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Research Article

Enhancing EFL Students' Writing Performance through Scaffolding: A Quasi-Experimental Study

Muhammad Setya Nugraha[1,*], Faiqah Mahmudah[1]
[1] English Education Study Program, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to investigate the effect of the scaffolding teaching strategy on students' writing achievement in recount text at Junior High School 30 Merangin. Writing is a complex skill that requires mastery of various components, including content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. However, many students still face difficulties in developing ideas and organizing their writing. To address this issue, scaffolding was implemented as a structured instructional strategy to support students throughout the writing process.

Methodology: This research employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental posttest-only control group design. The sample consisted of 64 eighth-grade students, divided into an experimental group and a control group, each comprising 32 students. The experimental group received instruction using the scaffolding strategy, while the control group was taught using the Scientific Approach. Data were collected through a writing post-test and analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent sample t-test.

Main Findings: The experimental group achieved a higher mean score (M = 83.10) compared to the control group (M = 75.20). The result of the t-test (t = 5.982) indicated a statistically significant difference between the two groups at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that the scaffolding strategy had a positive effect on students' writing achievement.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Scaffolding is an effective teaching strategy that can enhance students' writing performance, particularly in organizing ideas and developing coherent texts. This study contributes to EFL pedagogy by providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of scaffolding in improving students' writing skills.

Corresponding Author:
Muhammad Setya Nugraha,
Department of English Education, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Thaha Saifuddin,
Jl. Lintas Jambi-Muara Bulian KM. 16, Simpang Sungai Duren, Kab. Muaro Jambi, Jambi, 36361, Indonesia
Email: nugrahasetya564@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most important skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. It is not only used as a means of communication but also plays a significant role in developing students' thinking skills and evaluating their academic performance. Writing is a complex activity because it involves several components at once, such as grammar, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, and coherence [1]-[5]. Writing is a recursive process that includes planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Its effectiveness

depends on how well ideas are organized, how clearly they are expressed, and how accurate the language is [6]-[10]. In addition, cohesion and coherence are essential to ensure that ideas in a text are logically connected and easy to understand. Therefore, developing writing skills requires continuous practice supported by clear and structured instruction.

Writing ability does not develop instantly but grows gradually over time. Students typically begin with simple sentence construction before progressing to more complex forms such as paragraphs and essays. Hadley et al, describes this development as a continuum, moving from basic writing skills to more advanced types such as expository and argumentative writing [11]. In academic settings, writing is often used to measure students' ability to organize ideas, think critically, and express their understanding [12]-[15]. For this reason, improving students' writing skills has become a key goal in EFL teaching.

However, many Indonesian students still face difficulties in writing. Common problems include generating ideas, organizing content, choosing appropriate vocabulary, and constructing grammatically correct sentences [16]-[19]. Limited knowledge of grammar also makes it difficult for students to express their ideas effectively [20]-[23]. In addition, students often struggle to create unified paragraphs, develop clear arguments, and apply suitable writing strategies. These challenges indicate that writing is not only a matter of language ability but also involves thinking and problem-solving skills.

Initial observations at Junior High School 30 Merangin reflect these issues. Students showed low writing ability, especially in organizing ideas and developing paragraphs. Out of 20 students observed, only half were able to structure their ideas properly and use appropriate vocabulary, while the others had difficulty producing clear and coherent texts. This suggests that current teaching practices have not fully supported students in developing their writing skills, particularly in idea development and organization.

To overcome these challenges, more effective teaching strategies are needed. One approach that can be applied is scaffolding. Scaffolding is based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, especially the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between what students can do on their own and what they can achieve with guidance [24]-[29]. In writing instruction, scaffolding can be implemented through activities such as providing examples, giving feedback, guiding students step by step, and gradually reducing support as students become more independent [30]-[34]. This approach can help students improve their writing skills while also increasing their confidence and engagement.

Although many studies have shown that scaffolding can improve writing skills, several gaps still exist. First, most studies focus on general writing improvement without clearly measuring students' writing achievement, especially at the junior high school level. Second, many previous studies use descriptive or qualitative methods, making it difficult to determine the direct effect of scaffolding on students' writing performance. Third, there is still limited research conducted in Indonesian secondary schools, particularly in rural areas such as Junior High School 30 Merangin. Fourth, previous studies rarely focus on specific writing problems, such as idea generation, organization, and paragraph development, which are key challenges faced by students.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to provide new contributions. It examines the effect of scaffolding on students' writing achievement using a quantitative approach, allowing for clearer measurement of its impact. In addition, this study applies scaffolding throughout the writing process to address students' specific difficulties in developing and organizing ideas. It also focuses on a rural junior high school context, which has not been widely explored in previous research. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of scaffolding in writing instruction on students' writing achievement at Junior High School 30 Merangin. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of teaching strategies in EFL writing and provide practical guidance for teachers in improving students' writing skills.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher's research design is quantitative, using a quasi-experimental posttest-only control group design. It was done to investigate causal hypotheses by comparing one or more experimental groups that received treatment with a comparison group that did not. This research design was implemented because it aligned with the research objectives, which aimed to determine whether there is a significant effect of using a scaffolding teaching strategy on the writing achievement of eighth-grade students in recount text. This study used descriptive statistics (average, minimum, and maximum) and inferential statistics. The inferential statistic used was the independent sample t-test.

Tabel 1. Posttest Non-Equivalent Control Group Design

Group	Treatment	Posttest
Experimental	Scaffolding teaching strategy to learn recount text writing	O_1
Control	Text writing through the Scientific Approach	O_2

This research was conducted at Junior High School 30 Merangin, with a total of 64 eight-grade students. There were 32 students in the experimental class and 32 students in the control class. The experimental class used the Scaffolding teaching strategy to learn recount text writing, while the control class used the Text writing through the Scientific Approach. The sample collection technique used was Cluster random sampling. This method was chosen because it is more practical to implement in schools and less time-consuming. In this study, the first step in the data collection process was to provide intervention only to the experimental class using Scaffolding teaching strategy to learn recount text writing. In contrast, the control class used Text writing through the Scientific Approach. The results of the effectiveness of scaffolding in writing instruction on students' writing achievement at Junior High School 30 Merangin. The instruments used were an analytical assessment rubric consisting of five aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The function of this test is to measure students' achievement in writing recount texts. The scoring rubric was adapted and validated from Jacobs et al, with modifications to suit recount text writing [35]. The detailed scoring indicators are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The indicator of witing

No	Aspects	Score	Level	Criteria
1.	Content	30-27	Very good	Content is very relevant to the topic, complete supporting details, and very easy to understand.
		26-22	Good	Content is relevant to the topic, adequate supporting details, and easy to understand.
		21-17	Fair	Content is fairly relevant, some supporting details missing, and fairly understandable.
		16-13	Poor	Content is not relevant, lacks supporting details, and hard to understand.
2.	Organization	20-18	Very good	Ideas are clearly stated, well-organized, complete logical sequence, and connectors are effectively used.
		17-14	Good	Ideas stated clearly, loosely organized, complete logical sequence, connectors are used effectively
		13-10	Fair	Ideas unclear, loosely organized, weak logical sequence, connectors sometimes inappropriate.
		9-7	Poor	No clear organization, weak sequence, connectors not used or ineffective.
3	Vocabulary	20-18	Very good	Effective choice of words and mastery of word forms.
		17-14	Good	Adequate word choice, some minor misuse of words.
		13-10	Fair	Limited vocabulary, frequent errors, sometimes confusing.
		9-7	Poor	Very limited vocabulary, frequent errors, meaning often unclear
4.	Grammar	25-22	Very good	No errors in the use of past tense, pronouns, articles, and other grammatical features.
		21-18	Good	Few errors in past tense, pronouns, or articles, but meaning is clear.
		17-11	Fair	Some errors in past tense and grammar, occasionally affecting meaning.
		10-5	Poor	Frequent and serious grammatical errors, meaning often unclear.
5.	Mechanics	5	Very good	No errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
		4	Good	Few minor errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
		3	Fair	Some errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
		2	Poor	Frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

To obtain data on students' writing achievement in recount texts, a writing post-test was administered at the end of the treatment period to both the experimental and control groups. The post-test aimed to measure students' writing performance under equivalent conditions, ensuring that both groups were assessed using the same task, time allocation, scoring procedures, and evaluation criteria. This design was intended to allow for a fair comparison of students' writing achievement following the implementation of different instructional approaches. In the post-test, students were instructed to write a recount text consisting of approximately 100–125

words based on their personal experiences. To facilitate idea generation, several guiding topics were provided, such as “An Unforgettable Holiday,” “My School Trip,” and “A Memorable Experience.” The time allocation for completing the task was 60 minutes, which was considered sufficient for planning, drafting, and revising their writing. In developing the writing test, two key measurement principles were considered, namely validity and reliability. Content validity refers to the extent to which a test adequately represents the skills and knowledge it intends to measure. In this study, content validity was ensured by aligning the writing task with the competencies outlined in the junior high school English curriculum, particularly those related to recount text writing. This alignment ensured that the test reflected the instructional objectives and the learning materials taught during the treatment. Reliability, on the other hand, concerns the consistency of test scores across different administrations or raters. To enhance scoring reliability and reduce subjectivity, inter-rater reliability was employed in this study. Two raters were involved in the scoring process: the researcher as Rater 1 and an English teacher as Rater 2. Both raters independently evaluated students’ writing using the same scoring rubric. In cases where the score discrepancy between the two raters exceeded five points, a discussion was conducted to reach a consensus on the final score. This procedure was implemented to ensure consistency and fairness in the scoring process.

Students’ writing performance was assessed using an analytical scoring approach, which evaluates multiple components of writing separately rather than assigning a single holistic score. The scoring rubric was adapted from Jacobs et al., encompassing five key aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics [35]. Each aspect was scored based on defined criteria, and the overall writing score was calculated by summing the scores across all components. This approach provided a more detailed evaluation of students’ writing abilities and allowed for a more precise measurement of their achievement in writing recount texts.

All data obtained from this study in the control and experimental classes were collected, then calculated and analyzed using SPSS 21. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the frequency, percentage, average, minimum, and maximum for the control and experimental groups. In this study, quantitative data were analyzed using parametric statistics, including independent sample t-tests. Independent sample t-tests were conducted to test differences in scaffolding in writing instruction on students’ writing achievement at Junior High School 30 Merangin. This study used SPSS 21 at a significance level of 0.05.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the treatment had been given, both the experimental and the control classes were administered a post-test to evaluate the effect of the Scaffolding Teaching Strategy on students’ writing achievement. The post-test required students to write a recount text of approximately 100–125 words using the same scoring rubric as in the pre-test, covering five writing aspects: Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Grammar, and Mechanics. The purpose of this post-test was to determine whether there was any significant improvement in the students’ writing performance after the treatment. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics through SPSS version 26. The summary of the descriptive results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Writing Performance Students Junior High School

Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental Class	32	75	90	83.10	4.58
Control Class	32	70	80	75.20	3.92

The results presented in Table 3 indicate a clear and meaningful difference in students’ writing performance between the experimental and control groups. The experimental class (N = 32) achieved a higher mean score (M = 83.10, SD = 4.58), with scores ranging from 75 to 90, whereas the control class (N = 32) obtained a lower mean score (M = 75.20, SD = 3.92), with a score range of 70 to 80. This finding suggests that students who received scaffolding-based instruction demonstrated better writing performance compared to those who were taught using conventional methods. The relatively small standard deviations in both groups indicate that the scores were fairly homogeneous, although the experimental group showed slightly greater variability, reflecting a broader improvement among students. These results are consistent with previous studies highlighting that structured instructional support can significantly enhance students’ writing outcomes [36]-[39]. In contrast, the implementation of text writing through the Scientific Approach alone appears insufficient to fully address students’ needs in developing writing performance, particularly in aspects such as idea organization and coherence. This comparison shows that the application of Text Writing through the Scientific Approach failed to meet students’ needs in writing performance. At the same time, the application of the Scaffolding teaching strategy was able to provide and foster better writing performance for students.

Table 4. Independent sample t-test for Students Writing Performance

	t	df	Mean	Std.Deviation	*95% confidence interval*	
					Lower	*Upper*
Writing Performance	5.982	64	3.2818	.14149	8.912	.6252
	5.982	1.998	2.1286	.20917	7.874	.8622

As presented in Table 4, the result of the independent samples t-test further confirms this difference. The obtained t-value (t = 5.982) is higher than the critical t-value (t = 1.998) at the 0.05 significance level (two-tailed) with 64 degrees of freedom. This indicates that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in students' writing performance between the control class, which was taught using the Scientific Approach, and the experimental class, which received scaffolding-based instruction in learning recount text writing. Furthermore, the mean difference between the two groups is 3.2818, indicating that the experimental class outperformed the control class. This result is strengthened by the 95% confidence interval, which does not include zero, thereby confirming the robustness and statistical significance of the findings.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be explained through Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD refers to the distance between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with guidance from a more knowledgeable other [40]-[43]. In this study, the scaffolding strategy provided systematic support—such as modeling, guided practice, and feedback—which enabled students to perform writing tasks that would otherwise be beyond their current ability. This is in line with the view that learning is socially mediated and that cognitive development is fostered through interaction and instructional support [44]-[47]. As the scaffolding was gradually withdrawn, students became more independent in generating ideas, organizing their writing, and applying appropriate grammatical structures, reflecting the internalization of learning processes.

These findings are also supported by previous research indicating that scaffolding can effectively improve students' writing skills by reducing cognitive load and guiding learners through complex tasks [48]-[51]. Thus, the significant improvement observed in the experimental group suggests that scaffolding not only enhances students' writing performance but also promotes the development of strategic competence in writing. In contrast, the conventional approach used in the control class appears to provide less structured support, resulting in comparatively lower performance. These findings highlight the effectiveness of scaffolding as a pedagogical strategy in EFL writing instruction, particularly in addressing students' difficulties in idea generation, organization, and coherence. Therefore, scaffolding can be considered a valuable instructional approach for improving students' writing achievement in recount text and potentially other genres of writing.

The findings of this study offer several important contributions to the existing literature on EFL writing instruction. In terms of novelty, this study provides empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the scaffolding strategy using a quantitative quasi-experimental design, which allows for a more objective measurement of its impact on students' writing achievement. Unlike many previous studies that primarily employed qualitative or descriptive approaches, this study statistically demonstrates the significant difference between students taught using scaffolding and those taught using the Scientific Approach. Furthermore, this study focuses specifically on recount text writing, particularly addressing students' difficulties in idea generation, organization, and paragraph development, which are often overlooked in broader writing studies. Another distinctive contribution lies in its context, as the research was conducted in a rural junior high school setting, providing insights into underrepresented educational environments in Indonesia. In addition, scaffolding was systematically implemented across all stages of the writing process, including planning, drafting, and revising, offering a more comprehensive instructional model.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), by demonstrating that structured guidance can significantly enhance students' cognitive and linguistic performance in writing. From a practical standpoint, this study highlights the importance of incorporating scaffolding strategies into classroom instruction. Teachers are encouraged to provide step-by-step guidance, model writing processes, and deliver continuous feedback to support students' learning. The results also suggest that scaffolding can serve as an effective alternative to conventional teaching approaches, particularly in improving students' ability to organize ideas and produce coherent texts. Moreover, this study implies that writing instruction should shift toward a more process-oriented and student-centered approach, where learners actively engage in constructing their knowledge with appropriate support.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of a posttest-only design limits the ability to measure students' initial writing proficiency, which may affect the interpretation of improvement levels. Second, the sample size is relatively small and limited to a single institution, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Third, the study focuses exclusively on recount text

writing, and therefore the results may not be directly applicable to other genres such as argumentative or descriptive writing. Additionally, the duration of the treatment was relatively short, which may not fully capture the long-term effects of scaffolding on students' writing development.

Based on these limitations, several recommendations are proposed for future research. First, future studies should consider using a pretest-posttest control group design to provide a more comprehensive analysis of students' progress. Second, researchers are encouraged to involve larger and more diverse samples across different regions and educational levels to enhance the external validity of the findings. Third, further research should explore the application of scaffolding strategies in teaching various text genres to determine its broader effectiveness. Additionally, integrating scaffolding with digital learning tools or technology-based platforms may offer new opportunities to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Finally, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the sustained impact of scaffolding on students' writing skills over time.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the implementation of the scaffolding strategy significantly improved students' writing skills, particularly in recount text writing. This is evident in the clear difference between the learning outcomes of the experimental and control classes, indicating that students receiving scaffolding support were able to write with more structure, coherence, and linguistic accuracy. This strategy has proven effective in helping students develop ideas, organize their writing flow, and improve the accuracy of their grammar and vocabulary through the provision of gradual support tailored to their learning needs. The implications of these findings suggest that scaffolding can be used as a strategic learning approach in teaching writing at the junior high school level. Teachers need to design systematic learning activities, starting with providing examples and structured guidance, and gradually reducing support so that students can write independently. Furthermore, the implementation of scaffolding also encourages more student-centered learning, increases self-confidence, and facilitates the development of critical and reflective thinking skills in the writing process. More broadly, the results of this study emphasize the importance of using adaptive and responsive learning strategies to improve the quality of written literacy in the context of 21st-century education.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author was solely responsible for the conceptualization and design of the study, data collection, implementation of the narrative counseling intervention, data analysis, and interpretation of the results. The author also prepared the original draft of the manuscript, revised the content critically, and approved the final version for publication.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the generation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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