

THE USE OF SCAFFOLDING TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE THE STUDENTS' COMPETENCE IN WRITING GENRE-BASED TEXTS

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Abstrak

Dalam menulis teks yang bersifat *genre-based*, para mahasiswa masih mengalami kesulitan, khususnya tentang bagaimana mengembangkan ide, membangun struktur tematik yang benar, dan menggunakan ciri *lexico-grammar* pada teks. Untuk mengatasi masalah itu *the scaffolding technique* dibutuhkan dalam kelas Writing. Teknik itu diberikan untuk membantu para mahasiswa menulis sebuah teks, termasuk, persiapan, presentasi dan refleksi. 25 mahasiswa Fakultas Bahasa & Sastra, Dian Nuswantoro, dipilih untuk diberi pengarahan dan diminta untuk menulis teks *genre-based* dalam bahasa Inggris. Siklusnya diulang tiga kali. Hasilnya menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan pada kompetensi menulis teks yang bersifat *genre-based* itu.

Keywords : Genre-Based Writing, Scaffolding Technique, Students' competence, Texts, Teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, genre is one of the most important and influential concepts in language education, signifying what Ann Johns (2002:3) has recently referred to as “ a major paradigm shift” in literacy studies and teaching.

Genre-based writing teaching is concerned with what learners do when they write. An understanding of the concept allows writing teachers to identify the kinds of text that students will have to write in their target occupational, academic, or social contexts and to organize their courses to meet these needs. Curriculum materials and activities are therefore devised to support learners by drawing on texts and tasks directly related to the skills they need to participate effectively in the world outside the ESL classroom.

For writing teachers, genre pedagogies promise very real benefits. The concept of genres enables teachers to look beyond context, composing processes, and textual form to see writing as an attempt to communicate with readers – to better understand the ways that language patterns are used to accomplish coherent, purposeful text. For writing teachers, therefore, genre is a useful concept because it pulls together language, content, and contexts, offering teachers a means of presenting students with explicit and systematic explanation of the ways writing works to communicate.

In genre-based writing teaching, the students study in contexts where English is taught as a second or foreign language and they learn to write for different purposes and in different genres. In teaching Writing, especially in Genre-Based Writing, the students are asked to write texts in certain genre. In this case the students are not only to write texts they want, but they have to consider the texts' social function, schematic structures, and their lexicogrammatical features.

Although genre-based writing offers explicit and systematic ways of writing (Hyland, 2004:10) ESL students still found difficulties in developing the idea that support the social function, constructing correct schematic structure, and using appropriate lexicogrammatical features of certain text type. It is proven by the fact that there were several mistakes found in the texts produced by the students of English Department, Faculty of Letters Dian Nuswantoro University. This fact shows that the students still need some helps or supports to make their texts better. This kind of help or support, according to Wood, Bruner and Ross (1974) is called scaffolding.

In this teaching, scaffolding is very needed to apply to make the students' competence in writing better. To achieve this, several steps should be applied. They are preparation, presentation, and reflection (C. Stars dalam Sidi, 2001). In preparation, the students are invited to explore their prior knowledge of certain phenomenon by giving them some questions related to that phenomenon. In presentation, after the lecturer gives them a model of certain text, the students are demanded to search and present what they have found. They have to present the social function, schematic structure, and lexicogrammatical features of certain text. In reflection, the lecturer gives some comments and enforcement of what the students have done. The lecturer also tries to correct mistakes the students have made.

Based on the problem, this action classroom research was conducted to know whether scaffolding technique really improved the students' competence in writing genre-based texts.

2. SCAFFOLDING

When most of us hear the word scaffolding, we think of new office building going up, or else aging skyscrapers needing repair. Scaffolding is what gets erected outside a tall building so that works can climb up and hammer away. From the ground below scaffolding sometimes looks like an external skeleton, yet any long gaze will reveal it has nothing to do with supporting the actual weight of the building it surrounds. Instead, what is evident is the short-lived nature of its framework, individual pieces of which are designed to disassemble quickly. Scaffolding in construction is a means to an end, as soon as it is no longer needed, it disappears.

According to Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1974), the term scaffolding is tutoring or other assistance provided in a learning setting to assist students with attaining levels of understanding impossible for them to achieve without assistance. Scaffolding in an educational context is a process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning. Done correctly, such

structuring encourages a student to develop his or her own initiative, motivation and resourcefulness. Once students build knowledge and develop skills on their own, element of the framework are dismantled. Eventually, the initial scaffolding is removed altogether, students no longer need it. In English teaching, scaffolding can be applied in any skills such as Listening, Reading, Speaking or Writing.

3. TEACHERS' SCAFFOLDING TALKS IN CLASSROOM DISCOURSE

Based on Johnstone's statement (2001), discourse means actual instances of communication in the medium of language. Therefore, classroom discourse can be defined as actual communication events happening in classroom in the medium of language. The teachers play important roles in the success of communication through their talks to perform effective teaching and facilitate the students' learning and development.

Teacher's scaffolding talk is used in language teaching. It is teacher's utterances that accompany his or her action in language classroom to provide scaffold or assistance for the students' understandings and facilitate the learners' ability to interpret new information and complete their tasks.

There are some scaffolding talks suggested by Turney *et al.* (1983) as the following are:

3.1. Reinforcement

Turney *et al.* (1983: 14) define positive reinforcement as positive response by one person to another's response aiming at increasing student attention, maintaining motivation, promoting active participation, facilitating learning and improving student behaviour. Reinforcement should normally be applied as immediately as possible after a desired response. There are kinds of reinforcement as follows:

3.1.1 Verbal reinforcement

Verbal reinforcement is as teacher's comments offering praise and encouragement when used to reinforce responses or behaviours. Teachers can use words like "Yes", "That's right", "Great", etc. They can also use sentences such as "That's good work", etc.

3.1.2 Token reinforcement

It includes giving stars, ticks, stamps or points may be effective with young children. Positive and discriminating written comments on a pupil's work appear to be more appropriate with older pupils.

3.1.3 Praise and linked with token reinforcement

Examples of this kinds of reinforcement such as giving chart recognition (a star next to pupils' names, offering monetary rewards such as five cents for one test passed, fifteen cents for two and so on).

3.1.4 Proximity and contact reinforcement

A teacher may increase the impact of praise for performative and achievement by moving amongst pupils, sitting and standing with them, and displaying direct interest in their work and efforts by employing what is referred to “proximity reinforcement.”

3.2. Basic Questioning

According to Turney *et al.* (1983: 72), good teacher questions can stimulate interest and curiosity, focus pupil attention and interest on a particular issue or concept, provide opportunities for students to respond in increasingly thoughtful ways, to ensure widespread student participation in classroom discussion, and allow teachers to express a genuine interest in the ideas and feelings of the students. Through the skilled use of question, teachers can obtain information about how well students understand the materials they have learned, what potential problems they may encounter and what assistances are needed to facilitate the students learning. Based on Turney *et al.*'s suggestion (1983: 74), the skills of questioning can be classified into some components as follows: clear, purposeful, brief, natural and adapted to the level of the class, sequenced, thought provoking, redirecting, focusing on single task, wait-time, random distribution, and prompting (using simple language and avoiding difficult words, using instructional aid providing physical context, using students' experience to introduce an unfamiliar topic).

3.3. Advanced Questioning

Based on Zahorik's statement (1980), higher-ordered questioning is an important means of developing students' thinking processes. Questions that require students to improve an initial response to a question by providing such things as greater clarity, accuracy, support, or relevance are also effective in higher-level cognitive questioning. This questions are used to invite students to comment on or expand each other's responses.

4. GENRE-BASED WRITING

Genre is a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situation. The concept of genre is based on the idea that members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand, and perhaps write them relatively easily.

Today, genre is one of the most important and influential concepts in language education as “a major paradigm shift” in literacy studies and teaching.

In genre-based writing teaching, the teaching-learning cycle is based on the assumption that in order to write effectively, students first need to have an extensive understanding of and familiarity with the topic they are writing about. They also need models of the genre they are learning to write, in order to have clear idea of what it is that they are working towards. They need some support and guidance in learning how to organize what they know about the topic into an

appropriate written text. They need opportunities to apply what they have learned about writing the text, as they 'go it alone' and write independently.

There are four stages in genre-based writing teaching. They are:

4.1 Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF)

This stage is the point at which overall knowledge of the cultural and social context of the topic is built and developed. It is important for all learners to have an understanding of the topic before being expected to write about. Classroom tasks and activities at this stage enable learners to:

- a. Explore cultural similarities and differences related to the topic or text type.
- b. Practice grammatical patterns relevant to the topic or text type.
- c. Build up and extend vocabulary relevant to the topic or text type.

4.2 Modeling of Text

This stage involves introducing the learners to a model of the genre they will be writing. In this stage, there is explicit focus on analyzing the genre through a model text related to the course topic. This stage involves preparing the learners for writing by:

- a. Focusing on genre
- b. Discussing the social function/purpose of the genre
- c. Discussing the schematic structure of the genre
- d. Discussing the grammatical features of the genre.

4.3 Joint Construction of Text

At this stage, the aim is for the teachers to work with the learners to construct a similar text. The teacher first need to access the extent of the learners' knowledge and understanding of the field. Further work may need to be done before the actual construction of the texts begin. For example: gathering relevant information, researching the topic through additional reading, etc.

The emphasis at this stage is on the teacher providing guidance and support in order to convert and reshape language from spoken to the written mode.

4.4 Independent Construction of Text

Before moving on to this stage, the teacher needs to assess if the learners are ready to construct the text independently. Independent construction occurs only after group or pair construction has shown that the learners have gained control of the field and the mode. Classroom tasks and activities at this stage enable learners to: incorporate knowledge of schematic structure and grammatical features into their own writing, produce written texts that approximate control of the genre, read other examples of the genre in contexts outside the classroom, feel confident about writing the genre in contexts outside the classroom.

5. RESEARCH METHOD

5.1. Subjects

This research was conducted in the Genre-Based Writing course of the fourth semester English department students of Faculty of languages and Letters Dian Nuswantroro University in 2010. The subjects were 25 students taking the course.

5.2. Research Procedure

This classroom action research was conducted in three cycles . Every cycle consists of four steps: planning, treatment, observation, and reflection. Planning was conducted by preparing the materials used for the treatment in every cycle. Treatment was conducted by applying scaffolding technique to improve the students' competence in writing and asked them to write genre-based text . Observation was conducted by observing and scoring the students' texts; and reflection was conducted by evaluating all of the actions done in every cycle and its result seen from the students' average score of their writings.

5.3. Technique of Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this study was statistical analysis using Paired Sample T-Test formula. This formula worked by comparing the scores from cycle to cycle. The mean scores tendencies from cycle to cycle showed the effects of the given treatments/actions. This means that if the mean scores increase, the given action is considered effective and vice versa.

6. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Finding

During the action research the four tests were given to the students. In each test the students were asked to write a text in a certain genre and in a certain topic. There were four texts written by each student in the four tests. The first text was written in the pre-test, and the other three texts were written in the three cycles. Table 1 shows the mean of coherence scores of the writings written by the students in the four tests.

Table 1: Mean Score of T1 – T4

Test	N*	Mean Score
T ₁	25	64,8
T ₂	25	69,9
T ₃	25	75,1
T ₄	25	80,2

N = The Number of Subjects

From table 1, it can be said that the mean score for the first test was 64.5. In the second test, the mean score increased by 5,1 point into 69.9, and it increased by 5.2 in the third test into 75,1. In the fourth test, the mean score increased by 5.1 into 80.2. The increased mean scores of T₁, T₂, T₃, and T₄ from

64.5, 69.9, 75.1, and 80.2 was significant. This means that the lecturer's intervention by giving scaffolding technique to the students really improved their competence in writing English texts.

6.2. Discussion

As stated in the previous part, the aim of this research is to know whether scaffolding technique really improved the students' competence in writing genre-based texts. The competence here includes the idea development that support the social function, the schematic structure, and the lexicogrammatical features of the texts. The discussion of those competence in pre-test and in every cycle can be seen below.

Pre-Test

In this pre-test the students were asked to write 'anecdote' texts without being given any scaffolding. The result of pre-test can be seen in table 2.

Table 2: The Students' Competence in Pre-test

NO	SCORE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	%
1	A (85-100)	0	0
2	B (70-84)	2	8
3	C (60-69)	7	28
4	D (50-59)	12	48
5	E (<50)	4	16
	TOTAL	25	100

Table 2 shows that the students' competence in writing is low. It can be seen from their score. More than 50 % of the students got D, and E. The mistakes the students usually made are in developing the social function, organizing the schematic structure and in applying lexicogrammatical features of the texts. When the lecturer asked them to write 'anecdote' texts, most of them wrote 'recount' texts. Most of the students used present tense instead of past tense in writing these texts.

Cycle 1

After the students were given scaffolding to help them write 'anecdote', the result can be seen in table 3.

Table 3: The Students' Competence in Cycle 1

NO	SCORE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	%
1	A (85-100)	0	0
2	B (70-84)	5	20
3	C (60-69)	8	32

4	D (50-59)	10	40
5	E (<50)	2	8
	TOTAL	25	100

Table 3 shows that the students' competence in writing texts improved compared to those in pre-test. The number of students who got D, and E is less than 50 %. The kinds of mistakes the students made in this cycle were the same as those in pre-test but the number decreased.

Cycle 2

After the students were given explanation and scaffolding on how to write 'exemplum' texts, the result can be seen in table 4.

Table 4: The Students' Competence in Cycle 2

NO	SCORE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	%
1	A (85-100)	2	8
2	B (70-84)	8	32
3	C (60-69)	11	44
4	D (50-59)	4	16
5	E (<50)	0	0
	TOTAL	25	100

Table 4 shows that the students' competence in writing genre-based texts really improved compared to those in cycle 1. 2 (8 %) students got A, 8 (32%) students got B, 11 (44%) students got C, and only 4 (16%) students got D/E. The mistakes students made only in using lexicogrammatical features in their texts, and the number is not as many as those in cycle 2.

Cycle 3

In this cycle, the lecturer gave explanation to the students and also gave scaffolding on how to write 'argumentation' and asked them to write 'argumentation' texts. The result of their writings can be seen on table 5.

Table 5: The students' Competence in Cycle 3

NO	SCORE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	%
1	A (85-100)	5	20
2	B (70-84)	10	40
3	C (60-69)	7	28
4	D (50-59)	3	12
5	E (<50)	0	0
	TOTAL	25	100

Table 5 shows that the students' competence in writing genre-based texts really improved compared to those of the previous cycles. More than 50 % of students got A and B. This proves that scaffolding is really needed in teaching genre-based texts.

7. CONCLUSION

From the previous discussion, it can be concluded that scaffolding technique is effective to improve the students' competence in writing genre-based text. It can be seen from the increased mean score in every cycle. The mean score for the first test was 64.5. In the second test, the mean score increased by 5,1 point into 69.9, and it increased by 5.2 in the third test into 75,1. In the fourth test, the mean score increased by 5.1 into 80.2. The increased mean scores of T₁, T₂, T₃, and T₄ from 64.5, 69.9, 75.1, and 80.2 was significant. This means that the lecturer's intervention by giving scaffolding technique to the students really improved their competence in writing English texts.

The more lecturer gives scaffolding to the students, the better their texts are. It shows that the lecturer's help/scaffolding is really needed in teaching genre-based texts to make the students' competence in writing better.

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