# SCAFFOLDING STRATEGY IN TEACHING WRITING AND ITS CHALLENGES

Oleh:
**Widiana[1), Agus Husein As Sabiq[2)**
[1,2] Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan, IAIN Purwokerto
[1] Email: widiana2310@gmail.com
[2] Email: husein@iainpurwokerto.ac.id

**Abstract**

This study aimed to investigate the scaffolding strategy in teaching writing recount text and describe the teacher's challenges in implementing scaffolding strategy in teaching writing recount text and her efforts in dealing with the problems that occurred in teaching writing. This qualitative research investigated the English teacher and the students of 10th grade (X-AK 2) of a Vocational High School in Banyumas Regency, Indonesia. This research used triangulation of data to collect the data, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. The researchers used Miles & Huberman's model to analyze the data collected. The outcomes of this research showed that the teacher used a scaffolding strategy to develop students' critical thinking and high-level thinking skills. The process consisted of four curriculum cycles, such as field development, modeling, joint construction, and independent writing. This research also found that the teacher encountered some challenges, such as various levels of students' academic achievements, the lack of interest among students in engaging classroom activities, students' lack of vocabulary, and the difficulty of motivating them. However, the teacher tried to respond to the challenges by looking at students' ZPD on previous assessments, making icebreaking, encouraging students' engagement, and facilitating them to use the dictionary effectively.

**Keywords:** *Scaffolding Strategy, Teaching Writing, Recount Text, Teacher's Challenges.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Usually, writing is complicated and challenging. In reality, they don't understand how to make a choice of words and bring words together. In writing, the choice of a word depends on the purpose and the particular situation that is being used in creating a text (Deane, 2018; Pratiwi, 2015). Scholars have different perspectives in defining writing skills. However, Yi (2009) classified writing skills into three major approaches, namely product/text-oriented, process/cognitive-oriented, and reader/genre-oriented. The product/text-oriented approach focuses on the surface of sentence structures, highlighting the cohesion, and readability of text (Hyland, 2013). The process/cognitive-oriented approach tends to focus on what the writer does during writing (Silva, 2012). Whereas the reader/genre-oriented emphasizes the constraints of form and content which the writer recognizes the context for whom the text will be generated (Tribble, 2010).

Scholars have different perspectives in dividing the steps while begin to write. Those steps are planning (prewriting), drafting, editing (revising) (Harmer, 2007), and publishing (Johnson, 2008; Lander & Brown, 1995). Further, Coffin et al. (2003) explained that the writing process includes eight different stages. They are pre-writing, planning, drafting, reflecting, peer or tutor reviewing, revising, and editing/proofreading. In the planning or prewriting stage, students are guided to find their ideas, collect information, and organize their thoughts. In the next stage, students develop the meaning of using their ideas and information that they have collected in the previous stage. Students also can remove or add information to narrow down the broad focus. Students look for peers' responses while a text is under development in the stage of peer review. The students should reflect and re-read what they created and how well their plans correspond. In the editing stage, students focus on sentence, punctuation, spelling, and subject, and predicate agreement. The final paper must be freely accessible to the public in the final stage (Coffin et al., 2003; Williams, 2005).

In many classrooms, students are asked to write simply to show their knowledge of meaningful contexts reality, with little understanding of the reader outside the teacher-examination (Hyland, 2013). Students will be passive and distracted. After all, they do not understand the material provided by the teacher because they think it is challenging and complicated, so they will become less attentive and not concentrate during the lesson. This problem commonly arises in learning exercises, which may be triggered by a lack of interaction between the teacher and the student. The teacher only discusses the materials with the students, without any care that the students understand the materials or not (Kaur et al., 2020). This issue can be resolved when the teacher has adopted an appropriate strategy in teaching writing.

One of the most unique strategies is the scaffolding strategy. Scaffolding is clearly

described as the ability to catch the role of an expert in designing insightful environments to assist students(Gibbons, 2015; Hammond, 2001). The students are guided to construct about what students have learned to get into something that they don't know about. It creates cooperative learning which promotes collaboration and conversation between peer group; concrete prompts, questioning; mentoring; visual cues, or modeling (Orey, 2010).

Scaffolding is derived from a sociocultural theory developed by Vygotsky (1978) who suggested that in the process of learning and development, students need the help of a 'more knowledgeable other' adult or peer besides what they can do by themselves. In other words, it is called a *zone of proximal development* (ZPD)(Chaiklin, 2003; Orey, 2010; Shabani et al., 2010). Learning will occur if there is an interaction between teacher and students, and among the students (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011; Hamzah & Rozimela, 2018).The key purpose of scaffolding in teaching is the ZPD's view of the transition of responsibility for the task to the student (Mercer & Fisher, 1992; van de Pol et al., 2010). They underline the teacher-learners cooperation in building information and knowledge, and skills.

The metaphor of scaffolding is considered restricted by other scholars compared to the idea of ZPD. The temporary support is represented as a metaphor for scaffolding. Since it offers a forum on which learners can develop the next stage of understanding and knowledge (Boblett, 2012; van de Pol et al., 2010; Verenikina, 2003). Scaffolding describes support for the learning of both content and language (Mahan, 2020). It provides an image of how new learning is based on what is already learned, while scaffolding is always provided by the instructor, and can also be provided by a more competent peer or peer group.

It was intended to provide students with procedures or measures to create concepts, sentences, and paragraphs. In this practice, the teachers step by step provide the students with adequate instruction so that the students can learn the procedure, and the teachers eventually give up the help of the students in order to pass the responsibility to the learners to complete the assignment (Faraj, 2015). The support given for each student in the classroom could varyin each phase (Padmadewi & Artini, 2019), so the teacher must pay attention to the difficulties that the students face. In certain cases, the instruction given to students must be distinguished according to the particular issues of the students, and teachers must adjust the materials in order to meet the appropriate understanding of the students.The students' engagement in scaffolding strategy is one of the key advantages. The learner does not passively listen to the information given, but instead, the learner builds on prior knowledge and develops new knowledgethrough the prompting of the teachers. Scaffolding offers a chance to give constructive feedback to ELL students (Yau, 2007).

Browne et al. (2009) proposed four elements to be integrated into the syllabus to develop a critical thinking scaffold, namely shared understanding of the scaffold, expert modeling, ongoing assessment, and deconstruction of the scaffold. In an educational environment, scaffolding refers to a temporary and supportive framework established by an instructor to help students carry out a mission that they would otherwise not have been able to achieve at all or as easily (Weinstein & Preiss, 2017). Scaffolding can also support students on an emotional level by minimizing agitation and allowing them to become independent learners without stress (Murray & McPherson, 2006; O'Connor et al., 2014). Coe (2011) argued that scaffolded writing could develop students' critical thinking that students need to demonstrate on a concluding assignment into a comprehensive sequence of smaller assignments, from papers that use relatively basic skills, such as summarizing small pieces of text, to much more complicated skills, such as analyzing the positions of others, creating their own conclusions on issues.

Dewi (2013) has summarized the curriculum cycles in Scaffolding instruction in the context of teaching writing into four stages. Those are building the field, modeling, joint construction, and independent writing. The field building stage is the first cycle as a crucial factor in improving students' writing backgrounds. In the classroom, it is possible to share experience in order to develop successful language and literacy (Hammond, 2001)before expanding awareness by reading and writing. The next step is modeling, which refers to the step of describing, analyzing, and discussing the text model. The third stage is collaborative construction stepin which thestudents and the teachers jointly compose a specific text (Kamil, 2018). The last stage is independent writing, which refers to the stage where scaffolding is taken off.

Researchers found that students needed a lot of guidance or scaffolding to write compositions in English. It was believed that scaffolding could be given in different ways to facilitate the teaching and learning of writing skills (Kaur et al., 2020). This study aimed to investigate the Scaffolding strategy administered by the teacher in teaching writing recount text for $10^{th}$-grade students and to describe the teacher's challenges in implementing this strategy.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted using qualitative approach and emphasizing a case study design to investigate the use of scaffolding strategy

in teaching recount textin a vocational high school Banyumas Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. This study also aimed to explore the teacher's challenges while using the strategy and her efforts in overcing the problems. The primary sources were the English teacher and 32 students of 10th grade.The teacher apllied this strategy to facilitate students' learning in writing recount text.

The data collection techniques carried out in this study were a triangulation of data namely observation, interviews, and documentation. To collect relevant data, the researchers used the participant observation (passive participation) that the researchers presented at the scene of the action but did not engage or participate. The instruments were the observation checklist and field notes. The observation checklist was used to collect information on the scaffolding technique applied by the teacher and the field notes used to write the results of the observation. Besides, a semi-structured interview was conducted to support the data from observation. Documentation has been used by researchers to collect data on relevant research subjects such as images of learning events, lesson plan, and documents related to scaffolding strategy in teaching writing recount text.

The techniques of data analysis in this study used Miles & Huberman's models that are data reduction, data presentation, and verification. Data reduction is intended to summarize the data for this research in order to ensure that this research is understood.After compiling and reducing the data, the researchers have presented the transcribed data in the form of a recount. It should be focused on the formulation of the research problem in the process of reducing and presenting the data. The researcher used a temporary conclusion and a final conclusion to validate the results. The conclusion began from the beginning of the study, following the compilation of the data by a temporary conclusion. In other terms, the conclusion was constantly evaluated and tested for validity in order to draw a perfect conclusion.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher found some research findings to meet the objectives of the research. In general, it would be concluded in three discussions: 1) The implementation of scaffolding strategy in teaching writing recount text, 2) teacher's challenges, and 3) teacher's efforts dealing with the problems occurred. The result findings could be classified as follows:

**Teaching Writing Recount Text Using Scaffolding Strategy**

The environment of the classroom was calm, and the teacher asked the students to explore their own thought skills. The teacher presented the recount text video, and the students wrote everything on their minds to the notes of the book.

When the students addressed the group discussion, the instructor ordered the students to improve their knowledge of recount text using their own words.

The main activities of scaffolding strategy in teaching writing recount text consist of several kinds. The researcher found that there was a kind of scaffolding techniques which was used by the teacher in teaching writing recount text. The teacher used the form of scaffolding to develop students' critical thinking. The students were given a case model through teaching aid and they were asked to doquestion and answersactivity which led them to solveproblems.

The use of teaching media was assisted in implementing these scaffolding techniques. During the choice of educational media, the teacher should acknowledge that both teachers and students are assisted by the media in teaching-learning. The media used were a white board and LCD projector.The teacher used LCD projector to show the short video and white board to write students" ideas based on the video. Based on the interviewed with the students, two students said that the video helped them to get understanding recount text. As one of the students said, *"It make easier because when we watch the video, we can see what happened easily"*.

The learning of certain tasks has shown that the instructor has taken four steps. The teacher used students' activities based on curriculum cycles of writing, namely building the field, modeling, joint construction, andindependent writing text. The learning process showed that the kind of scaffolding strategy developed critical thinking and high order thinking skills. Often the teacher restructured the questions in order to have tailored responses. The student's high-level reasoning skills were stimulated through the graduation of questions. The students ability to solve the problems depended on teacher's ability to answer the key questions(Padmadewi & Artini, 2019).
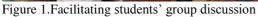
In building the field stage, the teacher was particularly good at attacking the interest of the students. It is focused on the teaching process that has been carried out in the classroom. This stage was connected to the brainstorming process with visual assistance. The teacher reported:

> *"There are preparation to teach students with scaffolding strategy such as prepare physic and mental, manage the class in discussion time, the correct media, reward as the gift to increase their enthusiastic, and also writing tools".*

This shows that the procedure carried out by the teacher in the implementation of the scaffolding strategy in the teaching of writing recount text has gone well. This success indicator can be seen from the interest of students to review recount text. However, the students were pretty calm at this point. When the teacher asked questions, not all of

the students answered them. According to the observation, the students were ashamed that they could not respond with English, so the students were calm and not too talkative. Luckily, the task of the teacher at this point was a good one to direct the participation of students. The main point of this stage was that the teacher showed the students a short video and asked the students to write down what they saw based on the video. The teacher helped students to walk around to review their work.

The teacher found the students' baseline knowledge on this stage to figure out what they already know. To determine the ZPD, the teacher needed to put the students in whole class interaction. The teacher walked around the classroom and guidance to discuss about the video which related with the material of recount text. The teacher demonstrated to the class what the purpose of recount text shortly and students were asked to tell what their ideas about recount text. From this practice the teacher knew which students belong to upper and lower levels. During walked around, the teacher wrote eight the students' names who were active in the classroom interaction or students who could understand easily when the teacher gave instruction, example, question or initiation. The students who had high ZPD would be leader of groups. Each group had one student who could help her/his friends by practicing discussion in group. By grouping the students according to ZPD can facilitate the teacher in providing assistance to groups who have not been able to learn independently.



Figure 1.Facilitating students' group discussion

Based on Vygotsky's principle of ZPD, the distance between the real levels of development is determined by independent problem-solving and the level of future development as determined by problem-solving under adult supervision or collaboratively with more competent peers. The teacher wrote the names of the students who were involved at this point (Shabani et al., 2010).

The next step is the modeling step.Based on the observation, the teacher divided into eight group discussion with eight leaders that had written by the teacher before. The teacher asked the students to make a group and set the position based on number of group. They shared their own thoughts, perspectives and ideas on the substance or principle of the text and had it applied to and associated with their lives. The teacher also gave suggestions and feedback, led them somewhat to the links, but they would recognize the material for themselves once they arrived.

The teacher introduced the students to a model of the recount text genre they would write. In this point, the study of the genre by modelling a text on the topic of the course was specifically focused. The teacher showed a recount text illustration for each groupand shared it. The students were asked to interpret the text in Indonesian. The teacher also showed the students the actual steps in writing. In this point, the students were prepared to write by concentrating on the genre of the text, the social function or recount text purposes, the graphical structure, and the grammatical characteristics of recount text.

The teacher provided the opportunity to share students' thoughts with the teacher. The teacher gave feedback to the students who were confident enough to raise their hands to speak about the teacher's instruction. The students followed the instruction from the teacher. The teacher has shown the meaning, the structure, and the language characteristics of recount text. The main point of this stage was that the teacher gave the students a 'model text' so that the student could imagine that they were supposed to create the text. The teacher could support the students by pointing out the language that was widely used in this form of text.

In the third step, the joint construction stage, the teacher used think pair share method. It aimed to collaborative the scaffolding strategy where students worked together to solve a problem or make a recount text an assigned writing. Even though, it worked in group, but it helped students to think individually about recount text, share ideas with group members and built oral communication skill. The teacher first needed to access the extended of the students' knowledge and understanding of the field. The teacher was monitoring and supporting students as they worked through the ways: the teacher asked the students to think about what they knew or had learned about recount text which would be their theme; each student should be paired with another student of their group; the students shared their thinking each other. The teacher expanded the "share" into a whole class discussion.

The teacher asked the students to discuss about the text that the teacher was given. The students tried to analyze about the text and shared each other. In this stage, the teacher gave ice breaking toward the students to make movement. The students looked happy and laugh freely. Based on the researcher observed, the researched looked the students felt confused because they did not understand the recount text, but the teacher was active to walk around the groups to guide the

students. Some groups were asked to the teacher about the topic. The teacher guided them patiently and asked students to discuss then write the result of discussion into a paper. The class was quiet good of group discussion and became livelier after the teacher gave ice breaking.



Figure2. Giving an ice breaking

As stated by Hammond (2001), the joint construction activities are applicable and also important for the purpose of this point, which is to reduce some responsibility of the teacher in the construction of the text and to build the critical thinking of the students. Students shared the content with friends to create a strong text and broader knowledge. The teacher instructed them as well as possible (Kamil, 2018).

There was no difference with the other stage in the last step, i.e. independent writing text, of using scaffolding strategy to teach writing recount text. Students were required to operate individually on the basis of their own abilities. The students were asked to write a recount text in free theme based on their experiences. There were different topics for the whole class to avoid plagiarism. It depended on their ability of writing recount text in English. Based on the observation, the teacher was discipline for the time and also gave guidance for the students who were difficult in progress of discussion. The teacher warned the noisy students and asked students to be focus in writing a recount text. The students seemed discipline because they enjoyed the learning process. One of the studentssaid:

> "*I am happy because we are required to be independent in learning. However, we also given structuredmaterial first*"

As stated byMulatsih (2011), at this point, the teaching process and activities in the classroom allow the students to incorporate their own knowledge about schematic structure and grammar, to produce written texts which approximate genre control, to read other genre examples outside the classroom and to feel confident in writing the genre in situations outside the classroom.After that, the teacher did not advise the students to rewrite the text but asked the students to present the discussion in a group. Often, they were checked by the teacher. At least, the teacher checked all the contents of the recount text presented and asked the

students to find out how well the students understood the learning process.



Figure 3. Group presentation

In line with the writing curriculum cycles, this study related to Dewi's (2013) research in writing news item text. Four phases were also noticed at all stages in the curriculum period that the teacher gave. This is related to the theory of Australia's four-cycle concept of the gender movement.The stage included the construction of the field stage, the modeling stage, the joint construction stage, and the independent writing stage. Distinguished by this study, the teacher discovered the ZPD students on the building field stage. Students who were involved and had high ZPD would be the leaders of their community to clarify the recounting text to other members of the group who had low ZPD.

Each stage has been associated with various types of activities. The teacher would use the scaffolding strategy in English lessons, especially writing recount text. The teacher used this technique because it could help students improve their critical thinking about the English text. It was also possible, at any point, to return to activities from earlier phases of the course if the students needed revision or further practice in order to move forward.

**Teacher's Challenges**

In teaching writing recount text using a scaffolding technique that the researchers have encountered, the researchers have established some issues. The first challenge that the teacher faced in teaching writing recount text using scaffolding strategy was the various levels of the students. When the teacher taught in the first stage of the scaffolding strategy level, the teacher tried to look for the students' ZPD. The teacher has only noticed eight successful students who were active engagement in classroom activities and they were expected to be the group leaders. The teacher said:

> "*The first challenge for me as the teacher is the students' levels of writing ability. All the students are special and unique in their own ways. I have to know their abilities to place them based on their ZPDs when I use scaffolding strategy in learning*".

Second, the researchers found that there were some of the students talking to their other friends and did not pay attention to the teacher in

the joint construction process. There were also some students having a low level of vocabulary mastery. These problems were noticed to be a concern when the researchers did the study in the classroom. The researchers found that it was difficult for students to translate Indonesian into English.A student reported:

> *"For me, grammar is very difficult, especially past form of verbs. Yeah… besides I did not have many vocabularies, so it is very difficult to write in English."*

The last was hard to motivate the students. The teacher did not have much time to motivate the student because of the time spent on learning activity. It also has related to the impact of English is not L1 in Indonesia, so many students did not have motivation to study English especially recount text.

The teacher was hard to motivate the students because of the limitation of learning time and time constraints (Kamil, 2018). In the context of Indonesia as a country that does not use English as the L1, the teacher needs a lot of time to clarify the material slowly to the students. They need a teacher's encouragement to learn English, and students need to know what the purposes, rewards, and ways to study English well are. But in practice, only two meetings in a week are held in English. Each meeting, the teacher was given 45 minutes of time for an hour's high school lesson.

**Teacher's Efforts in Overcoming the Students' Writing Problems**

With the various students' abilities, the teacher classified the students based on the previous assessment. The students with high level of ZPD would be the leader in each group. In this case, the teacher found that students with high ZPD from the previous assessment made them be peer tutors in each group. During the group discussion in, the teacher gave feedbacks to develop their writing. Ertmer & Glazewski (2006) suggested that the teacher's efforts in reference to students' ZPD on the previous assessment could be done by building collaborative classroom culture, managing students' interaction, and improving evaluation methods and tools. By giving feedback and classroom interactions, the students could improve their wrtiting quality and promote critical reasoning (Fithriani, 2019; Schwieter, 2010). In addition, Akhtar et al. (2019)concluded that peer tutoring developed academic achievement and students' interest in the writing process as they participated in writing with their peers.

Dealing withstudents' lack of interest, the teacher used ice breaking and giving a reward. Based on the solution explained by the teacher, using ice-breaking and managing the student engagement in the teaching-learning process improved students' attitude toward English learning(Rahmayanti et al., 2019), especially toward the English teacher. They have enjoyed the learning process; as a result, the class was livelier. Ice-breaking aimed to avoid students' boredom during learning activity(Solihat et al., 2020). As reported by some researchers (Baranek, 1996; Lo & Hyland, 2007; Loi et al., 2016; Putri & Refnaldi, 2020), giving rewards could develop students' motivation, academic performance, enthusiasm, and engagement in classroom activities. The reward and punishment also made students be discipline and obeyed the teacher's rule in teaching writing recount text.

The teacher's dilemma occurred in writing recount text was that students had less vocabulary. The teacher's asked the students to use the dictionary to find the meaning of difficult words. Without the dictionary, the students did not look for the meaning of the words and were lazy to translate the word. The teacher also reminded the students to write down the significance of the note in the text. Hidayat (2014) suggested that EFL Teachers who aim to improve the standard of their students' writing and speech should consider using a 'lexicographic method', i.e. teaching dictionary skills and optimizing the use of dictionaries, as an alternative, promising approach. Effective dictionary use can develop students' vocabulary knowledge both receptive and productive lexical development (Lin et al., 2017).

## 4. CONCLUSION

Students' ZPD becomes the basis of using scaffolding strategy in teaching writing. The teacher classified the students' ZPD to divide them into several groups and provide peer tutoring in each group. The guidance through giving feedbacks and members' interaction stimulated the students'high-order thinking skills.Ice-breaking and giving rewards were applied to gain students' engagement, improve motivation, decrease students' boredom, and raise an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. In writing, lack of vocabulary mastery would be an obstacle for the students, so that the teacher should maximize the use of the dictionary to develop their lexical knowledge.

This study is limited in investigating scaffolding stategy in teaching writing recount text. Besides, the challenges and efforts to overcome the problems represented the setting context of this research. It would be found different challenges faced by the teachers based on the different settings of the research. Thus, it is recommended to conduct the further research to explore more on the use of scaffolding strategy in writing different genre of the text. Further, the other researchers could also explore more critically on teacher's challenges in teaching other skills using scaffolding strategy.

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