

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of this study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, the scope of the study, clarification of the key terms, and thesis organization.

1.1 Background

Writing plays a critical role in English language learning as one of the four fundamental skills in English. Writing is a complex process in which ideas or feelings are conveyed in written form; it is more than just writing or constructing a sentence or paragraph based on ideas (Harmer, 2007). In writing, students must express their opinions, provide logical reasons, support their ideas, and organize them (Rashtci, 2019). In the English for foreign language (EFL) classroom context, writing skills stimulate thinking, force students to focus and organize their thoughts, and develop the ability to analyze, summarize, and criticize (Rao, 2007).

Writing is also considered an essential skill officially mandated in the Indonesian national curriculum for senior high school. Communicating in written form is highly required instead of oral form in the 2013 curriculum regarding interpersonal, transactional, and functional text at informational literacy (Kemendikbud, 2016). It deals with the implementation of the socio-function of the text in the context of personal, sociocultural, academic, and personal life using various text formats with adequate structure coherently and cohesively and appropriate linguistics elements (Kemendikbud, 2016). One of the texts that have to be mastered in the senior high school curriculum is analytical exposition text.

However, writing is often perceived as the most challenging skill for EFL learners to master (Gibbons, 2015). The preliminary study of the present research showed that most students encountered problems in five writing aspects: content, organization, and writing mechanics (cognitive problems); grammar and vocabulary (linguistics problems). Besides their low ability in writing aspects, they also lacked interest in writing, were confused about starting writing and sharing ideas, were confused about grammar rules and had low motivation in writing

(psychological problems). These facts popped up in the students' reasoning for their negative perception of writing.

There have been previous studies that revealed learners' difficulties with writing. Students struggled greatly to write coherently, and the lack of cohesion in their compositions had a long-lasting effect and took many different forms (Terenin, 2015). EFL students also frequently had grammatical errors in their writing and had trouble choosing the right words to accurately convey the authors' intentions (Phuket & Othman, 2015; Nasser, 2019). The lack of specific instructional methodologies and adaptations has affected the development of students' writing, contributing to the writing problem because so many students did not receive enough writing instruction in elementary school (Wen & Walters, 2022).

In Indonesia, several studies regarding students' problems in writing were found. First, students were troubled with psychological, linguistic, and cognitive problems (Rahmahtunisa, 2014). Then, students also encountered several issues regarding writing, such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling (Younes & Albalawi, 2015), motivation, and vocabulary (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017; Astrini et al., 2020; Younes & Albalawi, 2015). Finally, students were also troubled with the with cohesion, coherence, paragraph order, diction, and spelling errors (Yusuf, 2016).

Consequently, the problems in writing have encouraged the creative activity of English teachers in the EFL classroom. Scaffolding is perceived as one of the teachers' classroom strategies to solve the problem and successfully achieve learning objectives in writing (Boldrini & Catteneo, 2014; Howell, 2018). The term scaffolding refers to the temporary instruction system teachers provide to their students, which is set together and then fades when no longer needed by the students (Boblett, 2012). It also performs various activities that happen in the classroom and the interaction of teacher-learner (Boblett, 2012). Additionally, Suherdi (2008) describes scaffolding as an instructional help to enable learners to acquire specific knowledge and skills. To sum up, the present study considers scaffolding as a teaching strategy utilized by the teacher to help students maximize their potential

to learn new concepts or skills by themselves to reach their best achievement in writing.

Scaffolding refers to both aspects of the construction site in the pedagogical context: the supportive structure that is relatively stable though easy to assemble and reassemble and the collaborative construction work carried out (Walqui, 2006). However, it is not easy to explain the term scaffolding because, in normal usage, it refers to a rigid structure, not the fluid dynamics of collaborative works that we associate with working in the zone of proximal development (Gibbons, 2003, as cited in Walqui, 2006). The most important thing is that the dynamics between the scaffolding structure and the scaffolding process must be kept in mind. Teachers can adopt scaffolding to provide a temporary learning framework (Veeramuthu, 2011). Students are reassured to boost their motivation and creativity, and one of the teachers' tasks in teaching is to be a tutor (Harmer, 2007). When the students feel the support and guidance from their teachers, the classroom learning atmosphere will improve (Harmer, 2007). In short, teachers need to assist their students throughout teaching and learning.

In education, scaffolding can be considered three connected pedagogical scales (Walqui, 2006). First is the concept of establishing a framework that allows specific activities and skills to develop; second, there is the actual implementation of specific classroom activities; finally, there is the support supplied in instantaneous interaction. The sequence moves from macro to micro, from planned to improvised, and from structure to process (Van Lier, 1996). As we all know, plans have a habit of altering as they are carried out. Pedagogical action, in particular, is usually a mix of planned and unplanned, predictable and unforeseen, routine and creativity (Walqui, 2006).

The significance of scaffolding lies in its potential to maximize students' zone of proximal development (ZPD), the distance between the child's level of independent performance, and the child's potential level of maximally assisted performance (Bodrova & Leong, 1998). As a new skill or concept is grasped, what a child can accomplish one day only with assistance, soon becomes their level of

independent performance (Bodrova & Leong, 1998). In this study, the significance of effective scaffolding is the ability to extend the upper limit of the ZPD to reach the specified achievement.

Previous studies have investigated scaffolding to facilitate students learning in argumentative writing (Howell, 2018; Pessoa et al., 2018). Scaffolding also benefited and positively influenced the teaching and learning of writing among inadequate learners (Singh et al., 2020). The scaffolding technique resulted in significant improvements not only in writing quality but also in students' attitudes and interests (Padmadewi & Artini, 2018). In the Indonesian curriculum context, students' analytical exposition writing was improved using scaffolding through experimental study (Sari et al., 2018; Yulianti, 2017). Regarding classroom action research, Ahn (2012) revealed that the teacher's active scaffolding activities at the beginning of the cycle benefited students by making them aware of how texts were organized for different communicative purposes. Rimawati and Hermayawati (2020) also found that the students were engaged and motivated to write using the scaffolding technique in teaching descriptive text in three cycles. It meant that scaffolding was a suitable and successful teaching strategy for teaching writing skills.

Many studies have investigated the benefits of scaffolding in writing using quantitative research methods and experimental design. The present study fills the gap that has not been addressed in many previous studies. First, this study is intended to overcome the problems in writing by conducting classroom action research with qualitative design to gain an in-depth understanding to improve students' learning in writing analytical exposition text. Then, the researcher conducted this study at a public Islamic senior high school in West Java since the preliminary study showed that students had problems with analytical exposition writing. Third, this study fills the gap between theory and practice in teaching writing that can be directly used to benefit the teaching and learning process quality. For these reasons, the present study aims to use scaffolding to improve students' writing analytical exposition text in EFL classroom contexts.

1.2 Research Questions

The present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does scaffolding improve students' writing in analytical exposition text?
2. How do the students perceive the implementation of scaffolding in facilitating them to write analytical exposition text?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In line with the research questions proposed above, this study aims to:

1. Elaborate on how scaffolding improves the students' writing analytical exposition text.
2. Explicate students' perception of the implementation of scaffolding to facilitate their exposition writing.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to contribute to Indonesian education theoretically, practically, and professionally. Theoretically, this research provides insights for institutions, teachers, and researchers in the education field. Practically, the findings of this study are hoped to enlighten teachers to design better classroom practices to reach the goal of institution and education. Professionally, this study is expected to be a reference for teachers with the same writing problems and researchers in a similar field. Finally, in policy, the finding of this study will be significant in evaluating the existing policies and as references for the upcoming school and government policies.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is conducted to solve the problems in students' analytical exposition writing skills mentioned above. It is limited only to using scaffolding strategy to improve writing skills, particularly in analytical exposition writing, by using classroom action research in one class of eleventh-grade students of a public Islamic senior high school in West Java.

1.6 Clarification of the Key Terms

1. Scaffolding originates from the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, particularly with the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018). Scaffolding refers to the temporary and dynamic support

within the ZPD (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018). In this study, scaffolding refers to a teaching strategy utilized by the teacher to help students maximize their potential to reach their best achievement in writing.

2. Writing is a complex process in which thoughts or feelings are conveyed in written form (Harmer, 2007). This study focuses on improving students' writing skills in a specific text genre.
3. A genre can be defined as text types (Emilia, 2016). It is concerned with the overall purpose of a text. The specific genre in this study is analytical exposition text.
4. Genre-based approach refers to an approach to language and literacy education that incorporates an understanding of the notion of genre and teaching about genres in the educational programs (Hyland, 2007; Ahn 2012).
5. Exposition text is a text that expresses the writer's opinion on a topic. Analytical exposition aims to persuade the reader that the idea is an important matter (Gerot & Wignel, 1994). In Indonesia's curriculum, Analytical exposition text is a text taught at the senior high school level.

1.7 Thesis Organization

Chapter I consists of the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, the scope of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II elaborates on the relevant theories of the study. It covers the learning theory of scaffolding, scaffolding in the EFL context, the pedagogical implication of scaffolding in teaching writing skills, scaffolding in teaching writing of analytical exposition text in the English curriculum, and a review of related studies.

Chapter III discusses the research method applied in this study. It involves research design, research site and participant, data collection, research procedure, the criterion of success, and data analysis.

Chapter IV elaborates on the results and discussion of this study to answer the research questions.

Chapter V provides the conclusions and implications of the study, and recommendations for future research.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, clarification of key terms, and thesis organization.