

# Student Centric Approach of the Content Based Instruction and Instructional Scaffolding



V. J. Vinita, M. Ilankumaran

**Abstract:** Teaching English as a second language expedites the probability of teaching English language in the utmost trying situations. The process of language instruction of English, as a second language, is a highly demanding skill. A number of challenges arise during the process as second language learners have fewer linguistic resources in the language of instruction. Content-Based Instruction lays a stress-free interactive platform for English language learners. Scaffolding students' learning is a possible way to overcome certain tasks that learners come across. Content-Based Instruction oriented teachers hold key responsibility for the implementation of language learning in a classroom condition. The English language is used as an instructional language not only to teach English language lessons in classrooms but also functional in delivering other subjects. The article deals with the English language learning principle through Content-Based Instruction along with the collaboration of scaffolding. The goal of the study mainly rests on the factors responsible for the successful implementation, the strategies, the prospect, and the advantages of language learning through the approach. Content-Based Instructors function as scaffolds offering support to the students to create more specific learning activities. Using scaffolding, Content-Based Instruction can approach the English language learners to promote themselves from what they are capable of doing at present to what they will be able to do later. Scaffolding is a promising teaching technique. It is an interaction promoting tool that promises to enhance speaking skills in second language learning English students. This paper intends to prove the usability features of scaffolding teaching technique in Content-Based Instruction promoting English language teaching, the characteristics and critical features of scaffolded Instruction, methods of instructional scaffolding, and the challenges and benefits of instructional scaffolding. The article ponders upon the importance of time and the preparation of the course of study undertaken by this technique and throws light on how the language facilitators face the challenges like the choice of the topic till the content reaches the language learner and is expected to go an extra mile in imparting the English language learners.

**Keywords:** Content-Based Instruction, Instructional Scaffolding, Second Language Learners, Interaction, Speaking skills

## I. INTRODUCTION

Content-Based Instruction as an approach, is unique in its own way. It aids the English language learners to acquire the

functional usage of the English language when used as the second language just as it is applied by the native users of the English language. The highlight is laid on meaning than given to its form. Meaningful functionality of the English language used in a stress-less atmosphere of the Content-Based Instruction classroom. Such a language learning experience provides a great level of interest, motivation, and eagerness on the part of the English language learners. This would help the students to a great extent in acquiring the English language. Students naturally require support in the language learning process. Instructional scaffolding rendered by the English language instructors, provide support wherever it is required. Teachers allow the learners to freely access the language learned once the student shows instances of understanding and support-less functionality. As a teaching technique, scaffolding takes the instruction of the English language to another level. The teaching of language goes a level further in understanding the capacity and the level of the student and in assessing their capability in comprehending what has been taught. Moreover, it defines the depth of teachers' learning and the innovative technique which they adept to deliver their understanding. Though the term 'scaffolding' is a novel term that has been used so widely within teaching-learning and general edification, yet it bears a general view-point that it functions as supportive teaching.

## II. INTRODUCING CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION

Content-Based Instruction is a systematic teaching approach. It holds a unique position in English Language Teaching in instructing English as a second language. It focuses more on teaching language skills. It is a dual-functional approach, thus covering the functional language purpose satisfying both language skill and subject-knowledge of the language learners.

Content-Based Instruction promotes productive language skills. Comprehensible input as it is popularly called, Content-Based Instruction balances in delivering authentic, meaningful academic contexts. Content-Based Instruction leads English learners to attain Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). This ultimately aids the students to achieve overall academic success. Instructors play a key role in choosing the right subject matter for the students to learn. Interaction is the core element of instruction of English Language Learning (ELL). English Language instructors include teaching schemes that necessitate optical aids, intangible maps, and correspondences by which they purportedly produce consequential and organized information.

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# Student Centric Approach of the Content Based Instruction and Instructional Scaffolding

Content-Based Instruction provides the English language learners with cognitively difficult content materials and tasks, proves advantageous to the students in a way that they can develop self-esteem and critical thought process.

## A. Context - An important ingredient

Content-Based Instruction implements teaching of the English language in learning programs catering to the needs of language learning across grade levels. Other functional aspects of Content-Based Instruction is the instruction of bilingual programs, foreign language programs, heritage programs, and the like. These language learning programs mainly emphasizes helping students to acquire content knowledge by providing different types of content-driven approaches. These programs are provided according to the need and the necessity of the English Language Learners. It categorizes the pedagogic situations of the learner. Situations where spoken languages are not part of the curriculum of the host country. In some cases, language learners compromise to a situation where they deal with one language academically and another socially. Students usually succumb to a situation where some subjects are taught in the local minority languages. There are situations with dire need where learning a language becomes essential to attain a good job. Hence this expectation falls hard on the school curriculum to teach some subjects in English. By default, schools become a platform to learn the English language and provides scaffolding wherever it is essential for a students' language development. It is worth mentioning that in such contexts native language is different from the academic language.

## B. Principle of Content-Based Instruction

As the name itself suggests, Content-Based Instruction mainly focuses on instructing English as a second language by providing authentic content material to learn. English Language Learning becomes interesting and informative when the course materials are presented in a meaningful and contextualized manner. Content-Based Instruction activates the role of the language instructors, who carry out the most challenging task in functioning course contents to be taught in the target language. The main centre of attention is the content. Deliverance of a meaningful context is the focal aim of Content-based Instruction. Language learners learn when they find the study material interesting, useful, and a way to meet its end. Credibility plays a key role when choosing content is undertaken by the language tutors. Another major consideration which the language teachers should take into account is that the target language learned is packed with functionality in the real world. This makes language-learning worthwhile. This calls for a greater demand for selecting relevant subject material. Effective acquisition of language learning takes place when the learning portion is associated with communicating with relevant issues. Care has to be taken to pay attention to that language learning takes place in an interesting manner and this gets fulfilled only when the interaction is added in the classroom activity. This beats up the usual monotony and regular classroom situation where everything is expected and framed. unexpected surprises and activity-based language learning increases curiosity and certainly attracts language learners' attention. Systematic preparation demands a substantial investment of time and energy on the side of language tutors. Lack of in-depth knowledge reduces the effectiveness of the instruction

process. Some of the factors that determine the successful implementation of Content-Based Instruction are:

### i) Context and Curriculum

The curricula for Content-Based Instruction vary depending upon the balance between language and content. Emphasis on the influence in curricula like the kind of syllabi, activities, and materials used. This also deals with the assigned role of pupils and the teachers in erudition. Depending on the educational and social contexts, the function of the native language in the target language, the setting vary.

### ii) Characteristics of the Teachers

Generally, two types of teachers ensure the application of the Content-Based Instruction programs. Of which, native and non-native speaking teachers involved in teaching the target language. Implementation of Content-Based Instruction requires positive interaction between teachers and students. Interaction developed with a meaningful and effective relationship between the tutor and the taught. Teamwork is perceived as the key determinant for a successful Content-Based Instruction implementation. Language instructor is expected to possess certain characteristics which are jotted as follows:

- (a) Language teachers are expected to perform with expertise
  - (b) Language instructor is susceptible to contain a wider idea about the content that which they are teaching in the class
  - (c) Strategies meant for teachers cover both content and instruction
  - (d) Attainment of students' achievement is an expected function of the language instructor.
- Language instructors with the above mentioned qualities can boost teaching and learning in an English classroom.

## III. CONTEXT - AN IMPORTANT INGREDIENT

Content-Based Instruction implements teaching of the English language in learning programs catering to the needs of language learning across grade levels. Other functional aspects of Content-Based Instruction is the instruction of bilingual programs, foreign language programs, heritage programs, and the like. These language learning programs mainly emphasize helping students to acquire content knowledge by providing different types of content-driven approaches. These programs are provided according to the need and the necessity of the English Language Learners. It categorizes the pedagogic situations of the learner. Situations where spoken languages are not part of the curriculum of the host country. In some cases, language learners compromise to a situation where they deal with one language academically and another socially. Students usually succumb to a situation where some subjects are taught in the local minority languages. There are situations with dire need where learning a language becomes essential to attain a good job. Hence, this expectation falls hard on the school curriculum. By default, schools become a platform to learn the English language and provides scaffolding wherever it is essential for a students' language development. It is worth mentioning that in such contexts native language is different from the academic language.

### A. The Instructor's Role

Content-Based Instruction is highly demanding for language mentors. It calls for more efficient language teachers having in-depth knowledge about the subject matter and the efficacy to bring out knowledge from students. Some of the qualities required for the English language teachers are as follows:

1. To bring out the ability needed to promote the change of direction.
2. To implement group work in an English classroom condition.
3. To execute team-building techniques.
4. To organize jig-saw reading arrangements.
5. To provide the aforementioned knowledge about particular topics.
6. To deliver language skills required for language learners.
7. To help students to form coping strategies.
6. To execute the process approach in writing.
7. To use the appropriate error correction techniques.
8. To assist students in developing and maintaining a high level of enthusiasm.

These qualities which are expected from the teachers determine the success of a Content-Based Instruction classroom. It is suggested to the language instructors to acquire adaptable skills in order to implement a successful interactive Content-Based Instruction classroom.

#### iii) Characteristics of Language Learners

The English curriculum that has been set with the purpose of making the students understand and use the language in appropriate life circumstances:

- (i) Expertise in the target language;
- (ii) A well-drawn plan about the subject material that has been discussed in the class;
- (iii) The strategies for acquiring language and the familiar styles that are related to its usage;
- (iv) Students' age and the level of cognitive development; and
- (v) The Aptitude, motivation, and anxiety level related to undertaking the English learning skill.

Content-Based Instruction does not suggest necessitating students at the beginning level of language especially when they are exposed to learning the meaning of the second language. In such a language learning scenario, students naturally deny to comply with the language teachers and remain unwilling to perform well. Content-Based Instruction is expected to frame a curriculum that designs a classroom instruction that is presented that students advance in language proficiency, thus making use of their prior knowledge, the needed degree of development, and to adapt to language learning styles.

#### iv) The Role of the English Language Learners

Content-Based Instruction is an active approach. It believes in the functional aspect of language instruction. It is a doing-learning language instructional program. Content-Based Instruction underpins and expects a student-centric and student active participation in English language learning. A language is a mind-related event in a human being. Hence, a student has to be mentally prepared for a language study. Another major aspect in which Content-Based Instruction is that students exercise the usage of the English language independently. Language learners' autonomy not only helps the students to learn the prescribed subject material but also be cognizant about their own learning process so that they can authorize their own learning. Interaction is encouraged to take place between the

language learning students. The learners are trained to maintain the patience and tolerance needed when learning something new. The uncertain things that take place during learning prompt the learners to seek diversified interpretations presented by their classmates. Content-Based Instruction bestows the authority in choosing learning contents which is the ultimate end-product got with a corroborative effort done by both the learner and the language tutor. This promotes the language learners in the prolonged journey of education and directs them to reach their goal of language learning.

#### v) Ample Resources

The effective determinant that facilitates the implementation of Content-Based Instruction is ample resources. In a language learning scenario, teachers, learners, materials, and classroom equipment, and the like are exclusively considered to be resources. Other important resources that come under resources are a good rapport and hand-in-hand of both relationships and classroom activities. Also, allotment of required time and money comes under resources. Getting the textbooks ready for usage and maintaining other kinds of materials are considered resources. Language learners who get used to the prescribed textbook activate the classroom. The preparation of the study is simultaneously undertaken by the students along with the tutors.

### B. Introducing Instructional Scaffolding in Content-Based Instruction

Scaffolding is an expression that augments classroom language learning. This technique actively supports and provides necessary help to the language learners for better erudition, understanding, and usage of the English language. The main objective being once the student no longer needs any support, this technique can be disconnected. Scaffolding is a tool that is used like a walker which has been introduced to a toddler learning to walk. Once it starts to walk, the walker is no longer needed. The same is applicable in terms of a student who is learning the English language. This is done only with a clear indication of the student's mastery and the independent accessibility to the language dealt with. The aim of scaffolding stands firm with its objective in helping students from what they can do at present to what they will be able to do in the on-coming days. Content-Based Instruction is a student-centered approach that promotes all the four major skills in students learning English as a second language. Interaction is the predominant skill that is encouraged by skilful instructors in an instructional scaffolding classroom implementing Content-Based Instruction.

## IV. SCAFFOLDING AND BRAIN SCIENCE

The term 'scaffold' is used in construction sites such as buildings, dams, bridges, so on and so forth. Basically, the scaffold is used to provide support. It functions as a tool. Another major and the most exciting feature of this technique is its range of extension, which is continuous according to the demand, expectation, and the task of the work. It is highly relevant to the working of the human brain.

The prefrontal cortex, the parietal cortex, and the cerebellum are the three areas of the brain that allows the learner to pay concentration, to perform accurate movements, and sequence steps. When the sensory-motor cortex takes over, more space will be allotted in the brain thus these areas become less involved in learning skills and this is the place where instructional scaffolds help. In such a condition, the instructional facilitator can give temporary help for the language learners to learn, and when the intake of the learning is over, and the support can be discontinued. Again, acquiring skills becomes more automatic, thus providing the necessary 'think time' in order to form new connections. Therefore, working memory is accessible for meaning-making. Automaticity is reliant on a student's working memory. Instead of the attempts in enforcing a lot of information into the brain all at once, unassociated bits of information at a time can be of great support for the language learners. Thus, it is in the hands of the teachers to support the students when they are working with new or previously unassociated information, but the students do not need to provide scaffolds when the language learners are working with known information. Teachers need a large portion of information in a consistent way with working memory and long-term transfer. Mental structures that represent the content is one way of performing it. Some of the tools like concept maps, word webs, graphic organizers give students with schemas that they are capable of applying structured information. These are temporary scaffolds and they provide students with organizational systems for content learning. It is important to cultivate an understanding of memory systems that has profound implications for learning, and it includes producing systematic and intentional supports of the language learners' understanding rather than leaving them alone to discover information independently. Indeed, the learner has to engage themselves in collaborative learning since the productive group works to prompt the students to interact with one another which helps them to generate ideas. This has to work towards the consolidation and application of content that has been dealt with. Moderation of study load has to be maintained in order to avoid counter-productivity in students. Ensuring teacher's guidance suggests appropriate scaffolds which mean to engage students' attention to and involvement in classroom learning. The same proportion of teacher's guidance is supposed to be provided to the students even when they are involved in a group activity with their peers. The major function of a language facilitator was to guide the language learners to new levels of understanding. Strategies guide the students to ensure to have a wealth of opportunities to practice what they have learned. Such usage of information leads the students to obtain long-term memory, which leads to working memory. This can be got without any constraints on the number of items that can be utilized later.

### A. Strategical Application Of Instructional Scaffolding in Content-Based Instruction

Instructional scaffolding breaks up the learning material into smaller chunks. It provides a tool or a structure or guidelines along with each chunk which functions as a support in order to promote language learning in a fruitful manner. It is recommendable for language instructors to go through for a preview of the prescribed text, sit for a discussion about key vocabulary, the content of the subject, and connecting to real-life situations for further use. Language learners can be

guided to try hands in improving their writing skills or developed reading in a classroom scenario. Scaffolding is a natural technique in which parents or teachers adapt to introduce a fresh learner to a new learning skill. Especially when considering a struggling learner like a student learning English as a second language, the instructor needs to differentiate by modifying an assignment or seeking alternate accommodations like choosing a more accessible text or assigning an alternative project.

Differentiation is essential for the effective implementation of scaffolding in an English language classroom. Both differentiation work hand-in-hand with scaffolding. It is a dire need for the language instructors to know the individual and collective Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) of the English language learners. The zone of proximal development clearly defines the area of study that the learners are able to cope up and the support needed for them to be helped to achieve the next level with competent assistance.

The following strategies are a gentle reminder for the English language instructors that would prove awesome results in the English language learning environment and would prove helpful for their future life.

#### 1) Demonstration Exercises

Learners learn better by seeing and comprehend well by doing. Modeling, which is considered to be a keystone, is the main objective of instructional scaffolding. The activities suggested below bring out the functional usage of the English language.

##### i) Bowl activity

A small group of students forming an inner circle and circled by the rest of the class. The inner-circle students perform an activity, thus provide as a model by demonstrating an activity to the larger group.

##### ii) Model-Based activity

A model is presented along with that of an essay or inquiry-based science project. Teachers guide at each and every step of the process. The main idea of this activity is to have an overall idea about the activity and to provide in-depth knowledge of what they are learning before doing the demonstration.

##### iii) Think aloud

Think aloud is an activity when instructors model their thought process as in a text, solve a problem, or design a project. It is essential for children who are in the process to develop their cognitive abilities and critical thinking.

#### 2) Inclusion of prior knowledge

i) The prior knowledge, experiences, guesses, and ideas about the content or concept of study are encouraged to share in the classroom session. They are encouraged to relate and connect it to their own lives. Only on demand are the instructors expected to offer hints and suggestions and functions as connectors. The language instructors relieve the support rendered when the language learners grasp the content.

ii) Introducing the learning in the English classrooms with the prior knowledge of the language learners using this method as a structure for future lessons is a good teaching plan.

### 3) Give Time to Talk

i) The language learners require time to formulate new ideas and information. Articulation of the language that is taught is an important criterion in order to engage the language learners in disclosing skill-based language learning.

ii) The activities like think-pair-share, turn-and-talk, triad teams, or structured talking time, encourages the students to get a wholesome knowledge of the lesson learned. These activities can be inculcated on a regular basis as a crucial strategy.

### 4) Pre-Teach Vocabulary

i) A well-prepared vocabulary-oriented class is an essential strategical approach that the English language teachers are supposed to use in abundance. This is called the Front-loading vocabulary strategy which is ideal for teaching an English class.

ii) Introducing the new vocabulary to language learners with the help of photos or contextually related objects will heighten the level of learning interest in students. Another strategy is to invite students to create a symbol or drawing for each word by using analogies and metaphors. This can be carried out by forming small-group or by involving the whole class in a discussion of the words. Usage of dictionaries is encouraged only to compare and correct themselves with that of the already found meanings and the results of the given task.

### 5) Use Visual Aids

Scaffolding tools such as graphic organizers, pictures, and charts aid kids to visually represent their ideas, organize information and grasp concepts like sequencing, cause, and effect.

One of the important criteria of a graphic organizer is to guide and the thinking aspect of the language learner. It is the quality of some students who can dive right into discussing, or writing an essay, or synthesizing several different hypotheses, without using a graphic organizer. There are other students who get benefitted from reading and others by undergoing challenging new information. Hence, the graphic organizer is a temporary device that is meant to be removed once the target of language learning is achieved.

### 6) Pause, Ask Questions, Pause Review

Understanding of the section of language learned can be easily checked using this strategy. The teacher is supposed to pause providing think time after sharing a new idea from discussion or the reading, and then ask a strategic question, pausing again.

Questions posed should be specific, guiding, and open-ended. Whenever the language instructor finds the class stuck on the questions, provide an opportunity for students to discuss in pairs. Preparation on the part of the teacher helps them to get a grip in teaching, to learn, and to experiment with new scaffolding strategies. Scaffolding strategies should be enforced slowly, but the end product is far greater and the learning experience is more rewarding.

## V. CHALLENGES FACED BY INSTRUCTIONAL SCAFFOLDING

The mission to assess the strategies and techniques that are involved in careful planning in doing away the restraining features and fastens the preparation of an appropriate scaffolding technique. Some of the challenges that are related to scaffolding technique are as follows:

1) Instructional scaffolding is a technique that demands a high level of time consuming nature.

2) Skilful training faculty are hard to find.

3) Students' potential has often been underestimated. Often the students' capabilities are calculated to a high level than their normal capability which is abnormal than their realistic condition.

The desired behaviours, strategies, or activities are inadequately set as a model, which is hard for the students to acquire.

4) Properly trained faculty will reap benefits and in other ways such a condition is a failure.

5) Insufficient textbooks and other subject matters will also slow down the teaching process thus work in a negative manner. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the learning strategies and the challenges that are required for delivering an effective language learning English class.

### A. Student-Centric approach of Instructional Scaffolding and Content-Based Instruction

When bearing in mind the advantageous aspects of scaffolding, it is necessary to take into account the content that is taken for the implementation of the technique. Moreover, it is highly important to gauge the level of the English language learners and the method of assessment, and the basic support of study preceding the execution of the technique. Some of the benefits are as follows:

1. Early detection of the learning gifted quality of the student can be done.
2. Instruction is enhanced based on a one-on-one basis.
3. The language learner acquiring the desired skill, knowledge, or ability is assured at a greater level.
4. The learning and teaching that take place stand apart from other kinds and show much difference.
5. The learning delivered is structured, based on definite content, efficiency in completing the action is amplified and all possible inadequacies and limitations are either avoided or eliminated and therefore the efficiency is heightened.
6. Students' interaction is highly managed and maintained. This naturally develops the communication skills of language learners.
7. A high level of drive thus involving the language learners to indulge in self-study excites the students to spend more time learning, searching, and discovering resulting in active language learning.
8. Involvement on the part of the language learner is quite prominent.
9. The motivation level to learn is obvious since the students are directly involved in a learning activity.
10. Students are either kept in groups or maintained to concentrate on their portion of the learning and so this reduces the intensity of disturbance for the learners in getting isolated, left, or unnoticed.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Of the several features and qualities of instructional scaffolding, one distinct feature proves it to be remarkable and that is its provision of support.

# Student Centric Approach of the Content Based Instruction and Instructional Scaffolding

Language facilitators provide support in helping babies learn to walk just like the teachers are learn to identify the moments wherever support becomes demanding. This also calls for the time needed to remove the support rendered. With practice and reflection, teachers get a clear picture as to the place they have to design the specific supports that would best meet the requirements of the language learners. Systematic planning and careful selection of content materials for study help in identifying the complexities and advance dynamics of effective teaching. Instructional scaffolding aids students meet up with new challenges, they may need new types of scaffolds that are susceptible to change according to the demands of the students' learning capacity.

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## AUTHORS PROFILE



**V. J. Vinita**, is a passionate English educator with over a decade of teaching experience. After holding several teaching assignments across the Sultanate of Oman, U.A.E, and Qatar in reputed educational institutions, she is currently working as an educator in Alphonsa School -a leading educational institution in South India. Besides being a dedicated teacher, she is serving as head of the English Literary Association & President of the English Club in the same Institution. Her passion for continuous learning & excellence has prompted her to pursue her research interest in NI University under the guidance of Dr.M. Ilankumaran, Professor & Research Co-ordinator at NI University. She is an eloquent speaker & has spoken at numerous conferences. She recently bagged the best presenter award for her excellent research paper presentation at Holy Cross College, India. She is a rank-holder in master's degree in English Literature from M.S. University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India, where she had done her investigations on a study on American Culture. She has done her Pre-doctoral degree at M.S. University, Tirunelveli, where she had done her research work on Identity Crisis based on Ralph Ellison's novel "Invisible Man." She has also completed her Masters in Psychology at Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India. She has done her Post Graduate Course on Methodology in Teaching of English Language at M.S. University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India. A voracious reader, patient counsellor & a natural presenter, Vinita loves to travel & enjoys long walks in her spare time.



**Dr. M. Ilankumaran**, having English Language Teaching (ELT) as specialization in his M.Phil and Ph.D with an experience of three decades of teaching at various levels, is at present working as Principal, Geetha Jeevan Arts and Science College, Thoothukudi, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India. He worked as a Professor and Research Programme Coordinator in English at Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education (NICHE), Kumaracoil, Tamilnadu. With all earnestness, he conducts workshops for the English fraternity on Effective Communication Skills and organizes conferences regularly on English Language and Literature. He is a visiting faculty teaching 'Applied Linguistics' and 'English for Communication'. Enjoying 12 years of research experience, he guides scholars at M.Phil and Ph.D level and produced many. He evaluates doctoral theses and conducts public viva voce examinations in different universities. He is the President of English Language Teachers' Association of India (ELTAI), Kanyakumari Chapter and the South Region Coordinator ELTAI. He is also a member of International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), UK. He is the main author of five books on *English for Engineering Students I* and *Technical English for Engineering Students II*, the prescribed textbooks with ISBN for first year BE/B.Tech students of NICHE. He is a member of Editorial Board of a Refereed International Journal. Besides being an able administrator, he, to his credit, has published more than 130 articles on ELT in Indexed, Refereed journals at National and International levels of which 25 in Scopus Indexed Journals.