

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RECIPROCAL SCAFFOLDING TECHNIQUE ON STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to investigate the effectiveness of using the reciprocal scaffolding technique on students' writing skills and the students' responses toward the implementation of the technique in the teaching and learning process at the second-year student of State Junior High School 1 Kutamakmur, North Aceh. The samples for this study were drawn in two customized groups using a random sampling approach with class VIII/b as the experimental group and class VIII/d as the control group forming a total of 52 students. The data for this study were gathered using a test and a questionnaire. The data were analyzed to determine the difference in the t-test scores between the two groups. The statistical results showed that the control group's mean pre-test score was 50.15, which was lower than the experimental group's 51.69. Meanwhile, the mean score of the experimental group in the post-test was 70.88, which was higher than the control group's 58.34. The significant value for both groups in the post-test was 0.00, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It indicates that teaching writing while employing reciprocal scaffolding more effectively improves the students' writing than teaching without it. In addition, the questionnaire that was presented to the experimental group revealed that the students gave positive responses toward the use of reciprocal scaffolding techniques in teaching writing.

Keywords: *reciprocal scaffolding technique, writing skill.*

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INTRODUCTION

School-based Curriculum (KTSP) has been implemented in Indonesia for junior and senior high school levels. Although the curriculum has now been updated, this previous curriculum is still in use in many schools. Students in the eighth grade are required to be able to write in the style of description and recall, among other texts, based on the KTSP (School-based Curriculum) of English for Junior High School. This skill necessitates mastery of language elements such as grammatical features, writing content, vocabulary, and the ability to arrange material in a logical manner (Depdiknas, 2006).

However, it is not easy for students in Indonesia and especially in Aceh to learn English, especially writing because a lot of things should be learned, including content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, etc. Additionally, in learning writing skills, some problems are also faced by the students regarding the complex grammatical structures in English. Isa et al. (2017) proposed that not only about grammar, they also faced some difficulties in terms of delivering the content of their composition into good writing which is caused by the difference of their mother tongue and English.

Regarding the types of learners' problems in learning writing skills as mentioned above, the researcher observed the teaching and learning problems that were faced by the students in Kutamakmur, especially in State Junior High School 1 Kutamakmur, North Aceh, on October, 4th, 2016 to obtain the preliminary data, and the researcher learned that the majority of the students struggled to write in English. They have difficulties in starting to write the content and generate ideas into a good paragraph. Furthermore, a lack of mastery in grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics makes it even more difficult for them to produce coherent sentences. In order to pass the English subject, the students in the eighth grade should attain the minimum standard criteria score of 70. In fact, the students writing tests showed that many of them had great difficulty in reaching it because of some problems of writing mentioned above.

To develop English language abilities, English teachers have employed a variety of methods and techniques of teaching and learning, including conventional methods, communicative language instruction, and cooperative learning among others (Krashen, 1982). However, many English teachers still do not use the appropriate

teaching technique and method in order to increase language performance, particularly in writing skills because they do not understand it well. The implementation of appropriate methods and techniques in teaching and learning English is an important thing to consider. The Indonesian government, educational institutions, and other parties related to this issue also provide the solution by changing and upgrading the curriculum in order to make the students in Indonesia enable to master English language skills. They also provide some training in order to improve the quality of the English teachers. But ironically, the fact in the field showed that most of the students are still low in mastering the English subject especially in writing skill.

Referring to the studies concerning challenges in teaching and learning writing, the researcher tried to apply another technique in teaching writing. For example, one way to increase students' writing skills is by having feedback from the teacher and peers and also brainstorming and making drafts before composing writing. As a result, the researcher believes that reciprocal scaffolding is one of the learning approaches that may be used to teach writing skills. This strategy is recommended for teaching writing since it is an effective learning tool. Scaffolding allows pupils to go beyond what they could do on their own. It can be provided by teachers, more capable classmates, or through learning resources. According to Fields and Marsh (2017), the goal of scaffolding is to enable students with lower anxiety levels to become more open and involved in their learning so that they can progress. Furthermore, Holton and Clarke (2006) argue that scaffolding as a strategy can help learners with their future independent learning.

Previous research has demonstrated that this reciprocal scaffolding strategy is a helpful, supportive, guiding, and engaging technique that teachers may utilize and select while teaching English, particularly when teaching writing skills (Ahangari et al., 2014; Lin & Samuel, 2013; Majid et al., 2015; Rachael, 2013; Yasinta, 2014). They report that the scaffolding technique improves students writing skills.

Based on the elaboration above the writer conducted research about the effectiveness of reciprocal scaffolding technique in writing class. She intended to examine the theory of scaffolding that was done by some researchers as mentioned above. The results of this

research provide teachers with a good alternative for teaching techniques that can be implemented in senior and junior high schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Oshima and Hogue (1997), in order to build writing skills, it is necessary to study and practice. It implies that it's crucial to remember that writing is a process, not a result, for both native speakers and new English learners. Because writing is a progressive activity, kids have already been thinking about what they are going to say and how they are going to express it when they first write something down. The pupils then go over what they've written and make modifications and revisions once they've finished writing. As a result, writing is never a one-step process; rather, it is a multi-step process. The majority of pupils believe that writing is a tough talent to master. However, with the right strategy and engaging teaching methodology, it can be a simple and pleasurable pastime. It implies that it's crucial to remember that writing is a process, not a result, for both native speakers and new English learners. Because writing is a progressive activity, kids have already been thinking about what they are going to say and how they are going to express it when they first write something down. The pupils then go over what they've written and make modifications and revisions once they've finished writing.

As a result, writing is never a one-step process; rather, it is a multi-step process. The majority of pupils believe that writing is a tough talent to master. However, with the right strategy and engaging teaching methodology, it can be a simple and pleasurable pastime. As a result, the instructor should make the classroom livelier by encouraging students to share their views with their classmates. The adoption of suitable and fascinating teaching techniques is thought to have a favorable influence on the second-year students' difficulties in acquiring writing skills at State Junior High School 1 Kutamakmur, North Aceh. Scaffolding, as one of the most widely used teaching and learning methods in the educational profession, is thought to have a critical role in assisting learners' understanding processes. This notion is based on Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural approach, which examines society's significant contributions to individual development. It asserts that learners gained information

and new tactics of the world and society through socializing and engaging with others. Scaffolding, a metaphor-based on the concept that children require the supervision and support of adults or more capable peers to promote their learning growth before they can operate as independent agents, is taken from the work of Wood et al. (1976).

Scaffolding is defined by Chang et al. (2002) as a support method for children's convergent development domains. It is based on a regulated provision of assistance by a capable adult to alleviate the cognitive difficulties that children confront when they are unable to solve issues at their current level of development. It is critical that such assistance be just temporary. Scaffolding fades when children's abilities improve with the help, and they are finally able to perform on their own. Collins et al. (1989) define scaffolding as "a form of cooperative problem-solving effort by teachers and students with the express purpose for the students to assume as much of the work on his own as feasible, as soon as possible." The notion of scaffolding is used to identify and explain the function of adults or more capable peers in assisting children's learning and development, according to Stone (1998). It may not provide accurate indicators as to how the educational process will unfold, but it does provide insight into the relationship between adults and children. However, in order to properly utilize scaffolding, a teacher must first discover the disparities between what each student can do independently and what he or she can do with supervision, i.e. the student's zone of proximal growth (Gaskin et al., 1997).

Scaffolding is divided into three forms by Holton and Clarke (2006) in terms of agency: expert, reciprocal, and self-scaffolding. The researcher focuses on reciprocal scaffolding in this study. Reciprocal scaffolding is a technique that can assist and support learners in solving learning problems, particularly in writing, completing tasks, and achieving the goal of learning beyond their unassisted effort by collaborating with more capable peers. The group can benefit from each other's experiences and expertise in this instance. Students collaborate with their peers during this procedure. In their quest for knowledge, they share information. They are working in the exchange of information to reach a consensus on how to best express their expertise in a learning community. Each group member shared the scaffolding, which was continually changing as

the groups worked on a job. For the first time, the person actively transferring knowledge provides scaffolding, and the one passively absorbing information receives reciprocal scaffolding. Students reciprocally scaffold their knowledge building in this sort of scaffolding by engaging in the six types of acts listed below: supplying information, offering encouragement, providing a proposal, providing a reflection, providing confirmation, and finally, providing an explanation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Because the researcher presented the data using statistical analysis, the approach used in this study was descriptive quantitative in nature. Meanwhile, in this situation, the researcher picked and concentrated on an intact group pre-test – post-test experimental design. The individuals were separated into two groups by the researcher: experimental and control groups. Reciprocal scaffolding was used to teach writing skills to the kids in the experimental group. The students in the control group, on the other hand, would not be taught writing skills using the Reciprocal scaffolding approach.

Participants

This study's participants are second-year students of State Junior High School 1 in Kutamakmur, North Aceh. In the academic year 2016/2017, the school has four classes with a total of 103 pupils. Meanwhile, in this study, students in level VIII/b served as the experimental group, which included 26 students, while students in level VIII/d served as the control group, which included 26 students. As a result, there were a total of 52 students in this study's sample. Because most of the samples in this study have almost identical characteristics in several areas, such as linguistic background and prior language learning experiences, they were classified as homogenous. The sample of the research was selected through sampling through the lottery technique.

Data Collection Technique

The researcher employed pre and post-testing to obtain data. In addition, a questionnaire was employed as part of the investigation. A test was administered to see if the pupils' writing skills had

improved by asking them to write a descriptive piece on their own. As a result, the content assessed was based on a syllabus or curriculum. The exam was adapted from an English book for junior high school students in second grade as well as internet sources. According to Heaton (1988), writing skill rating scale, there are five components that should be stressed when evaluating pupils' writing performance: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

Data Analysis Technique

Separately, the results from the test and the questionnaire were evaluated. Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 17 was used to evaluate the data acquired from the pre-test and post-test. These statistical approaches were utilized to compare the scores of the experiment and control groups using mean, standard deviation, and the t-test. The normality test was used in the data analysis procedure for both the pre-test and post-test.

Meanwhile, the goal of the survey was to gather information from students regarding their reactions to the use of reciprocal scaffolding as a teaching strategy in writing. After the students received therapy, the experimental group (students in grade VIII/b of SMPN 1 Kutamakmur, North Aceh) received a questionnaire with 15 items. On the basis of the Likert scale, the questionnaire scoring system was implemented. Sudjana (2009, p. 43) suggested percentage formula was used to process the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The results of statistically measuring the tests were calculated and compared using the t-test statistical process. As previously stated, the level of significance for this sociological study was 0.05. If the t-test t -table, H_a is accepted as a criterion for assessing the hypothesis, it suggests that there is a large accomplishment gap between students who are taught writing through reciprocal scaffolding and those who are not. If, on the other hand, t -test $>$ t -table, H_0 is accepted, it suggests that there is no significant difference in success between pupils taught writing through reciprocal scaffolding and those who are not.

According to the statistical results, the Control Group's mean pre-test score is 50.15, which is lower than the Experimental Group's mean pre-test score of 51.69. While the post-test statistical results of the Experimental and control groups revealed that the Experimental group's mean score was 70.88, which was greater than the control group's 58.34. In the post-test, the significant value of the group and control groups was 0.00, which is less than 0.05. It indicates that H_0 has been rejected and H_a has been approved. It indicates that teaching writing using the reciprocal scaffolding approach is more effective than teaching writing without it in terms of improving students' writing skills. Furthermore, a set of questionnaires including 15 statements was presented to 26 students in the experimental group to determine their reactions to the application of reciprocal scaffolding in teaching writing competence. The students' answers to the use of reciprocal scaffolding in teaching writing competence were favorable, according to the findings of the surveys.

Discussions

Based on the findings revealed in chapter one, students had a lot of trouble in learning writing prior to using the reciprocal scaffolding approach. For instance, they struggle in starting the writing, generating the ideas to form paragraphs, and having a non-sufficient vocabulary and poor grammatical mastery. All of these difficulties tend to make the students not being able to write a good text.

The reciprocal scaffolding strategy was chosen as a way to help students in enhancing their writing skills. The use of reciprocal scaffolding was supposed to help pupils improve their writing skills by giving some assistance from teachers or more proficient classmates. In the group, students support each other in looking for the ideas, choosing the right vocabulary and grammar, and also organizing the paragraph.

According to the findings of the pre-tests and post-tests, the reciprocal scaffolding approach did considerably enhance the students' writing skills, particularly in a descriptive setting. In the post-test, all elements of writing were improved, including content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Furthermore, the most progressive aspect made by the students in those five writing elements was the content and organization. This phenomenon

occurred because of the frequent use of discussion during the treatment sessions. In the group of work, they discuss, shared, and evaluate their personal ideas which would be developed into a descriptive text. During the discussion, every member looked for ideas then discussed how to organize them into a well-organized descriptive text.

On the contrary, the lowest progressive aspect was the mechanics. The students made a lot of mistakes in using commas, capital letters, and points. These mistakes could happen since most of the students did not put much attention to the mechanical aspects of writing.

Furthermore, the researcher attempted to link the findings of these studies to the findings of other researchers who had undertaken similar studies on the use of scaffolding in the teaching of writing skills. The findings are consistent with Yasinta (2014), who stated that through scaffolding, the writing skill can improve significantly. It is believed that the usage of scaffolding in the teaching and learning process, especially in writing, will give a positive contribution. Because of that, the researcher concluded that scaffolding can be an effective way to help the students improve their writing skills.

The finding of this research was also compatible with Dewi (2015) who stated that the use of scaffolding can improve students' writing skills in terms of five aspects of writing. It's happened because the student could write the writing easily after the scaffolding treatment. This research is also consistent with Rachael (2013) who found that students will write better if given the correct and sufficient support.

The research is also in accordance with Ahangari et al. (2014) who presented that scaffolding gave a positive impact on students' summary writing. It is also in accordance with Yusuf (2014) who claimed that the use of scaffolding in teaching recount text leads to the improvement of students writing performance. Moreover, after being treated with scaffolding, the students wrote English text more purposefully and they can convey the context of the text properly.

In line with other researchers, Wulandari et al. (2014) also found that the scaffolding technique can improve students' attention to the lessons and class cooperation which is also compatible with this research. The students' ability was also improved in developing the information or ideas appropriate with the topic provided,

organizing the text, using vocabulary precisely and appropriately with the topic, using the correct grammatical patterns to text, spelling the word correctly, and using the right punctuation.

The study conducted by Majid et al. (2015) also supports the present study. They summarized that the use of blended scaffolding strategies in writing can improve social interaction among students and the writing process and performance in learning. This research is also consistent with Bodrova and Leong (1998) who stated that the students' writing skills had become much better after applying the scaffolding technique.

Furthermore, by giving various scaffolds in group work, students in the experimental class performed better. This is in line with Lin and Samuel (2013) who believed that several scaffolds used in peer responses sessions could provide assistance during student interactions, as well as bridge the students' current developmental progress to a higher level of thinking, improving their revisions and writing ability.

The results of the students' response toward the use of reciprocal scaffolding technique in writing from the questionnaire, found that most students gave positive responses toward the use of reciprocal scaffolding in teaching writing descriptive text. The result shows that most of the students could help each other in the teaching-learning process, especially the students who understand better could help their peers in expressing their ideas and opinions in writing. This finding is in accordance with Prabandani (2016) who found the students' response toward scaffolding implementation was good, students gave positive responses and also enjoyed learning writing through scaffolding. It means that scaffolding successfully helps the students' problems in writing. Because students were expected to create their arguments from particular motions, this activity promoted their inventiveness in exploring the language. The movements were familiarized with them so that they could write about the themes with ease. For these reasons, it could be summarized that reciprocal scaffolding is the technique that is effective to facilitate teaching English writing.

The results of this study have revealed that the reciprocal scaffolding technique can provide a positive effect on student writing skills. However, the generalizability of this conclusion is subject to some limitations. Firstly, the sample sizes were relatively small in

both the experimental and control groups. As hypothesis testing is proven more accurate for larger sample sizes, future research can use more than one class for each group of participants in their research. Secondly, the study only investigated the results of brief teaching effect and therefore the effect of one-semester classes might be different. Finally, the questionnaire used in this research for the students in the experimental group was not adequately validated using either exploratory factor analysis (EFA) or confirmatory factor analysis. Therefore, it is recommended that future study relies more on a questionnaire design that is based on a more proper scale development process.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After conducting an experiment with second-grade students at State Junior High School 1 Kutamakmur, the researcher discovered that the reciprocal scaffolding approach considerably enhanced students' writing skills in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. According to the results of the data analysis, the experimental group's score was greater than the control group's score. It may be concluded that teaching writing utilizing the reciprocal scaffolding approach improves students' writing skills more effectively than teaching writing without the reciprocal scaffolding technique.

The results of the students' replies to the questionnaire demonstrate that they were enthusiastic about the use of reciprocal scaffolding in the teaching of writing skills. The results of the survey indicated that students can share their thoughts and opinions in group work. Students might also assist one another in the production of descriptive text. In addition, the students believed that reciprocal scaffolding encouraged them to learn to write.

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