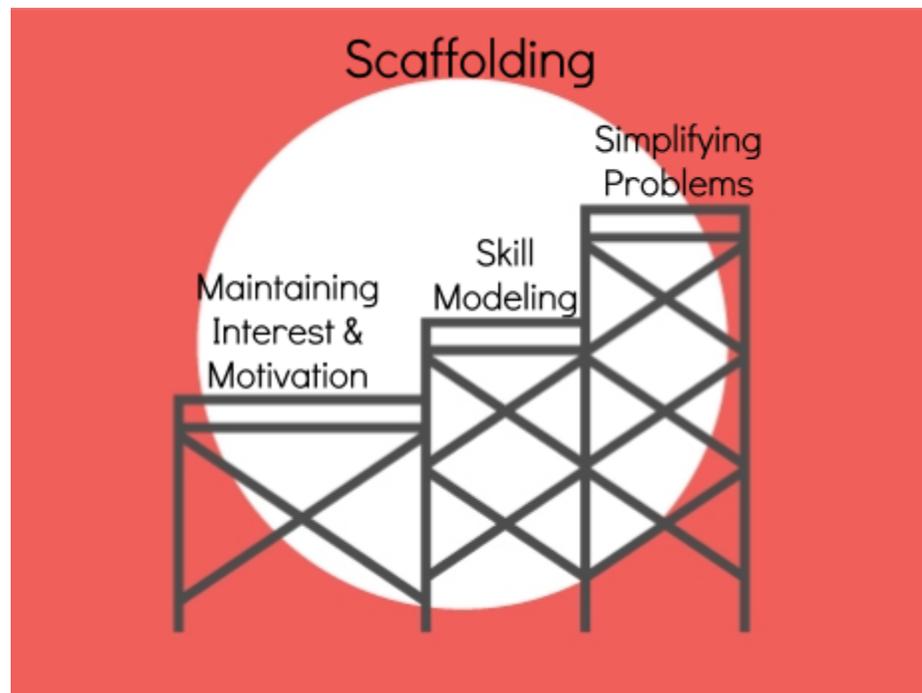
Papa Bear's Porridge =
Information is too challenging. Students cannot learn even with assistance.

Baby Bear's Porridge =
Information is just challenging enough that students can learn it with some assistance.

Mama Bear's Porridge =
Information is not challenging enough. Students already know the information and/or can learn it without assistance.

How to Teach in the ZPD:

Scaffolding is extremely useful when teaching in the ZPD. It is the instructionally supportive activities and social interactions that occur between the child and other individuals as they participate in effective learning and development in the ZPD.



Examples:

- Assess prior knowledge of the subject.
 - At the beginning of the year, give students an opportunity to share how much of the language they already know.
- Provide pictures when presenting vocabulary.
 - Have students draw pictures of the vocabulary words when introducing them.
- Use visual aids in lessons.
 - Use the image of a boot when teaching verb conjugation.
- Pause after learning a new concept and discuss.

Benefits of Teaching with Scaffolding & the ZPD: (Lui)

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|----------------|--|
| Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Students are challenged and motivated to learn and grow.● Students are driven to develop at an appropriate pace.● Students are provided an environment where they feel valued as individuals, a group, and a class.● Students are provided a learning environment where their creativity and thoughts are accepted. |
| Teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Teachers better understand their students individually.● Teachers discover different thought processes that students use to problem solve.● Teachers can identify strengths and weaknesses in their teaching and use them to tailor learning experiences to individual students. |
| Administrators | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Administrators can promote higher quality differentiated learning in schools.● Administrators can promote better teacher - student relationships.● Administrators can work with more motivated teachers and students. |

How to Determine a Student's ZPD:

1. At the beginning of the semester, provide a pre-test to assess each student individually on their knowledge of the language.
2. Set up individual meeting times with students during class to discuss their current knowledge of the language, how they enjoy learning, and what they want to gain from your class.
3. After activities in the class, provide a reflection for students to fill out. This reflection should allow them to express their thoughts on the difficulty and the enjoyment level of the activity and what knowledge of the language they gained from the activity.
4. Promote class and group discussions after activities and assess each student's participation in the discussion.
5. Keep a file on each student and/or each class and keep track of individual assessments, ways in which students learn the language best, and where they are in learning the language.

Foreign Language Students



Students who are below grade level:

Middle school students in french classes who are below grade level will exhibit lack of understanding of basic vocabulary, an inability to conjugate regular -er verbs such as manger, an inability to conjugate basic irregular verbs such as être or avior, the inability to introduce themselves in french, an inability to understand basic instructions by the teacher in french, and an extreme uncomfortableness towards saying basic vocabulary out loud.

Students who are at grade level:

Middle school students in french classes who are at grade level will exhibit an understanding of basic vocabulary, the ability to conjugate all regular -er verbs such as manger, the ability to conjugate irregular verbs such as être, avior, faire, and aller, the ability to introduce themselves in french and describe some of their likes and dislikes, the ability to understand basic instructions given by the teacher in french, and a mild discomfort to complete comfort towards saying basic vocabulary out loud.

Students who are above grade level:

Middle school students in french classes who are above grade level will exhibit an understanding of advanced vocabulary and grammar such as conjugating in the passé composé or the futur proche, the ability to conjugate all regular -er verbs as well as -ir, and/or -re verbs, the ability to conjugate irregular verbs such as vior, the ability to provide basic conversation, the ability to understand conversation by the teacher, and an extreme comfort in saying french sentences out loud.

Teaching in the ZPD Checklist

Provide a check in the boxes that describe your current classroom. At the end, if most of the boxes are checked, then you are demonstrating ZPD teaching in your classroom.

- I am assessing my students at the beginning and end of the course.
- I am providing clear goals for my students at the beginning of the year.
- I am scaffolding my lesson plans.
- I am providing differentiated learning in my classroom.
- I am discussing with students individually about their learning.
- There is movement involved in my lessons.
- I am using technology in my lessons.
- I use a combination of small group work, large group work, and individual work in my class.
- I am promoting involvement in my class.
- I am providing time for discussion after introducing a new concept in class.
- I am providing reflections for my students after activities.