

SCAFFOLDING STRATEGY FOR THE LOW-MOTIVATED STUDENTS IN WRITING

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Abstract: Writing is one of the basic language skills that should be mastered by English department students. By mastering this skill, they are expected to be able to express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas in written form. However, most of the students said that writing is difficult subject, and they always face some problems in writing. The most serious problems arise when the students have negative attitude about writing or lack confidence in themselves as writers. To overcome the problem, scaffolding strategy in the process of writing is an alternative strategy to improve the low-motivated students' ability in writing.

Keywords: writing ability, scaffolding strategy, low-motivated students

Writing is one of the four language skills which is considered to be the most difficult to master. For the students of English as a foreign language (EFL), learning to write in English is a very complex process because a piece of writing as written communication requires the writer's ability to use not only his linguistic competence but also his communicative competence (Mukminatien, 1997). Writing is a highly sophisticated skill combining a number of various elements that require not only grammatical but also rhetorical elements. Writing needs time, thought, and many conscious choices to move from one first conception to public document.

Writing as a means of communication plays a significant role. Troyka (1987) mentions that there are four important points of writing. Firstly, writing is a way of thinking and learning. Writing can give learners the opportunities to explore ideas, to acquire information, to know subjects well and to own the knowledge. Secondly, writing is a way of discovering. The act of writing allows the writers to make unexpected connections among ideas and language. Thirdly, writing creates reading. Writing creates a permanent, visible record of ideas for others to read and ponder. Writing is a powerful means of communication, for reading informs and shapes human thought. Fourthly, educated people need writing ability. To write many different types of assignments in a college, a student should have ability in writing.

However, most of the students always face some problems in writing. The most serious problems arise when the students have negative attitude about writing or lack confidence in themselves as writers. Negative statement such as

“I really don’t like to write, it’s boring, writing is so difficult, I always feel my English terrible” are problematic in EFL writing classrooms. As writing teacher, to identify who has negative attitudes toward writing is important.

According to Gebhard (2000: 237), doing personal approach to students, listening to their experience and their views in doing writing as writers, not only offer teacher knowledge about students but also can make students aware of themselves and their attitudes, possibly leading to change. In addition, to explore ways to give students a more positive perspective about their writing, teacher can demystify the writing process. Teacher can point out that no one’s writing perfect, that writing often hard work, and that the point of writing is to express our ideas. Besides, asking students to put together their best writing into a portfolio can also provoke their positive perspective toward writing. When students can see their best work together in one place, they feel very good about themselves, even proud of their efforts.

SCAFFOLDING STRATEGY

Scaffolding is a practice based on Vygotsky’s concept of assisted learning (Slavin, 1994:231). The Vygotsky’s concept of scaffolding is similar with Bruner’s scaffolding concept. Bruner (in Arends, 2001:335) states that scaffolding is the process in which a learner is helped to master a particular problem beyond his or her own capacity through the assistance (scaffolding) of a teacher or more accomplished person.

Scaffolding strategy as a teaching strategy based on the Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). “The zone of proximal development is the distance between what children can do by themselves and the next learning that they can be helped to achieve with competent assistance” (Raymond, 2000:176). It is in a sense that the scaffolding strategy provides individualized support based on the learner’s ZPD. Thus, the scaffolding or support given to the students will be varies based on the students’ level and their needs.

According to McKenzie (1999), the scaffolding has at least eight characteristics. First, scaffolding provides clear directions. This strategy offers step-by step directions to explain just what students must do in order to meet the expectation for the learning activity. Next, scaffolding clarifies purpose. It means that the scaffolded lesson aspires to meaning and worth. Each time of acting, it is in service to the thought process, the discovery of meaning and the development of insight. Third, scaffolding keeps students on task. It means that this strategy more than a matter of clear direction, but it provides a pathway or route for the learner’s learning experience. Fourth, scaffolding offers assessment to clarify expectations. From the very start, scaffolded lessons provide examples of quality work done by others. Right from the beginning, students are shown rubrics and standards that define excellence. Fifth, scaffolding points students to worthy sources. Here the teacher provides the sources that have been selected by him, so the students will get the best sources. As consequence the students can reach the learning expectation. Sixth, scaffolding reduces uncertainty, surprise and disappointment. The operating design concept for scaffolded lesson is the “Teflon lesson” – no stick, no burn and no trouble. Teachers are expected to test

each and every step in the lesson to see what might possibly go wrong. Once the lesson is ready for trial with students, the lesson is refined at least one more time based on the new insight gained by watching students actually try the activities. Seventh, scaffolding delivers efficiency. And the last is scaffolding creates momentum.

THE PROCESS OF WRITING

Process of writing refers to everything a writer does, from the moment he or she starts to thinking about what to write, until the final copy is completed. As a process, writing comprises some stages. Every writer gives a different version of the stages of writing process. McCrimmon (1980) and Farris (1993), for example, divided the writing process into three stages. They are prewriting, writing, and rewriting stages. Meanwhile Irmischer et al. (1983) divided it into four stages namely prewriting, writing, evaluating, and revising. Goffman and Berkowitz (1990:2) divide the process of writing into four steps as well. They are prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Calderonello and Edwards (1986) classified it into five stages. They are inventing, planning, drafting, revising, and editing. For the same thing, Gere (1992) classified the process into: prewriting or inventing, drafting, revising, and editing. Similar to Gere, Funk et al. (1993) broke it up into: prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and editing. Tompkins and Hoskisson (1991:227) divide the writing process into five stages as well namely prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing. Some writers consider publishing as final step in process of writing and classify it into writing stage.

Students can be shown the different stages in the production of a piece of writing and be encouraged to discover what works best for them. Students can be shown the basic phases of the writing process: pre-writing, drafting, revising (editing and proofreading), and presenting. The writing process can be summarized as follows.

Writing Process
<p><i>Prewriting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using pre-writing techniques to gather ideas • ordering ideas or making an outline
<p><i>Drafting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing the outline • exploring new ideas during writing
<p><i>Revising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editing: considering ideas and organization • Proofreading: correcting errors including sentence structure, usage, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization • Polishing
<p><i>Publishing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing writing

SCAFFOLDING STRATEGY IN THE PROCESS OF WRITING

Scaffolding strategy in the process of writing is an alternative strategy to improve the low motivated students' ability in writing. The concept of support in scaffolded instruction is much broader than the modeling and teaching of strategies and skills; this is only one part of the scaffolding process. Providing support takes place in a number of ways:

- the way in which the selections are organized in a theme,
- the amount of prior knowledge activation that is provided,
- the way in which the literature is read by the students, and
- the types of responses students are encouraged to make.

It is a strategy in which a student at the beginning of learning is given a great deal of support by modeled and coached to perform a specific task in each stage of process of writing; gradually, this support is taken away to allow students to try their independence.

The appropriate model of the scaffolding strategy in the process of writing encompasses five major stages. First, the prewriting stage in which there are three strategies implemented namely, question-answer, clustering, and modeling. Second is the drafting stage. The scaffolding strategies in the drafting stage are modeling and the discussion about the model of a text. Third is the revising stage. The scaffolding strategies in the revising stage are by having one by one conference between teacher-student and by giving them revising guidelines. Fourth is the editing stage in which the scaffolding strategies implemented are by giving editing guidelines and doing peer-editing activity. Fifth, the publishing stage in which the scaffolding strategies implemented are reading the final draft in front of the class and displaying it on the cardboard.

Prewriting Stage

On the prewriting stage students are expected to be able to explore, select, and order the ideas to make an outline of their topic. To reach these instructional objectives there are three scaffolding strategies that can be developed on this stage. They are question-answer, clustering, and modeling of outlining. The question-answer was conducted to explore the students' ideas. It is used as a starter in activating the students' background knowledge toward the topic discussed. In this strategy, the teacher delivered a number of questions orally and the students answered it based on their background knowledge. The students' answer must be responded and given some feedback by the teacher. This was done for two reasons. First, by doing this it is expected that the students will not be reluctant in presenting their ideas. Second, responding and feedback is very useful to elicit the students' ideas as much as possible.

It is line with Hogan and Pressley (1997: 27) proposed that rather than asking a student for direct participation, a teacher might scaffold learning by asking students to contribute clues or ideas. When students contribute their ideas about a topic or skill, the teacher can add her own ideas to guide the discussion. If the students' understandings are incorrect or only partially correct, the teacher can correct them and tailor her explanations based upon whatever the students have brought to the discussion (Hogan and Pressley, 1997, pp. 27-28).

To lead the students in selecting ideas for writing, the teacher used the clustering (word webbing) strategies. In this strategy, while the teacher was brainstorming the students' ideas by having question-answer activity; she organized the ideas on the web. This activity was used to provide the students picture of what they had to write about the topic. This is in line with what Ausubel (in Dahar, 1988:144) calls "advanced organizer". It is a process of providing the students to internalize new knowledge based on their prior schemata. It means that by doing this, the learning will become more meaningful if there is a relation between what the learners already know with the topic they will study. Here is an example of the clustering technique on the topic of caluholism.

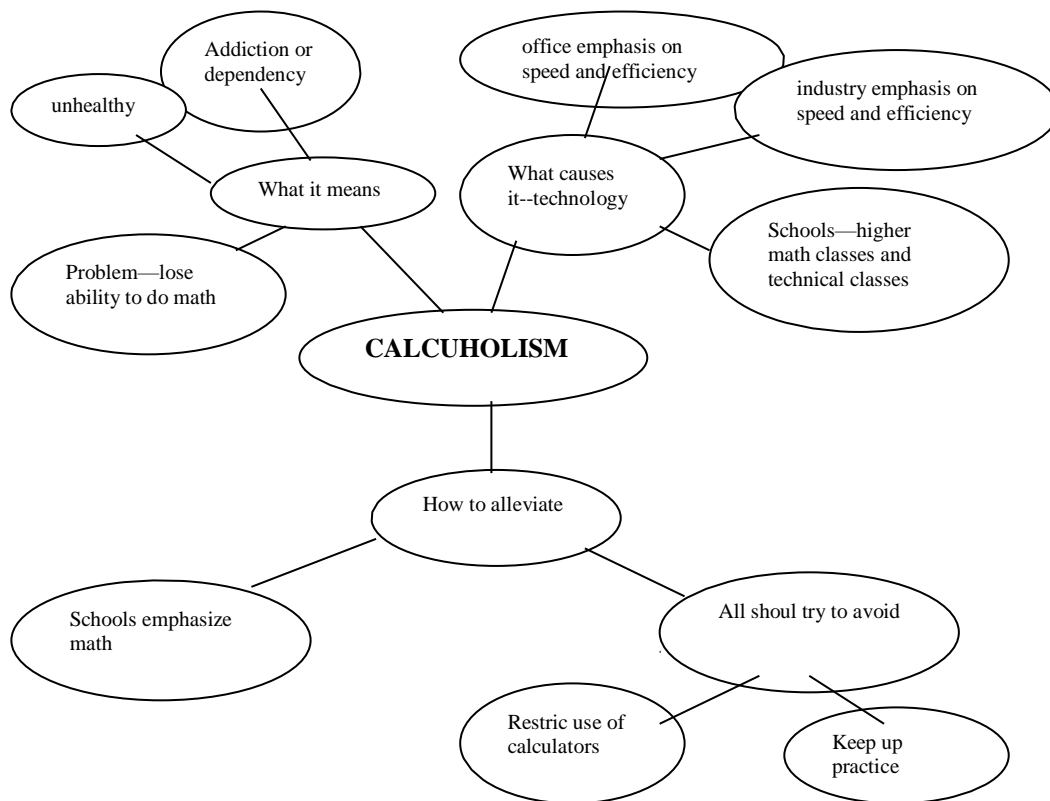


Figure 1 Model of Clustering
(Adopted from Pyle and Muñoz, 1991:467)

Another important strategy used by the teacher in the prewriting process was modeling. The modeling strategy was used to give a model to the students of how to organize thoughts to make an outline. Modeling in instructional scaffolding is defined as "teaching behavior that shows how one should feel, think or act within a given situation" (Hogan and Pressley, 1997, p. 20). The

modeling strategy is linked to the nature of the scaffolding (NCRL, 2001, in Katilie, 2003) in which the scaffolding is an instructional technique whereby the teacher models the desired task, then gradually shifts the responsibility to the students. Without giving a model of how to write an outline to the students, they will not know what they have to write in the outline. Here is an example of the outline on the topic of calculholism.

<p>Introductory Paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. It has been said that many people are victims of calculholism, a dependence on the use of calculators, causing a diminished ability to do mathematics on one's own.b. Technology in schools, offices, and industry has resulted in an unfortunate overdependence on all types of modern devices, but particularly on calculators.c. Calculholism can be avoided if schools and individuals concentrate on using the mind to do mathematics rather than relying on calculators for simple tasks. <p>Body Paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">I. What the writer means by calculholism<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The term indicates an addiction or dependencyb. Generally such a dependency is unhealthyc. Problem—if children rely too much on calculators, they lose ability to do mathematics easily without itII. What causes it—more technology<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Emphasis in schools on more advanced math and technical classes that require calculatorsb. Emphasis in offices on speed and efficacy—word processors and computersc. Emphasis in industry on technologically advanced machinesIII. What can be done to alleviate it<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Schools should avoid causing students rely on calculatorsb. All should avoid becoming too dependent on the calculators<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Restrict use of calculators2. Keep up practice with actual math <p>Conclusion</p> <p>Calculholism has increased in recent years and will continue to increase due to advances in technology. To avoid dependency, we must do mathematics with our minds from time to time rather than with a machine.</p>
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Figure 2 Model of Outlining
(Adopted from Pyle and Muñoz, 1991:467)

Drafting Stage

On the drafting stage students are expected to be able to develop an outline to become a rough draft. The scaffolding strategies developed on this stage are modeling and questioning.

The modeling was used to show the students a model of a draft that they were expected to write. By observing and reading the model draft, they were

expected to have an experience to compose a rough draft easily. In line with this, Brown (2001) states that by reading and studying a variety of relevant modes of texts, students can gain important insights both about how they should write and about the subject matter that may become the topic of their writing. Here is a model of the draft essay on the topic of calculholism.

It has been said that many people are victims of calculholism, a dependence on the use of calculators, causing a diminished ability to do mathematics on one's own. Technology in schools, offices, and industry has resulted in an unfortunate overdependence on all types of modern devices, but particularly on calculators. Calculholism can be avoided if schools and individuals concentrate on using the mind to do mathematics rather than relying on calculators for simple tasks.

Obviously the term calculholism has been coined with the intent to compare it to other addictions such as alcoholism. While it is not nearly as serious as alcoholism, dependence on the calculator can be harmful. Abuse of something normally beneficial may lead to a harmful reliance on it. It is not that calculators are harmful, but that overuse may cause harm by causing people to forget how to do mathematics with their own minds.

The problem arises from modern technology advances. In schools, classes become more complicated because of the technology for which students must be prepared when they graduate. Calculators are permitted and essential in many such classes. In offices, calculators, computers, and word processing systems are commonplace because they increase speed and improve efficiency. Business people may spend hours working with numbers and rarely calculate mentally. In industry as well, the emphasis on advanced machines results in individuals' solving fewer mathematical problems on their own.

To alleviate the problem, schools should avoid allowing students to use calculators too early and should require sufficient in-class work without them. All of us should restrict our use of calculators and strive to do math on our own so that we will not lose our basic math skills.

Calculholism has increased in recent years and will continue to increase due to advances in technology. To avoid dependency, we must do mathematics with our minds from time to time rather than with a machine.

Figure 3 Model of Draft Essay
(Adopted from Pyle and Muñoz, 1991:467)

The questioning strategy is used to guide the students in constructing their writing. Frazee and Rose (1995) state that although questioning is the oldest teaching technique, it is fundamental to outstanding teaching. The strategy of questioning focuses on giving leading questions on the content and the organization of the model draft. By doing so, it is expected that students are aware of the essential part in constructing their writing. Here is an example of the questioning on the model of the draft essay.

- Ok students! Have you observed the model draft that you got?
- **Does it have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion?**
- **How many paragraph does this essay have?**
- **How many paragraphs do the body have?**
- **How about the terms or phrases used in this essay?**
- **Do you got new terms or phrases?**

Figure 4 Model of Questioning on the Model Draft

Revising Stage

On the revising stage the students are expected to be able to revise their draft as the teacher suggested. The scaffolding strategy that can be developed to reach this instructional objective is by having a conference one by one between teacher-student about their draft.

Before coming to the conference activity, the students should be supplied with revising guidelines. The revising guideline contains some questions directed to check about the content and the organization of their draft. They were asked to check their draft based on the revising guidelines while they were waiting to have a conference with the teacher. Obviously, by giving clear and effective guidelines, the teacher could minimize the students learning and problems as well as the time needed in accomplishing their writing. Here is a model of the revising guidelines.

Ideas/content:

1. Do my ideas work together to make my essay clear?
2. Do I have enough information?

Organization

1. Does my paper have an introduction, a body and a conclusion?

Introduction:

2. Do the general statements
 - give background information?
 - attract the reader's attention?

Body:

3. Does each body paragraph have
 - clearly stated topic sentence with a main (controlling) idea?
 - good development with sufficient supporting details (facts, examples, and quotations)?
 - unity (one idea per paragraph)?
 - coherence (logical organization, transition words, and consistent pronouns)?

Conclusion:

4. Does the conclusion
 - summarize your main points?
 - give your final thoughts on the subject of your essay?

Figure 5 Model of the Revising Guidelines

After each student got the revising guidelines, the teacher gave an explanation about how to use it. After that, the students come to the teacher one by one for having conference. The students took a seat besides the teacher. Here, the teacher asked the content of their draft. She also gave some comments and suggestions to improve the students' draft. By having a conference one by one between teacher-student is one effective scaffold to help students in revising their drafts. By doing so, the students can express their ideas orally to the teacher. The teacher as a listener as well as facilitator can clarify the unclear ideas written by the students by giving suggestion whether it needs to change, delete, or add words/phrases on their draft. Here is a model of guided questioning in teacher-students conference.

- Do you get any references to back up your essay?
- **Does your essay have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion?**
- **How many paragraphs does your essay have?**
- **How many general statements are in your introduction?**
- **Show me which is your thesis statement! Do you think your thesis statement state a clearly focused main idea for the whole your essay?**
- **How many paragraphs are in the body?**
- **Ok. Now underline the main idea in each body paragraph!**

Figure 6 Model of Questioning in Teacher-Student Conference

Editing Stage

According to Troyka (1987:63), editing focuses on surface features. When the writers edit, they check the technical correctness of their writing. They pay attention to correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The scaffolding strategy developed on this stage was peer-editing, in which the students exchanged their revised drafts with their friends.

Before coming to the peer-editing activity, the students were supplied with editing guidelines. They were also provided by the explanation of what to edit and how to edit. In this example, I take from Azar's grammar book used as editing guidelines as the students in my college use this book in their grammar classes. It is very helpful to use editing guidelines that is already familiar to the students to make them easier in using it. Here is the model of editing guidelines adopted from Azhar (1989).

To the student: each number represents an area of usage. Refer to this list to find out what kind of error you have made and then make the necessary correction.

1	SINGULAR-PLURAL	<p>① He have been here for six month. ①</p> <p><i>He has been here for six months.</i></p>
2	WORD FORM	<p>② I saw a beauty picture.</p> <p><i>I saw a beautiful picture.</i></p>
3	WORD CHOICE	<p>③ She got on the taxi.</p> <p><i>She got into the taxi.</i></p>
4	VERB TENSE	<p>④ He is here since June.</p> <p><i>He has been here since June.</i></p>
5+	ADD A WORD	<p>⑤+ I want ^ go to the zoo.</p> <p><i>I want to go to the zoo.</i></p>
5-	OMIT A WORD	<p>⑤- She entered to the university.</p> <p><i>She entered the university.</i></p>
6	WORD ORDER	<p>⑥ I saw five times that movie.</p> <p><i>I saw that movie five times.</i></p>
7	INCOMPLETE SENTENCE	<p>⑦ I went to bed. Because I was tired.</p> <p><i>I went to bed because I was tired.</i></p>
8	SPELLING	<p>⑧ An accident occured.</p> <p><i>An accident occurred.</i></p>
9	PUNCTUATION	<p>⑨ What did he say?</p> <p><i>What did he say?</i></p>
10	CAPITALIZATION	<p>⑩ I am studying english.</p> <p><i>I am studying English.</i></p>
11	ARTICLE	<p>⑪ I had a accident.</p> <p><i>I had an accident.</i></p>
12?	MEANING NOT CLEAR	<p>⑫? He borrowed some smoke.</p> <p>(???)</p>
13	RUN-ON SENTENCE*	<p>⑬ My roommate was sleeping, we didn't want to wake her up.</p> <p><i>My roommate was sleeping. We didn't want to wake her up.</i></p>

Figure 7 Model of the Editing Guidelines
(Adopted from Azar, 1989)

Publishing Stage

In the final stage of writing process, students share the final product with the other students. Here, the students are given the opportunity to share their writings by reading them aloud to the whole class or in a small group or a partner. By sharing, the students learn about themselves and their writing as well as becoming better judges of their work.

Some techniques suggested in publishing stage are sending letters to a pen pal, submitting a newspaper article to the local newspaper, hanging it on the cardboard placed in classroom or library, and so on.

FINAL REMARKS

Those are the steps of using scaffolding in the process of writing. Having experiment in learning writing through step-by-step process writing in which in each step given scaffold will eliminate their frustration and they can enjoy their process learning. Hopefully the low-motivated students will be happy in learning writing through this process.

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