

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY USING INSTRUCTIONAL SCAFFOLDING

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Abstrak

This study was aimed at improving students' writing ability using instructional scaffolding at the eighth grade of Candra Jaya junior high school West Jakarta. The subjects of the study were 40 students in eight grade of Candra Jaya Junior High School. This study used Classroom Action Research (CAR), and it was conducted in three cycles, each of which consisted of planning, action, observation, and reflecting. The data of the study were taken from the questionnaire, observation, interview, and students' final product on writing descriptive text. Data analysis technique used were descriptive analysis both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative analysis used for qualitative data such as questionnaire, interview, observation, and documentation, while quantitative analysis used for quantitative data obtained from the students' final product on writing descriptive text. The result showed that the implementation of instructional scaffolding gave the positive effect toward the improvement of students' writing ability. It was based on the enthusiastic and active participation of the students in the process of teaching and learning, and also the result of students' test on writing descriptive text from pre-cycle with the mean was 59.00 increase at the end of cycle III became 70.13. Based on the findings above, the researcher suggests that English teacher can use one way of instructional scaffolding in teaching English. To get a wider generalization, research of similar kind should be done with different subject.

Keywords: writing ability, instructional scaffolding, action research

Introduction

One of language skills that should be mastered by the students is writing. Writing as one productive skill cannot be separated with other skill. Therefore, writing skill should be taught integrative with speaking and reading particularly during teaching and learning process. In teaching writing, students must understand the elements of writing, knowledge about unity, coherence, and writing competence according to kinds of writing. In this case, the students can explore their ideas and express their feeling in

the form of writing with good and effective. Good means that the paragraph as unity, while effective means the sentences are not ambiguous and run smoothly, so that the reader is easy to understand the writer's message. Finally, the reader is attracted to know more about the content of the text.

Of the four skills, writing is still considered as difficult subject to be learned by the students, for example writing descriptive texts. For example, in developing ideas, students cannot combine and arrange the words into the right sentences, so they should be given and should be taught how to connect and combine the words into sentences based on their ideas. The disability of students to formulate complex thought in English writing has become a prior focus to solve. Whereas, the standard of curriculum set that competence standard for writing aspect at junior high school is to be able to express the meaning in a very simple short texts and short essay in descriptive texts and recount texts to interact with environment (Dispendik, 2004:5).

As an English teacher, the researcher found many problems in teaching writing especially descriptive text in his school. The students who usually took a part the classes interactively had become quiet during the class teaching. They have low motivation to follow the material given. It looked different when learning another skill of English.

For the students, writing is one of language skill that is hard to follow. Since they have no idea and strategy how to write, they cannot write well. In fact that their result in writing exercise still got below standard of writing, for example, their spelling, vocabularies, tenses that are used in their writing still found mistaken.

Dealing with the discussion above, the researcher assumes that there must be a strategy in teaching descriptive writing with joyful process to increase students' motivation in writing descriptive texts.

By using instructional scaffolding as a technique of teaching and learning writing, especially writing descriptive text, the writing competence of the students can be improved. The improvement of writing competence can give the development to the other skills, such as, listening, reading, and speaking. Besides that, using instructional scaffolding can give beneficial and advantages for the students in learning process especially learning writing.

The study of scaffolding instruction to improve writing ability can be traced to the work of Vygotsky (1978). He found out that social interaction plays fundamental

role in the development of cognition and social activity where scaffolding is certainly crucial to child development as learner. While Burch (2007) showed that learning must be guided and supported by adult modeling and corrective feedback. Applying instructional scaffolding in teaching English writing needs to be done with care. It is because various text types must be introduced to the secondary school students and learning the process of writing is a difficult skill for students to develop and learn, especially in EFL context. Huggin and Rita Edwards (2011) found out that result of scaffolding the process of a writing, students developed a better understanding, approximately ninety-six percent of participant (43 of 45) complete the process of writing. The following study is conducted by Asep Dudi (2009) found out that a result of scaffolded writing activities, the students texts show progress over time.

Based on the fact and explanation above, the writer assumes that it is important to investigate the way of the EFL teachers' use instructional scaffolding in teaching and learning writing process in improving students writing descriptive text.

Problem of the research

The problem of this research is that students are not able to write descriptive text even though they have been taught how to write descriptive text. Based on the problem above, the problem above is how can instructional scaffolding help the students in developing writing descriptive texts?

Theoretical Framework

The model of scaffolding in teaching writing has been successful with students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Christie, 1999, and Macken-Horarik, 2001, as cited in Firkins, et.al., 2007:3). It is then supported by a claim that scaffolded writing facilitates the transition to independent writing (Bodrova and Leong, 1998:15). Based on the finding above, it can be concluded that scaffolding give a contribution to the students in developing writing especially for descriptive text.

Despite its popularity, however, some studies of scaffolding have found that it is not easy to define or readily found in classrooms (Michell and Sharpe, 2005:31). For instance, research into the nature of scaffolding (Gibbons, 2002; Rodgers and Rodgers, 2004; Michell and Sharpe, 2005) have suggested that scaffolding does not apply to all

forms of teacher support. It means that using scaffolding in classroom is not easy to apply and it demands teachers to carefully assist students' learning in every stage of instructions.

Writing

Writing is a process of delivering ideas through written text or translating what is on mind through written language. In writing English language, it has ever stated that too often English as first language writers at pre-intermediate level feel a great of sense frustration when asked to write a piece of writing because they know a bit about grammar and vocabularies (Coffey, M.P., 1987). It gives them problems to create a good paragraph and to develop ideas as well. It makes them lazy to write an English composition. Why it happened? It is because they have no comprehensive understanding about the theory of writing. As kind of English skills, students should have known that learning to write needs a process and a lot exercises.

Students should consider that writing is a process, not a product (Hogne, A. & Oshima, A., 1991:3). It means that a good writing cannot be produced instantly. It needs some stages and some exercises. The role of the teachers to make students aware about the process in writing class is very significant. The teachers must remind students again and again about the significant process of writing and train them frequently until the students can achieve the good quality of the writing.

Descriptive Texts

According to the English curriculum for Junior High School (Depdiknas, 2004: 36), Descriptive text is the text which describe something, someone or place in great detail. Descriptive text will use a lot of adjective and adverbs to describe how something appears. Titi, N. & Rinawati, & Maulia, Ana, (2008:28) also defines descriptive texts as a text to describe something or someone in specific characteristics.

The schematic structure of a descriptive text is identification and description (Gerot and Wignell, 1995:208; Depdiknas, 2004:36). Identification stage identifies phenomenon to be described while description stage describes parts, qualities, and characteristics.

It means that descriptive text has two parts of structure namely identification and description. Identification means that it deals with identify and introduce something to be described while description is the description of something.

Instructional Scaffolding

The term scaffolding was first created by Bruner, Wood, and Ross (1976) to describe the type of interaction that occurs within the ZPD (Zone Proximal Development). It is based on the theory developed by Lev Vygotsky which has been discussed in the preceding point. It means that scaffolding is one of strategy used in teaching and learning in improving students' ability, especially for writing, scaffolding has been conducted in some researches.

Types of Instructional Scaffolding

In a classroom practice, a teacher can do various types of scaffolding. In the present study, three types of instructional scaffolding listed by Walqui (2006:170) and García and Kleifgen (2006:8) are found during the writing instructions. They are modeling, bridging, and schema building.

Research Methodology

The method used in this study was a classroom action research (CAR). The researcher chose classroom action research in order to prove the use of instructional scaffolding to improve students writing descriptive text. The researcher conducted three cycles of action. The cycle in action research consists of four steps namely, planning, action, observation, and reflection. The researcher intended to know the students progress in writing descriptive in every observation.

The participants of the research were 40 students in eight grade of Candra Jaya junior high school consisting of 20 male students and 20 female ones. This study collected quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was collected through students' scores from the writing test that was administrated by the researcher. In qualitative data, the researcher used observation sheet, questionnaire, and interview to collect the data as qualitative data.

Result and Discussion

In the research, the data were collected from quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data were analyzed from observation, questionnaire and interview, while the quantitative data were taken from the scores of writing test during conducted research. The writing test was given each cycle after they had the treatment. The students' scores increased from pre-cycle to cycle I, cycle II and cycle III. In the pre-cycle test, all of the students have been doing the test, and the average result was 59.00. in this activity, the teacher still used conventional method,, he did not use instructional scaffolding as teaching strategy. In the cycle I, the average result was 64.75; the teacher began to use instructional scaffolding to teach writing descriptive text. In teaching learning process, there were many students joined the class enthusiastically. They paid attention to the lesson, although some students still confused with the teacher direction.. in the cycle II, the result was 66.38. in the cycle III the average result was 70.13. it means that there were improvements from pre-cycle, cycle I, cycle II and cycle III. It showed that there was an improvement in students' achievement. The data gained from observation, questionnaire and interview showed a better improvement and made a progress in their participation in each cycle. As a fact that students reponded positively during teaching and learning activity. The students argued that they got a useful guidance in writing descriptive text. As summary, It can be concluded that the instructional scaffolding asa strategy is helpful in the process of teaching and learning writing descriptive text.

Conclusion and Suggestions

After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that the etaching of writing through instructional scaffolding contributes significantly to the students' improvement in writing descriptive text. Referring to the process and result of the students while following the learning and teaching, it showed an improvement from the students; text that they write from pre-cycle to cycle III. Therefore, it can be concluded that instructional scaffolding signifcantly improve students' writing descriptive text. Based on the result of the study, some suggestions are pointed out as follows:

- 1) The teachers should give more clear explanation of generic structure, language features and grammatical rules in English about descriptive text in order they can be able to write descriptive text.
- 2) The teachers should know their students' ability in order to find out the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text, thus the teachers can solve the students' problems.
- 3) The students should be given more chance to have writing exercises and should be encouraged in using correct vocabulary and grammar.
- 4) The students should also be given more clear explanation about other grammatical rules, such as article, spelling, sentence pattern, parts of speech, etc so that the students can apply those rules correctly both in oral and in written ways, especially in writing descriptive text.

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