




Promoting Students' Autonomy in Written Communication Through Scaffolding Strategy

Vike Aprilianin Marwintaria Saputri^{1*}  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8973-241X>

Ine Yudhawati²  <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6484-2132>

Iin Avitasari³  <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7994-8058>

Sidartha Adi Gautama⁴  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8600-2354>

Wistina Seneru⁵  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4787-0217>

^{1,2,3,4,5} Buddhist Communication Science Department, STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung, Indonesia

*corresponding author: Vike Aprilianin Marwintaria Saputri, vikeaprilianin-marwintariasaputri@stiab-jinarakkhita.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study is to investigate the difference of the students' written communication autonomy after the implementation of scaffolding strategy. The sample is twenty students of the first-year semester of the undergraduate students of the Buddhist Communication Science Department in Jinarakkhita Buddhist College of Lampung. This research is quantitative by using one group pre-test posttest design. The instruments are writing test, questionnaire and interview. The result of data analysis shows that scaffolding strategy can further promote the students' autonomy in written communication significantly. The result of the questionnaire shows that the students give the positive response towards applying scaffolding strategy in writing class. The conclusion of this present study, after the students are given scaffolding strategy, along with the improvement in written communication ability, the students' autonomy in writing improves significantly.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Scaffolding Strategy;
writing autonomy;
written communication
ability

Article History:

Received: 07 December 2023
Revised: 29 December 2023
Accepted: 30 December 2023
Published: 31 December 2023

How to Cite in A.P.A. Style:

Saputri.V.A.M, et al.
(2023). Promoting
Students' Autonomy in
Written Communication
Through Scaffolding
Strategy. Journal of
Communication, Religious,
and Social Science, 1(2),
96-106.

Introduction

Teachers must face numerous challenges in the educational context. One of these challenges is determining the best instructional model for the students. It must allow both the teacher and the students to enjoy the teaching and learning process in the classroom, as well as assist students in promoting their skills. As a result, teachers must be creative in selecting the instructional model that will be used with their students.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four skills that must be mastered by the students during the English teaching and learning process. Reading and listening are examples of receptive skills. Language learners receive ideas, thoughts, and opinions by reading or listening. On the other hand, writing and speaking are useful skills. It means



that learners generate ideas, concepts, and meaning from context through writing and speaking.

Furthermore, 21st century skills are abilities that are important for society globally in facing 21st-century competition (Annisa Al Fatihah, 2022). Communication skills are one of the abilities required of humans in the twenty-first century. Communication is an important skill in human interaction (Simsek & Ardem, 2020). In the learning process, communication can encourage improvements in quality and effectiveness in successful learning at all levels (Hastuti, 2018). Communication is divided into several forms, one of which is verbal communication. Types of verbal communication include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Written communication is part of verbal communication (Churiyah, 2011). Written communication is the process of conveying ideas in written form (Wardhana, 2018).

In addition, autonomous learning has become a modern learning approach for teaching any subject, including language. Autonomous learning means to give more responsibility to the students in the learning process, both inside and outside the classroom to achieve success in learning in the future (Cotteral S, 2000). Learner autonomy is considered one of the essential factors affecting students' success in language learning. Students who have autonomy can manage and apply learning strategies to advance their language skills. It means that learner autonomy will also help students improve their writing skills (Uli Agustina Gultom et al, 2022).

In the context of EFL, autonomous writing skills are the techniques a student may use in the learning and subsequent reproduction through writing in English as a foreign language. These skills enable a student to take charge of their own writing tasks and projects (Shilan Bahaddin Mustafa et al, 2023). As such, EFL autonomous writing skills are bound to enable the student to control their own writing through making decisions with regards to the methods, purpose, setting and time of writing (Tajmirriahi & Rezvani, 2021 as cited in Shilan Bahaddin Mustafa, 2023).

Nunan (2003) also proposed five levels of autonomy; these levels of autonomy deal with learners' involvement in materials. The first level of autonomy is awareness, which focuses on encouraging learners to be aware of the goals, contents, and strategies used. The second level is involvement, where learners are pushed to be involved in decision-making by selecting their own goals in a range of alternatives offered by teachers. The next level is intervention, which means that learners are encouraged to actively modify and adapt the goals, contents, and tasks. The fourth level is a creation where the learners can create their own goals and tasks. The highest level of autonomy is transcendence, where the learners go beyond the classroom context by creating their learning materials available in the community without the help of others.

On the other hand, writing is a productive process done through some stages and the writing production is in the form of readable text that should be meaningful for everyone who read it. It is critical to students' academic success in higher education. The process of teaching and learning in writing should be run well by giving a good input and effective activities to improve student's writing skill (Masdianti et al, 2021). Besides that, writing is also crucial for building thinking skills, developing social skills, and fostering students' awareness of their place in society. Furthermore, in writing activities, students can communicate and organize their ideas supported by the information they have obtained. Moreover, in the development of twenty-first-century learning, writing skills are needed



to improve students' competencies, including creativity and critical thinking (Uli Agustina Gultom et al, 2022). Writing contributes to the thinking process in which the writers must express thoughts clearly and creatively to help their readers understand the meaning (Harmer J, 2007). Writers must be able to relate to their readers and express their ideas relevantly to their audiences. These facts highlight the importance of writing ability for students.

Writing is a way for students to express their ideas, but most students still make serious errors in spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. One solution is to provide students with a tool that can assist and guide them in demonstrating their error. Some factors influence students' ability to write, such as reading habits, student interest in learning, writing strategies, interesting topics, length of teaching time, and appropriate teaching techniques. Therefore, it can be concluded that the difficult skill in learning a language is writing. It is difficult for students in the teaching-learning process because the difficulties lie not only in generating and organizing ideas but also in translating those ideas into written form. In addition, the writer also thinks about the use of proper grammar in the text they make in order that the reader can understand the text well. Despite these challenges, writing skills can be taught by using temporary support as an instructional strategy, which is referred to as scaffolding.

One of the concepts is introduced by Vygotsky as cited in Poorahmadi (2009) that is scaffolding. He believes that all knowledge is social in nature and that learning takes place in the context of social interactions that lead to understanding. In his theory, learning is effectively formed through the zone of proximal development (ZPD) in social interaction. ZPD is defined as "the difference between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the potential development level as determined by problem-solving under adult supervision or in collaboration with more capable peers". In other words, ZPD is the space between what students can carry out independently and what they are not able to do, even with assistance. The relationship between the scaffolding strategy and ZPD that is the scaffolding strategy provides individualized support based on the learners' ZPD (Cole & Cole; Bockarie; Hill; Holzman as cited in Poorahmadi, 2009).

Scaffolding is a process in which teachers provide students with a temporary framework for learning in an educational setting. In this sense, the teacher is more than just a teacher who teaches, explains, and assigns activities to students; teachers are team players. Teachers and students worked together to brainstorm ideas for writing assignments. When students require assistance in reaching a specific level of understanding, the teacher provides them with adequate supports at the same time. The students will not feel isolated and inferior in class, and success is possible.

Scaffolding in the classroom is the process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning. More knowledgeable others (teachers, peers, etc.) provide scaffolding or support in scaffolding instruction. One of the primary advantages of scaffolding instruction is that it creates a supportive learning environment. Students in a scaffold learning environment are free to ask questions, provide feedback, and assist their peers in learning new material.

Scaffolding is used to help students achieve academic success. Scaffolding is mentor assistance for the learner's benefit (Muhammad Istiaque Hasan, 2020). Bruner (1978) defines scaffolding as a process in which a teacher assists a student or a proficient peer to



peer. Scaffolding can be provided in three ways, according to Hsieh (2017): peer to peer, multidirectional, and individual. Soft scaffolding and hard scaffolding are the two types of scaffolding (Saye and Bush, 2002 as cited in Chen and Law 2016). This assistance is very effective because students do not discover any way to solve the problem. A teacher is crucial in resolving the issue.

There are seven types of scaffolding in teaching writing which are synthesized from the literature. These include bridging, contextualizing, inviting students' participation, schema building, offering explanation, modeling, and verifying and clarifying students' understanding (Roehler and Cantlon; Hogan and Pressley; McKenzie; Gibbons; Sam; Walqui as cited in Dewi, 2013). Bridging refers to activating students' prior knowledge before new concept is delivered (McKenzie; Walqui as cited in Dewi, 2013). Another type is contextualizing as a way to connect students' everyday language and academic language by providing relevant illustration or metaphor (Sam; Walqui as cited in Dewi, 2013). Inviting students' participation is another type of scaffolding which gives students opportunities to complete task after illustration is given (Roehler and Cantlon as cited in Dewi, 2013). Besides, schema building is defined as a way to connect students' prior knowledge and new information or concept through organizing knowledge and understanding (Gibbons; Rubin as cited in Dewi, 2013). Next, offering explanation is to do with explicit teaching to develop students' understanding about declarative knowledge, conditional knowledge, and procedural knowledge (Roehler and Cantlon as cited in Dewi, 2013). Another type is modeling which is to show how one should feel, think, or act within a given situation when the desired of learning behavior is modeled (Roehler and Cantlon; Herrmann as cited in Dewi, 2013). The last type is verifying and clarifying students' understanding as the activity when a teacher checks students' emerging understanding as suggested by Roehler and Cantlon as cited in Dewi (2013).

The scaffolding strategy has been used in many studies and it has shown positive results. There have been some previous studies on the scaffolding strategy in the teaching-learning process. The first study, Zarandi (2014) assessed the effectiveness of interactive scaffolding strategies on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' speaking ability. The second study, Haghparast (2015), attempted to determine the impact of scaffolding on the reading comprehension ability of intermediate EFL learners. The third study, Veerappan (2011) examines the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in journal writing among L2 undergraduate university students. The purpose of this study is to examine the progress of L2 university college students in using correct grammar by employing a scaffolding strategy in journal writing.

The fourth study, Talley (2014) investigated students' reactions to scaffolding during English communication skills instruction in the classroom. The fifth study, Huggin (2011) evaluated the effectiveness of using instructional scaffolding in college-level reading and writing courses. Its goal was to see if instructional scaffolding had an effect on students' reading and writing performance. The sixth study, Poorahmadi (2012) investigated the effect of scaffolding strategies and classroom tasks on teaching reading comprehension to Iranian EFL learners.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate what extend does the scaffolding strategy develop the construct of students' autonomy in their written communication. The findings of empirical research can be used to support theories and practices that promote autonomy, particularly in language learning.



Method

This study employed correlational research, which is investigated the relationship between scaffolding strategy and students' autonomy in written communication skills of the Buddhist Communication Science Department students. They were the first-year semester of the undergraduate students of the Buddhist Communication Science Department in Jinarakkhita Buddhist College of Lampung, Indonesia. The design of this present study was pretest posttest experimental group design. Twenty students served as the sample of this study. The study applied a learner autonomy questionnaire, a writing test, and interview to collect the data. The questionnaire was used to obtain information about students' autonomy in learning and it was adapted from Gai Fangpeng (2014) which its validity and reliability had been tested. The item of test was valid. It showed from the sig. tailed < 0.05 and reliable of the analysis result was obtained 0.834. the item of test consists of thirtytwo items with five options adapted from the Likert Scale. To provide clarity and avoid misapprehension, the questionnaire was translated into Indonesian.

A writing test was given to the students to obtain data about their written communication skills. They had to write an essay and it was scored using a scoring rubric, particularly for the essay writing rubric. The data from the learner autonomy questionnaire and writing test were then analyzed with pearson product moment correlation by using SPSS 23 for Windows to determine the range of correlation between those two variables. The data obtained from writing test and questionnaire for measuring learning autonomy were calculated before and after treatment. Repeated Measures T-test was used to compare two types of data or mean coming from the same sample. It was used to compare the means score from the result of pretest and posttest. This was to see whether there was difference of the students' autonomy in written communication after the implementation of scaffolding strategy. Besides that, the researcher gave also the interview after posttest was done. This case was done to know the students' responses to scaffolding strategy during writing class. Since this study dealt with the effect of scaffolding strategy on the students' autonomy in written communication.

Finding

The Students' Autonomy in Written Communication

This subsection answered the research question that was to what extend does the scaffolding strategy develop the construct of students' autonomy in written communication. To answer this research question, data were gathered by administering pre- and post-tests of essay writing.

In this study, the researcher used a rubric score to analyze and measure the students' written communication ability in analytical exposition text. In this case, the researcher used J.B. Heaton rubric score because it was appropriate for the purpose of the research question which was to determine students' autonomy in written communication when they write analytical exposition text. J.B. Heaton's rubric score included content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

The scores from the two inter-raters in this study were combined and these were the final and average scores. The highest final score of the writing pre-test was 65 and the lowest final score was 38. The researcher had not given any treatments to the students at the time. As a result, it was not surprising that their score was still low. The students wrote what they knew based on their own experiences in the previous education level. Before they did this



pre-test, they must pay attention to the instructions in the pre-test paper that provided by the researcher. The students did this pre-test for ninety minutes.

In this situation, the students struggled to write an analytical exposition text because they had assumed that writing was a difficult and boring subject. They did not know how to begin writing something. They still confused about what they should write. Meanwhile, the students had many ideas to write something. Unfortunately, they still confused how to organize their thoughts and choose effective words/idioms in their writing. Additionally, the students did not understand the grammar that should be used in their writing. Their mechanics were still disorganized. However, they continued to write what they knew in this pre-test section. Finally, the students completed their pre-test on writing. The students' writing pre-test results for each aspect of writing were as follows: content 15.7, organization 11.5, vocabulary 10.5, language use 10.9, and mechanics 2.5.

Inter-rating was used in scoring the students' writing post-test, just as it was in scoring the writing pre-test. The results were as follows: the highest final score of the writing post-test was 73, and the lowest final score was 57. The researcher had given the students any treatments. The students also used all of the steps in the writing process which in this case included a scaffolding strategy. Scaffolding occurs during the stages of instruction in the context of teaching writing. As a result, the students gained a wealth of knowledge and experience while carrying out this treatment. The researcher assisted the students step by step when they wrote analytical exposition text. The students sometimes discussed with their friends in group. Finally, the students completed their writing post-test during ninety minutes. The students' writing post-test results for each aspect of writing were as follows: content 19.2, organization 16.15, vocabulary 13.2, language use 13.6, and mechanics 3.0.

Furthermore, comparing the average score of the pre - test and post - test, students' writing ability improved from 52.2 to 65.1. As a result, there was a 12.9% improvement. The end result was as follows:

Table. 1 The Students' Writing Improvement
Paired Samples Statistic

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair1 Writing_Pretest	52.2000	20	4.01182	.89707
Writing_Posttest	65.1000	20	8.95956	2.00342

The t-test was used to determine whether the improvement was significant or not. The end result was as follows:

Table. 2 Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences				T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
				Lower Upper			
Pair1 Posttest-Pretest	12.90000	7.62199	1.70433	9.33280 16.46720	7.569	19	.000



The researcher compared t-value to t-table using the table above. The t-value in this case was 7.569, while the t-table was 2.093. If t-value > t-table, the current study's result was significant. This could imply that scaffolding strategy could significantly improve students' autonomy in written communication than conventional methods.

The table above shows a significant difference in the students' writing pretest and posttest scores. According to the Paired Sample T-Test, the treatment had a significant impact on the students' scores, as indicated by the sig. (2-tailed) value of .000. In addition, mean score of 4.6, the treatment had the greatest positive impact on the "organization" aspect of writing.

Furthermore, to investigate students' autonomy in written communication, the data were collected by giving pre – test and post – test by using linkert-scale questionnaire consisting of thirty-two questions. The quantitative data from the pre – test and the post – test. The improvement of students' autonomy in writing could be seen by comparing the average score of pre – test and post – test, that was from 3.4 to 4.6. so there was an improvement of 1.2. Here was the result:

Table. 3 The Improvement of Students' Autonomy in Written Communication
Paired Samples Statistic

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Posttest	4.6094	32	.31557	.05579
Pretest	3.4484	32	.68973	.12193

Whether the improvement was significant or not, it was tested by using t – test. Here was the result:

Table. 4 Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair1 Posttest-Pretest	1.16094	.90827	.16056	.83347	1.48840	7.230	31	.000

Based on the table above, the researcher compared t-value with t-table. In this case, t-value was 7.230 while t-table was 2.042. If t-value > t-table so the result of this present study was significant. Besides that, probability level (p) which was under the column two tail significance, in this case p = .000. This could be inferred that scaffolding strategy could further promote the students' autonomy in written communication significantly.

The improvement was not too high due scaffolding strategy was an instructional technique whereby the teacher models the desired learning strategy or task and then gradually shifts responsibility to the students. This type of interaction was consistent with Vygotsky as



cited in Veerappan (2011) that believe that learning was a social process and not an individual one, and it occurs when students interact with their teacher and with one another in the classroom. However, the students sometimes felt be unwilling to ask or to discuss with their teacher or friends in the teaching learning process because they were shy. And of course, this case could obstruct their autonomy in learning, especially in written communication. Meanwhile, written communication was a complex process.

Discussion

The Students' Autonomy in Written Communication

This present study analyzed the increase of each aspect of writing; they were content (3.5), organization (4.6), vocabulary (2.7), language use (2.7), and mechanic (0.6). It was found that organization aspect increased more significantly than the other aspects. This finding was in line with some previous studies that dealt with teaching writing skill in EFL context cited as follows: Faraj (2015) conducted study *"Scaffolding EFL Students' Writing through the Writing Process Approach"*. In general findings of this present study revealed that teacher gives the right instruction to the students through the mini-lesson they know how to organize their writings and how to make correction in both reviewing and editing stages independently before publishing stage. Furthermore, Majid (2012) carried out study *"Blended Scaffolding Strategies through Facebook to Aid Learning and Improving the Writing Process and Writing Performance"*. In general findings of this present study revealed blended scaffolding strategies helped the students' writing process. The students mentioned that blended scaffolding strategies enabled them to generate ideas, edit their work, and improve their vocabulary and spelling. Not only that, they could understand the use of idioms and grammar correctly.

Furthermore, related to the implementation of scaffolding strategy in writing class, the finding of this present study showed that the improvement of the students autonomy was not very high but this case could be seen as a positive result of the scaffolding strategy in written communication. This finding supported some previous studies that dealt with the application of scaffolding strategy in promoting the students' autonomy in written communication cited as follows: Bryan and Christianson as cited in Veerappan et al (2011) carried out study on *"The Effect of Scaffolding Technique in Journal Writing among the Second Language Learners"*. Their study suggested that the scaffolding was entirely consistent with the notion of community where each student collaborated and assisted each other. The scaffolding here was implemented through peer collaboration where the students help each other in developing their writing abilities and move to a stage of autonomous writers. In additionally, Faraj (2015) conducted study *"Scaffolding EFL Students' Writing through the Writing Process Approach"*. In general findings of this present study revealed that scaffolding technique helped educators develop themselves and become autonomous learners. In other words, the scaffolding technique presented in this study has helped the students to find out their weaknesses and strengths, and how to work on their weaknesses and improve them.

Learner autonomy has an important role to play for successful lifelong language learning, particularly in the EFL context where learners tend to have infrequent contact with native speakers of English and thus limited opportunities to use English. Successful language learning is unlikely to occur unless the learner as an active agent endeavors to take charge of his/her own foreign language learning throughout his/her life (Nakata, 2014).

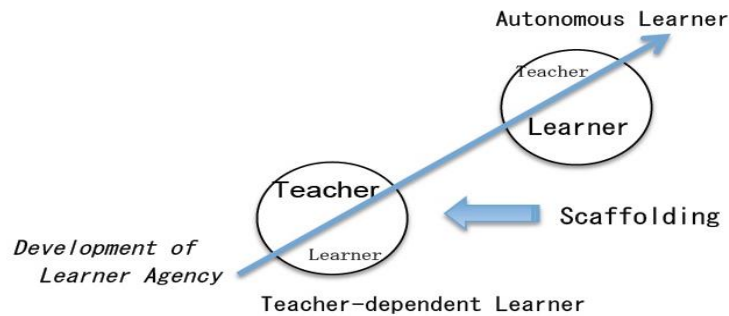


Figure 1. Development of Learner Autonomy

The figure above depicts the development of learner agency toward the achievement of learner autonomy, showing how learner characteristics change when provided with the right kind of scaffolding. It postulates that, given appropriate support in the quality and quantity of learning, learners can be encouraged to become more self-regulated in learning a foreign language and gradually start to take more responsibility for their learning. In other words, agency is considered as a prerequisite for the development of learner autonomy (Nakata, 2014).

Conclusion

In line with the analysis of the data gained during the research, the findings and the result of this present study in the previous section, the researcher draws to these following conclusions: the scaffolding strategy has been implemented in the first-year semester of the undergraduate students of the Buddhist Communication Science Department in Jinarakkhita Buddhist College of Lampung. Then, the students seem to have ability to complete their writing assignments are easier as a result of the scaffolding activities in the classroom. Although statistically the improvement is not very high, it is encouraging seeing the fact that every aspect of writing improved. After the students are given scaffolding strategy, along with the improvement in writing skill, the students' autonomy in writing also improve significantly. Scaffolding strategy seems to have benefit in teaching learning process, especially in writing class. In this case, the students, who previously struggled to write, now have a growing awareness of how to gather information and use it in their writing confidently.

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