

## EXPLORING TEACHER'S SCAFFOLDING TO THE STUDENTS IN TEACHING WRITING

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### Abstract

The research entitled "Exploring Teacher's *Scaffolding* to Students in Teaching Writing" is focused at investigating teacher's ways to provide *Scaffolding* and challenges of implementing *Scaffolding* in teaching writing Descriptive text to seventh grade students in Parongpong, West Java, Indonesia. The data were collected from classroom observation, field notes, and semi-structured interview. The data obtained were transcribed and analyzed by using curriculum cycles framework (Hammond, 2001; Gibbons, 2002; Emilia, 2010). Besides, the data were also examined based on *Scaffolding* types theories (Roehler & Cantlon, 1997; Hammond, 2001; Gibbons, 2002; Walqui, 2006). The results revealed that six types of *Scaffolding* were used by the teacher in teaching writing. The most intensive *Scaffolding* was given in Building the Field and Modeling stage of the curriculum cycle, and all *Scaffolding* was reduced in the Independent Writing stage. The results also showed various ways were used by teacher to provide *Scaffolding*; asking previous lesson, providing illustration, explaining Grammar and text structure, giving students chance to participate in learning process, reading text model, and providing supportive and corrective feedback towards students' responses. Furthermore, some challenges faced by teacher in using *Scaffolding* were the amount of students, language intrusion and time constraint.

**Keywords:** scaffolding; curriculum cycle; teaching writing

### INTRODUCTION

English has four important skills that must be mastered by students; one of them is writing. As a part of language learning, writing is important because it encourages students to focus on accurate language. Porter (2004) said that writing can trigger students' language development because they try to resolve linguistic problems during writing. Besides, through writing, a teacher also helps students not only to improve their thinking ability, communication skill and linguistic knowledge, but also to develop their knowledge (Alwasilah, 2005; Brown, 2001; Saville, 2006).

In Indonesia, English writing is firstly taught in level of junior high school. As explained in *Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan* (2006), the aim of teaching English in junior high school level is to reach functional level where students can communicate in spoken and

written. Thus, it is important to learn English writing because by learning writing skill will help students to prepare their academic and professional futures. However, writing is assumed as the most difficult skill to be mastered. Writing is challenging for students since the difficulties are not only on generating and organizing ideas, but also on translating those ideas into a readable text (Gibbons, 2002). In spite of its 'difficulties, writing is possible to be taught through giving impermanent support which is called scaffolding (Pinter, 2006).

Scaffolding is a guidance used by teacher to help students reach their learning potential. The term 'Scaffolding' was firstly used by Bruner, et.al (1976) to capture the nature of support and guidance in learning. Reiser (2004) defined scaffolding as an activity where more knowledgeable person (teacher) helps learners succeed in task that would be beyond their

reach. Besides, it is also defined as a tutorial behavior that is contingent, collaborative and interactive (Walqui, 2006). In teaching and learning, the term scaffolding is used to describe a temporary system of guidance offered to the learners by the teacher, jointly co-constructed, and then removed when the learner no longer needs it (Boblett, 2012). Scaffolding represents many activities that go in the classroom teaching and teacher-learner interaction (Bolbet, 2012). Furthermore, Suherdi (2008) defined scaffolding as an instructional helps provided for the construction of learners' mastery of certain knowledge or competencies.

A number of studies on scaffolding have been done in teacher/ students interaction context such as Cotteral and Cohen (2003), Burch (2007), Priyanti (2008) and Veramuttu (2011).

The first study was conducted by Cotteral and Cohen (2003) about scaffolding for producing academic essay. The study found out how an intermediate group of English students were guided through the process of producing their first academic essay in English. The findings shows that the use of scaffolding can promotes student's anatomy, which focus on task through making task expectation explicitly and giving flexible support to students as approximate target performance. This means that by giving appropriate scaffolding, teachers are able to focus on the language and the structure to write an argumentative essay.

The second study was conducted by Burch (2007) provides a report on the impact of scaffolding young children's acquisition of literacy in primary grades. The case study explored the implementation of scaffolding in literacy learning in a first grade classroom setting. The findings showed that the implication for instruction and students learning are significant. Students who were learning to read and write from instruction could present their capabilities and they could manipulate new literacy notions in social context. Besides, by providing of scaffolding might become of the solution in teaching writing. It also letting students temporary get the skills and competencies until they could read and write independently.

The next study was conducted by Priyanti (2008) shows that the used of scaffolding is significantly effective to improve students' competence in writing paragraph. The findings show that by providing scaffolding in writing paragraph, students are able to write complete and coherent paragraph. Scaffolding also makes students more confident in delivering their ideas in writing.

The fourth study was conducted by Kasmaini (2010) shows how the implementation of scaffolding improve students' activeness in writing in SMA 15 Padang. The finding shows that scaffolding increase the students' activeness in English writing. The success of scaffolding was also appropriate with the criteria of good teaching writing where the teacher lets the students to be creative in writing, giving feedback, asking the students to rewrite and did peer correction.

The last study was conducted Veramuttu (2011) from the Multimedia University of Malaysia about the effect of scaffolding technique in journal writing among the second language learners. The findings show that by the teacher intervention, the students were moved from zone of current development to a zone of proximal development. Besides, the study also suggest that through scaffolding provided by teacher in writing, it can support journal writing to students with low English language proficiency. In conclusion, scaffolding technique would help students in developing themselves and become autonomous learners.

The present study aims to explore how teacher provides scaffolding in teaching writing to junior high school students and also to reveal teacher's challenges to help students in writing.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Historical overview of Scaffolding**

The term scaffolding firstly appeared in the literature when Wood, Bruner and Ross described the interaction between tutor and preschooler in helping them to solve a block reconstruction problem (Wood et al., 1976). In their study, the adult guided the childs through the use of appropriate support during the interactions, leading the child toward successful in compeleting the task (Boblett, 2012). Then,

scaffolding also can be defined as Wood, Bruner & Ross (1976) in Reiser (2004) as an activity when more knowledgeable person (teachers) help a learner succeed in task that would be beyond their reach. In line with Wood statement, Walqui (2006) also assumed the term scaffolding as a tutorial behaviour that is contingent, collaborative and interactive. Scaffolding is a key strategy in cognitive apprenticeship, in which students can learn by taking increasing responsibility and ownership for their role in complex problem solving with the structure from the more knowledgeable mentors or teachers (Collins, Brown & Newman, 1989 (as cited in Reiser, 2004)). Bruner was coined in Bordova & Leong (1998) that scaffolding are types of assistance which make it possible for learners to function at higher levels of their zone of proximal development (ZPD).

As some perspective above, it become the main responsibility for teachers to provide such kinds of helps. In line with this, Bruner suggested that in scaffolding, teachers do not make the task itself easier, but make it possible for students to complete the task with support (Bordova & Leong, 1998). Further, Suherdi (2008) suggests some clues related to the basic characteristics of the "scaffolding" helps: First, the activities provided in scaffolding instruction are just beyond the level of what the learners can do alone. Here, the teacher should provide capable scaffolding so that the learner can achieve (with assistance) the task that he/ she cannot complete by themselves; second, the relevance activities should be provided to the concept or competences developed. Then, Suherdi (2008) also said if careless choice of activities or material happens, it may lead students' hesitancy in taking any parts in the teaching learning processes. In conclusion, scaffolding instructions are some systematic exertions in helping students guarantee a good success in learning new concept or skills through developing students' potentials to reach the best goal (Suherdi, 2008).

Scaffolding in Pedagogic has three scales: contingent, collaborative and interactive, these three scales have six central features (Schwieter, 2010). Van Lier (2004) these features are:

- a. Continuity. It means the tasks are repeated, with variation and connected to one another.
- b. Contextual support. Exploration is needed to encourage students in a safe, supportive environment; and meaningful learning in variety of ways.
- c. Inter-subjectivity. Mutual engagement and rapport are established; there is encouragement and nonthreatening participation in a shared community of practice.
- d. Contingency. Task procedures are adjusted depending on actions of learners; contribution and utterances are oriented towards each other and may be constructed.
- e. Handover/ takeover. Teachers supervise the learner skills and confidence carefully.
- f. Flow. Skills and challenges are in balance; participants are focused on the task and are 'in tune' with each other.

Successful scaffolding consists of six actions (Wood et al, 1976; Schwieter, 2010, p. 3) and they are: a) maintaining the novice learners' attention, b) reducing variability of the task, c) realizing goals within the task, d) highlighting critical learning characteristics, e) minimizing frustration during learning development, and f) providing solutions to problems.

In the classroom, scaffolding can be assumed as a process by which a teacher provided students with a temporary framework for learning (Veeramuthu, 2011). If the scaffolding is done correctly, the students are encouraged to improve their own creativity and motivation. One of roles of teacher in teaching is becoming a tutor (Harmer, 2007) which means teachers should help student during the teaching learning process. This role is more personal when contacting occurs between teacher and student in the class. The students will feel the support and help from the teacher and it will enhance the learning atmosphere in the class (Harmer, 2007).

### **Types of Scaffolding**

The principles of types of scaffolding are synthesized from literature. There are some studies which found and explained some types of scaffolding either in general used or in teaching writing. These types of scaffolding include bridging, contextualizing, inviting students' participation, offering explanation, modeling and verifying and clarifying (Roehler & Cantlon, 1997; Hammond, 2001; Gibbons, 2002; Walqui, 2006).

**Bridging** means activity where the teacher activates students' prior knowledge before the new concept which is delivered (Walqui 2006). The aim of this type is creating a personal link through collecting information and sharing experience between the students and the lesson to relate to students' life as individual (Gibbons, 2002; Walqui, 2006).

**Contextualizing** means the activity where the teacher provides relevant illustration to connect student's daily language and their academic language (Walqui, 2006). The point of this scaffolding type is bringing complex ideas of the topic that will be given to be closer to students' experience (Hammond, 2001; Walqui, 2006).

**Inviting students' participation** means activity where the students were given chance to join the occurring process in completing task after illustration was given (Bikmaz, 2010; Walqui, 2006). This type of scaffolding sometimes almost similar with bridging type, the different is on the purpose of each type. Where bridging tend to focus on establishing students' prior knowledge to the subject matters, whereas inviting students' participation tend to focus only on students' participation only (Walqui, 2006).

Another type is **offering explanations** where the teacher giving explanations to fit the learner's emerging understanding of the new concept of knowledge (Bikmaz, 2010; Walqui, 2013). The goal of this scaffolding is to anticipate any uncertainties problems (McKenzi, 1999).

**Modeling** is where teacher models the learning behavior by giving students a situation or clear example to show what students should act, feel or think (Walqui, 2006). The goal of this scaffolding type is to develop of content

understanding and then modified by students into their personal use.

The last type is **verifying & clarifying** where the teacher checks students' understanding of the knowledge (Bikmaz, 2010; Walqui, 2006). Roehler and Cantlon (1997) professed the aim of verifying and clarifying is to check whether students' understanding is reasonable or unreasonable through giving clarification and verification. Clarification is given when students' understanding is unreasonable and verification is given when students' understanding is reasonable (Roehler and Cantlon, 1997).

### **Curriculum cycle**

In the context of teaching writing, scaffolding occurred during stages of the instruction itself. The stages are known as curriculum cycle—the principle of —genrell movement in Australia which has four cycles. Those will be elaborated below.

**Building the field stage** is a core component of critical thinking to build students' background knowledge of writing (Emilia, 2010). In classroom, sharing experience can be done before extending the knowledge through reading and writing in order to develop effective language and literacy (Hammond, 2001).

The next stage is **modeling stage** which refers to explicit explanation, analysis and discussion at text model as professed by Hammond (2001) and Emilia (2010).

The third stage is **joint construction stage** where the teacher and the students write a particular text cooperatively (Hammond, 2001; Gibbons, 2002; and Emilia 2010).

**Independent writing stage** is the last stage of curriculum cycle where the scaffolding is removed (Hammond, 2001; Gibbons, 2002; and Emilia 2010).

### **METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive design which is designed to depict the participants in an accurate way. It means that qualitative method is used in this study in order to investigate and to describe teacher's scaffolding technique in teaching writing. An English teacher who

teaches 30 students of seventh grade is involved as research participant. In gathering data, classroom observation and interview have been employed in this study. The data obtained in this research were transcripts of video recording, field notes and teacher's interview.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Based on the analyzed data from classroom observation and interview, the research finds six types of scaffolding used during teaching writing. The study also figures out that the teacher used various techniques to provide scaffolding in each stage of curriculum cycle. Further, the research also finds three challenges of providing scaffolding in teaching writing.

### **Teacher's ways to provide scaffolding in teaching writing in each curriculum stage**

This section will discuss the ways a teacher provides scaffolding in each stage of the curriculum cycle including building the field, modeling, joint construction, and independent writing.

**Building the Field Stage -** Scaffolding used by teacher include: bridging was done through asking students about previous lesson; contextualizing was done through providing relevant illustration (Walqui, 2006); inviting students' participation was done through inviting students to participate in learning process; offering explanation was done through explaining Grammar; and verifying & clarifying students' understanding were done through Giving supportive feedback and praising (verification) & giving corrective feedback (clarification) toward students' responses (Roehler and Cantlon, 1997). These activities are applicable and its can support the purpose of Building the Field which is to build students' background knowledge about the topic they are going to write (Hammond, 2001; Gibbons, 2002; Emilia, 2010).

**Modeling Stage -** Scaffolding used by teacher include : contextualizing was implemented through Giving illustration before giving a text; modeling was done through reading text model; offering explanation was done through explaining text Structure (Walqui, 2006); inviting students' participation

was done through Inviting students to join in accomplishing a task; and verifying & clarifying were implemented through Giving supportive feedback and praising (verification) & Giving corrective feedback (clarification) toward students' responses (Roehler and Cantlon, 1997). Those activities are applicable and also relevant with the idea professed by Walqui (2006) that in classroom activities, modeling can be applied by describing, comparing, summarizing, and evaluating.

**Joint Construction Stage -** Scaffolding used by teacher include: offering explanation was done through re-explaining text Structure (Walqui, 2006), modeling was done through reading some ideas before constructing into a text, inviting students' participation was done through giving students a chance to accomplish task, and verifying& clarifying students' understanding were implemented through Giving supportive feedback and praising (Verification) and Giving corrective feedback (Clarification) toward students' responses (Roehler and Cantlon, 1997). Those activities are applicable and also relevant with the purpose of this stage which is to reduce some responsibility of the teacher in constructing a text and to build critical thinking of the students (Hammond, 2001; Gibbons, 2002; Emilia, 2010).

**Independent Writing Stage -** In this stage, Scaffolding used by teacher include: inviting students' participation was done through inviting students to read their writing work, and verifying students' understanding was done through giving corrective feedback (Clarification) toward students' inappropriate answer (Roehler and Cantlon, 1997). Those activities confirmed Hammond (2001) and Gibbons' idea (2002) that the aim of independent writing is to ensure students' ability whether students have developed their understanding to be able to write their own text confidently.

### **Teacher challenges**

According to the analyzed data from classroom observation and interview, three challenges were faced by the teacher such as amount of the students in the class, the language instruction during the teaching learning process, and time

constraint. These challenges show that the teacher has to improve appropriate scaffolding and this is relevant to the suggestion that teacher must be expert pedagogues or communicator to scaffold effectively (Hogan and Pressley, 1997).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the research concludes that there were six types of scaffolding used by teacher in teaching writing Descriptive text. Those six types of scaffolding were bridging, contextualizing, inviting students' participation, offering explanation, modeling and verifying and clarifying. All Scaffolding occurred in each stage of curriculum cycles. This is irrelevant with Hammond (2001), Gibbons (2002) and Emilia (2010) who professed that in independent writing stage, scaffolding is totally removed. This finding appeared due to the time limitation of meeting. As Suggested by Emilia (2010) that the process of curriculum cycles should be done minimally 12 meetings especially to teach writing. However this study only used 6 meetings in the learning process. Next, Teacher used various ways to implement scaffolding during the four stages of curriculum cycle. The results also show that the teacher faced some challenges in providing scaffolding which are amount of the students in the class, the language instruction during the teaching learning process, and time constraint.

it is highly recommended for further study to involve larger number of subject in different context to get richer and more reliable data and further study can be focused on finding out how the good scaffolding should be arranged, since various scaffolding is possible to reveal in each learning-cycle, it possibly to ascertain a good arrangement of scaffolding in teaching-learning process.

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