

Using Scaffolding Strategies in Teaching Writing For Improving Student Literacy in Primary School

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Abstract—Writing skill in English is considered to be a difficult skill for most students especially for elementary school students. The results of observations on 10 elementary schools in Bali confirmed the phenomenon that writing is a difficult skill for the students. For that reason a strategy is needed in order to solve the problem. The purpose of the study was to analyze the implementation of scaffolding activities in teaching writing for improving the English literacy of elementary school students. The study was conducted at North Bali Bilingual School Singaraja. The Design of the study was using embedded mixed method which was mainly in the form of qualitative study but supported with quantitative data analysis. The subjects were three teachers and involving 21 students of grade 5. The data were analyzed qualitatively as well as quantitatively. To maintain the trustworthiness of the results, the data were triangulated in terms of several aspects such as in terms of time, persons and also in terms of the techniques of data collection. The results of the study showed that the teachers used several scaffolding strategies which included process based writing techniques, sight word exercises, and problem solving based learning instructions provided with reading response journal. The use of scaffolding strategies reveals clear improvements not only in terms of the writing quality but also students' attitude and interests. The results implied that the quality of the scaffolding has beneficial contribution to students' writing competency.

Keywords—scaffolding strategies, literacy, elementary students

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a form of communication [1] that involves composing sentences to tell or retell pieces of information in the forms of narratives, descriptions, or to transform into new texts as in expository or argumentative writing [2]. Writing is a complex activity since it covers several cognitive and linguistic abilities [3], and most commonly learned in more formal settings and situations where teachers teach gradually from the easiest parts to the most difficult ones [4].

Writing in English as a foreign language is observed as a difficult skill which leads students feel reluctant to voluntarily write and consider it mostly as a school obligation. One of the sources of the difficulties is lack of vocabulary. Vocabulary knowledge is considered as critical for second/ foreign language learners because a limited vocabulary in a language can impede successful communication [5]. Students cannot learn how to write paragraph without first knowing how to compose a sentence which requires sufficient vocabulary [4]. Other sources of difficulties which create problems can be in terms of

grammar, organizing ideas, developing critical thinking and other related problems which contribute to low quality of writing.

Realizing the difficulties students have, scaffolding needs to be provided to students. Scaffolding is the support for learning and problem solving which might include clues, encouragements, providing examples and modeling which allow students to grow independence as a learner [6]. Scaffolding is a significant tool to contribute to the learning process because it assists students to solve their learning problems [7].

Many researches have been conducted to investigate the effect of scaffolding to students' writing ability, and the researches revealed that scaffolding has significant effects on students' writing ability. Despite many researches had been conducted on scaffolding, most of them were carried out for adult students or post elementary levels [8], [9], [10], [11]. Research to analyze the effectiveness of scaffolding to young children has not been much conducted yet, and therefore need to be further investigated. Its importance is highlighted by the fact that younger children need more supports, and especially for those who write English as a foreign language. The purpose of the study is therefore intended to describe how scaffolding was implemented in teaching English, to analyze the types of scaffolding strategies used for teaching writing for elementary school students, and to investigate the impact of scaffolding strategies to students' writing ability.

II. METHODS

A. Design

The research was conducted using Embedded Mixed Method design which mostly utilized qualitative design and supported with quantitative data analysis. The implementation of the scaffoldings was analyzed using qualitative design, and its impact on the students' English literacy was analyzed using qualitative as well as quantitative design.

B. Setting

The research was conducted at North Bali Bilingual School Singaraja Bali, Indonesia. The school was started in 2012. As the name says, the school is a bilingual school which employs two languages as the medium of instructions such as Bahasa Indonesia as the national language and English which functions as a foreign language. The school has a

comprehensive literacy program from which the school is labeled as literacy based school. English lesson was allocated for 3 times a week each of which was about 40 minutes.

C. Subjects

The subjects were two teachers and 21 students of 5th grade. One teacher is an experienced English native speaking teacher from Canada who has a rich teaching experience in teaching English as a foreign language. The other teacher is an assistant teacher who graduated from English Education Department. Besides the teachers, the school principal was also the other subject of the study who provided information pertaining to the policy related to the topic of the study.

D. Instrument and Data Collection Techniques

The researchers were the main instruments of the study. Besides that, additional instruments were also utilized such as interview guide, and assessment (test). The data were collected using different techniques such as through observation, interview, document analysis and using assessments. The assessments used were in the form of progress tests and also authentic test using performance based type of assessment. The data collection were conducted for 6 months started from December 2017 up to June 2018

E. Data Analysis

There were two kinds of data collected such as qualitative data in the form of description about how the scaffolding was implemented, and kinds of scaffolding identified to be utilized by the teacher in teaching English. This type of data was analyzed qualitatively. The second type of data was in the form of scores as the results of assessments given to students to assess their English literacy after the scaffolding was implemented. This type of data was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistical analysis.

F. Trustworthiness

To guarantee the trustworthiness of the study, the data collections were triangulated in terms of time that is to be collected many times during one semester. The frequent data collections were conducted until the data were considered as saturated and consistent results were recognized. The data were also triangulated across several persons that involved two teachers and a principal.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis towards the data collected through participatory observation, interview and document analysis revealed that scaffolding strategies were implemented in the process of teaching and learning in the school. There were several scaffolding strategies provided to students each of which has different purposes (Table 1).

TABLE 1 KINDS OF SCAFFOLDING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED IN TEACHING WRITING

No	Kinds of Scaffolding Strategies	Purpose	Activities
1	Process based writing	Scaffolding in developing ideas and developing sentences and paragraphs	Providing students with some guidance through step-by-step process such as: browsing ideas, deciding topics, drafting, revising, editing and publishing
2	Scaffolding in developing critical thinking and high order thinking skills	Scaffolding in developing critical thinking and high order thinking skills	Steps of scaffolding: 1. Guidance on problem solving is guided through reading problem based passage, 2. Problem solution strategies are guided through questions; 3. Using the guided questions to solve the contextual problems
3	Reading response journal	Scaffolding based on students' individual needs and problems.	Steps: 1. Students read texts (can be novel or short stories). 2. Students write questions/problems in their journal as communication interaction with the teacher. 3. The teachers answer the students' questions and provide advices
4	Sight word exercises	Scaffolding in increasing Vocabularies.	1. Students do exercises on sight vocabulary and use the words for expressing ideas.

Different kinds of scaffoldings implemented at the school are intended to achieve different purposes. Process based writing activity aimed at providing students with procedure or steps on how to develop ideas. In this activity, students are guided in every step until the students are able to produce a piece of writing. The supports provided in each step can be different for each student in the classroom, for that reason, the teacher must be committed to pay attention on the areas of difficulties faced by the students. Sometimes, the guidance given to students needs to be differentiated in accordance to the individual problems of the students, and the teachers need to modify the materials in order to suit the students' level of understanding.

It was also observed that, the tasks given to students needed critical thinking and students had to be able to critically organize their opinions which are often difficult for some students. To stimulate high order thinking skill of the students, scaffolding was needed. In this case, the teacher used problem solving based materials in teaching English. The students were provided with an example of a case through reading passage and the students were guided through question and answer activity which led the students to associate the problem solving strategies to contextual problems they had to solve. The questions were started from basic questions which guided students to comprehend explicit information provided in the passage. After that, more advanced questions were utilized. The teacher sometimes restructured the questions in order to lead to the targeted answers. The guidance through graded levels of

questions stimulated the high order thinking skills of the students. The ability of the students to solve the problems depended on the ability of the teachers to provide leading questions. In other words, the problem solving strategies exercised in the passage then can be utilized by the students to solve similar problems encountered.

During interactions in the classroom, not every student can use the chance to ask questions in the classroom, so the teacher provided the students with reading response journal. The scaffolding in the form of the journal was intended to function as an individual medium of interaction between the teacher with the students on how the problem can be shared and discussed, and how the teacher can guide the student individually. This support functioned well and had very significant impacts on students' attitude as well as students' competency.

It cannot be denied that as foreign language learners, basic problems faced by the students are on vocabulary. For that reason, improving students' vocabulary is a necessity and obligation. To achieve that purpose, the English teacher inserted sight word exercises every time the teacher teaches English. It was conducted briefly between 5-7 minutes communicatively to ascertain that students always increase their vocabulary. This gave impacts that the students can improve their vocabularies which can lead to improvement in their literacy skills.

The implementation of scaffolding activities was perceived as very positive and beneficial by the teachers (Table 2). The teachers considered that the supports provided by the teachers were very important and highly needed by the students.

TABLE 2 TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCAFFOLDING STRATEGIES

	Teachers' perception on Scaffolding Strategies			
	Process based writing activities	Problem solving based instruction	Reading Response Journal	Sight word exercise
1	This activity is very powerful because the students are guided step by step from browsing ideas, deciding topics, drafting, revising, editing and publishing	This activity is truly important and very beneficial because the students are trained on understanding contextual problems through reading, and then associating the strategy to solve the problems mirroring real problems.	This strategy is certainly needed by the students. It is used to explore and record the problems faced by individual student who did not have the chance to discuss it orally in the classroom.	This exercise is very important for increasing students' vocabulary.
2	The guidance helps students' understanding and lead them on how to develop ideas and sentences	This strategy improved students' critical thinking and problem solving strategies.	This is also good to train students to read and write daily	The increase of sight words will help students improve the quality of their writings.

The positive perceptions about the use of scaffolding strategies were confirmed by the information from the school principal acknowledging that the implementations of the scaffoldings are all by design. In other words, the school created a system on how the supports in the forms of scaffolding must be implemented and how the teachers modified the supports in order to suit the students' needs. The teachers' perception was in line with the students' literacy skills where all students could achieve high scores in English literacy.

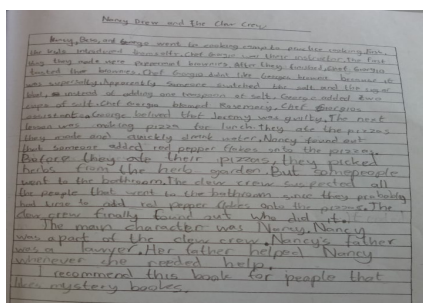


FIG.1. ONE SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WRITING

From the sample of the student's writing, it can be seen that the student was able to express their understanding in the form of a summary. The sample paper in Picture 1 was one of the tasks assigned by the teacher in order to make a summary of a novel in English. The summary was about an English novel which was read by the teacher part-by-part for

15 minutes before the English lesson started. The novel reading was completely finished at the end of the semester before the students had to write the summary.

The assignment of writing a summary itself has been reflecting a high demand of English use because the students must be able to listen to the native speaking English teacher who read the novel in English and then write the summary. Understanding the reading story from a native speaker needs a good skill of English in order to be able to grasp the plot of the story. The demands needed not only to listen to the foreign accent, pronunciation and the flow of ideas in English, but also how to put the main ideas of the story into a summary. However, the scaffoldings which had been provided to the students have been able to enhance students' writing competency.

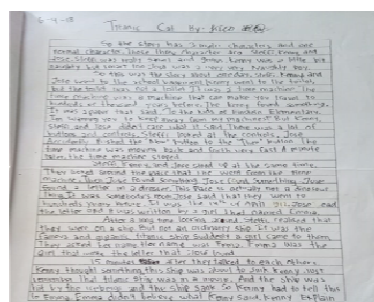


FIG.2. ANOTHER SAMPLE OF THE WRITING FROM GRADE 5 STUDENT

Figure 2 is another sample of a student's piece of writing which showed good quality of paper for a student who was in grade 5 of elementary school. The summary made by the students was a reflection of how students acquired the daily interactions and communication of English use in the school. The supports provided could be anytime not limited to during the English sessions in the classroom. Students could also make use of their time while they were in library. The interpersonal communication among the teachers and the students while they were in the school and during the lesson also made students feel convenient to share their difficulties and seek guidance. As a result, students' literacy skills were satisfying and showed good scores in their writing skills as stated in Table 3.

TABLE 3 THE SCORES ON LITERACY SKILLS OF THE GRADE 5 STUDENTS

Students	Scores using different types of Assessments			Average Score
	Finishing a story	Writing news in the school tabloid	Answering Problem based Task	
No 1	82	88	86	85.33
No 2	80	85	80	81.66
No 3	83	82	80	81.66
No 4	85	86	86	85.66
No 5	88	80	86	84.66
No 6	80	84	84	82.66
No 7	88	80	86	84.66
No 8	80	85	82	82.33
No 9	84	80	86	83.33
No 10	80	82	84	82
No 11	86	80	84	83.33
No 12	85	86	86	85.66
No 13	88	84	84	85.33
No 14	84	86	86	85.33
No 15	80	84	84	82.66
No 16	88	88	84	86.66
No 17	86	84	84	84.66
No 18	88	86	86	86.66
No 19	84	88	88	86.66
No 20	86	86	84	85.33
No 21	86	86	88	86.66
Average Score	84.33	84.28	84.66	84.33

The results of observations revealed that the students also improved in their characters. The obvious changing attitude was the character to like reading. It was observed that the students love reading and frequently took initiatives to borrow books during the weekends and school holiday. When students love reading and willingly read books, it is a strong indicator that they like readings because they were not only directed by an obligation to fulfill the school assignments but the habits of reading has been built and established. The results of the interview with the teacher and the school principal confirmed the findings that the reading habits have been successfully formed for most students since the literacy program was implemented and the teachers are obliged to provide sufficient support or scaffolding whenever needed by the students.

The provision of supports by the teachers had to be conducted in such a way which made students feel convenient and under stress-free environment. The supports

were provided based on the needs of the students who were heterogeneous in the classroom. The teacher modified the supports so it was just on the right level for the students so they all looked satisfied. The recognized attitude observed in the classroom afterward that the students were confident in delivering their works and has positive behavior in the classroom.

The success of the scaffolding implementation at the school is directed by the main philosophies of teaching such as differentiated instruction and constructivism. Following the philosophy of differentiated instruction, the services during the learning process are provided based on different needs of the students. The supports provided to students can be individualized and modified in terms of process, content and end product (Tomlinson, 1999, 2001). The benefit of differentiated instruction is also evident in Padmadewi and Artini (2017) that modified the learning materials for an inclusive classroom of different students in the same classroom. The benefit of giving individualized support can be seen from the quality of the students' writing as shown in the students' scores.

The success of the scaffolding was also determined by how the teacher managed the supports given to the students. The mechanism of providing supports to the students was also inspired by the philosophy of constructivism which states that students construct their understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing and reflecting on those experiences (Hein, 1991). The teaching learning process were task based and the students were allowed to experience real world literacy activities at the school. For example the students had to carry out a real observation to a rice field in order to write about how the paddies are planted, and after that they had to ask questions to farmers before they had to write a report about it. Other example was the task to write tabloid news for the school. The students had to interview people/teachers, and the results of the interview must be written in simple news to be put in the school tabloid by the students.

To be able to write news for the tabloid, the teachers had to provide students with different kinds of scaffolding. Students were provided with guided questions on how to interview the respondents. After that, based on the results of the respondents then the students wrote the news. Since the students were in grade five, the number of guided questions was also adapted so all can be done by the students. By having that kind of tasks, the students were exposed to direct experiences on how to collect information to make news. Those experiences emphasized on the process which provided real knowledge in the students' brain. In other words, these tasks allowed students to construct knowledge for themselves based on the experiences provided by their teachers during the teaching learning process.

The success of scaffolding strategies was reflected in the students' scores as assessed with different types of assessments (Table 3). When the students were assigned to finish the end part of a story read by their teacher, all of them performed good results with average score of 84.33 (out of maximum score 100). Similar results were also

found when the students were asked to write school tabloid news with the average score 84.28, and the average score was 84.66 when assessed with problem based task. All types of assessments are authentic in nature in the forms of performance tests which require students to use the language authentically.

The positive impacts of scaffolding in the teaching learning process were also proven by other researchers (Sinaga, Suhandi, and Liliarsari, 2015; Veerappan, 2011; Faraj, 2015; Ahangari, Hejazi, and Razmjou, 2014). All studies confirmed the power of scaffolding which contribute to the improvements of students' writing abilities. The management of scaffolding strategies in the classroom assists students in how they were "learning how to mean" using the target language, a term by Haliday in McKay (2006) to describe learning how to use the language.

The success of scaffolding is recognized not limited to the improvement of the students' literacy skills. The way how scaffolding was provided by the teachers also affects the success. The scaffolding must be gradually removed in accordance with the progress of the students. The key of its implementation is on the increasing support provided and its gradual removal along with the development of students' understanding until the students are able to be independent to achieve the purpose of their learning. It is confirmed by how the scaffolding is defined by Majid and Stapa (2017) as the gradual removal of a teacher's support which is provided through modeling, instructions, feedback and questioning.

The power of scaffolding is also reflected in its underlying ideology of promoting learning autonomy. Promoting learning autonomy refers to the ability to take charge of one's learning (Thanasoulas, 2016), which gave positive impacts to students (Kamberi, 2013; Hayta and Yaprak, 2013). With scaffolding, students are slowly and gradually guided to be independent and know how to take care of themselves in learning. Scaffolding activities which lead to learning autonomy allow students to have a sense of self confidence and responsibility because they are given space to decide on the issues which will guide them to increase their independence (Padmadewi, 2016). Therefore, scaffolding strategies must be all by design, and implemented in accordance with students' progress and development.

IV. CONCLUSION

Scaffolding in teaching English as a foreign language can be of many variations, and provided to students based on their needs Scaffolding in teaching English as a foreign language gave positive impacts on students' English literacy skill. It is proven by the consistent results of students' scores as assessed by different types of authentic assessments. Scaffolding also promotes students' learning autonomy which leads students to be more confident and responsible in their learning and help them learn how to mean using the language.

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