

CLASSROOM SCAFFOLDING: TEACHING READING AND WRITING IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

One of the main concerns in Education of Indonesia is Literary Writing and Reading in English, as stated in Government Regulation No. 23 Year 2006. The Curriculum of English Literacy in Indonesia has been developed and teachers require more models in the teaching of English reading and writing in order to successfully increase students' skills in reading and writing. One of the approaches is Genre Based, which has been also developed to Learning to Read: Reading to Learn (LRRL) program by David Rose. This program has successfully increased students' literary skills at twice the expected rate with integrating teaching of high level skills in reading and writing with normal classroom program across the curriculum in Australia. This paper aims, firstly, to describe the first important stage of the program in a study conducted in a vocational high school in Bandung, Indonesia. The description deals with the theory of scaffolding in classroom, which is one of the conceptual frameworks of Reading to Learn strategy, where learning with the support of teacher will be more successful than learning independently. Secondly, it also aims to show how the stage was conducted in Indonesian context, as in reading materials and points of view. The result of this research shows that such program can also give significant contributions to improve students' skill in reading and writing. In addition, scaffolding plays the most important roles in preparing students to comprehend reading and practicing writing, so that teachers should have more understanding about scaffolding.

Keywords: Reading to Learn Approach, Scaffolding, teaching reading and writing

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian Government has always been concern with literacy, especially with English language. It can be shown in the Government Regulation or *Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional* No. 23 Year 2006 on the Standard Competences for students in primary and secondary schools in a School Based Curriculum. One of the Regulations states that students to perform the skills of listening, reading, and writing in Indonesian and English languages, which confirms that the curriculum of English literacy to be implemented in Indonesia.

Teachers require more models of teaching, especially in teaching of English reading and writing in order to successfully increase those skills. One of the approaches is Genre Based, which has been also developed to Learning to Read: Reading to Learn (LRRL) program by David Rose. This program has successfully increased students' literary skills at twice the expected rate with integrating teaching of high level skills in reading and writing with normal classroom program across the curriculum in Australia (Culican, 2006a). This program is also suitable because the program has core principles (Acevedo & Rose, 2007:1) adequate with the purpose of the mentioned Curriculum above. The first is that reading and writing have to be explicitly taught in all levels in the curriculum and it is important that all teachers teach reading and writing in every subject in school. This principle is the fundament of the program and also can be the basis of English literacy curriculum in Indonesia focusing on reading and writing teaching. Secondly, students from all levels should experience the same skills in learning reading and writing in which the program has successfully closed the gap between students in term of their skills. The second principle is closely related to the condition in Indonesia where students have wide gap, especially in English skills, related to reading and writing. The last is the roles of teachers which are very important in supporting students to do the learning tasks and designing activities enabled students to succeed at the same high level. The last principle is important for the development of teachers' competences especially in Indonesia in order to improve their reading and writing teaching skills.

Based on the description above about the need of teaching reading and writing in Indonesia's School Based Curriculum and the success of the LRRL program, in 2010 a study was implemented using the program in a vocational high school in Bandung, Indonesia, to promote the explicit reading and writing teaching. As the fact that in Indonesian context LRRL program has not yet been implemented, this study attempted to discover the roles of the program in improving students' writing skills, to find students responses to the program, and to find the students' problems and feasible solutions. This paper only outlines the key principles of the program, one of

which is the scaffolding interaction cycle, detailed reading cycle, and the contribution of this study towards the students.

2. SCAFFOLDING INTERACTION CYCLE

There are six steps in Learning to Read and Reading to Learn (LRRL) Program, i) Prepare before reading, ii) Detailed Reading, iii) Prepare before writing, iv) Joint Rewriting, v) Individual writing, and vi) Independent writing. The steps were initially derived from Genre Based Approach to writing (Rose, 2008), which has three stages: (i) Joint Deconstruction, (ii) Joint Construction, and (iii) Independent Construction. In implementing each step, according to Rose (2006), students have to experience *scaffolding learning cycle* in order to gain skills in reading and learning from reading. This can only be achieved with the first cycle of preparation. In this study at the phase of Preparing before Reading, Detailed Reading, Preparing before Writing, and Joint Rewriting students are being introduced how to do the task before they first perform the reading and writing independently. This is what Rose means by scaffolding “preparing learners to perform a learning task successfully by showing them how to do the task” (2006:7).

Three steps will have to be conducted in preparing learners for a task and it might occur before or after the task is done. For example, students are asked at Detailed Reading the spelling of some new words in order to move on to the next level in a lesson and elaborate what students already know. The three steps of scaffolding are derived from Vygotskian social learning theories, in which Vygotsky refers to as a ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ (ZPD). Rose’s scaffolding learning cycle is completed

in three steps: *Prepare*, *Task*, and *Elaborate*, seen below:

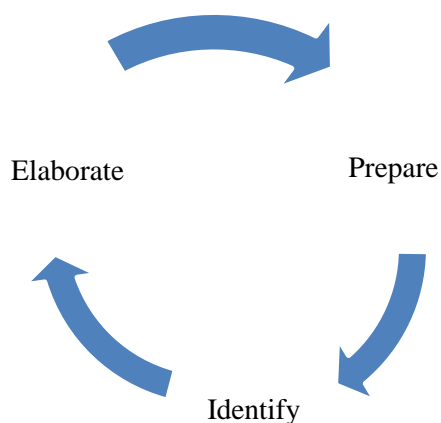


Figure 1. Scaffolding Learning Cycle
taken from Rose & Acevedo (2006:36)

In this paper, this scaffolding learning cycle will only be shown in the Detailed Reading Cycles conducted in this study, even though the scaffolding will have been occurred in other preparation cycles of the tasks. Detailed Reading Cycle is chosen because I think it is the fundamental preparation of reading understanding and structure learning.

3. DETAILED READING CYCLE

In this study there were three cycles conducted with three readings materials chosen. The first reading was Indonesian traditional story *Aryo Menak and His Wife*. It was chosen because students would feel familiar with the story and they would actively join the activities in Detailed Reading Cycle. It is a story of a fairy who could not return to her home in heaven in the sky because a man had stolen her shawl. Her shawl was magical that helped the fairy to fly.

The second reading material is taken from Martin & Rose (2008) entitled Karen’s story. The reason why the text has been chosen is because the writer uses her point of view “I”, which can be a good model for students to compare it with a recount. The teacher will have to provide information and background about the different race and cultural life of Aborigines and Australian, and how it would be difficult for an Aboriginal woman adopted by a white family, who lived far away from home.

The last reading material is a narrative text taken from *Exploring How Texts Work* (Derewianka, 1991) entitled *Unhappily Ever After* by Paul Jennings. The reason lying behind the choosing of this text is that this last

text is a high quality lengthy literature written by a professional writer and has a complex schematic structure. Students must aware that not all texts have a simple pattern on schematic structure. The story has a rather long orientation with minor complication, which leads to major complication. In addition, it has a false ending which rather hard to comprehend, then it goes to real ending. This requires students to think critically on what happens in the story. In addition, students will get more models of English language with more vocabularies. As there are many new and rather difficult vocabularies in the story. Teacher needs to make a preparation by giving the information and background of the text that can give an initial clue to students on what the story is about.

3.1 Cycle 1

Detailed Reading conducted in this study was similar to what Rose (2008) has suggested (see also Rose & Acevedo, 2006, Acevedo & Rose, 2007). This study followed the Scaffolding Learning Cycle (see Figure 1), where there are three steps: i) Prepare, ii) Task / Identify, iii) Affirm / Elaborate.

In this study, the first activity was the Prepare step when the whole story was read aloud first by the teacher or the students and then it was read again sentence by sentence along with paraphrasing the written words into spoken discourse. On the first Cycle, Detailed Reading stage was used to discuss the content of the story in the part of orientation to give more understanding to students on how a story started. The first sentence was read aloud and the next thing to do was to select one element of the sentence for the preparation, which was focusing on the temporal circumstance by using the transitivity category 'when' and telling them exactly where to find it.

Then, in the second step of Identify students were asked where the story took place. According to Rose (et al.), the move of Identify means that students identify elements in a text. From the transcript below, students were able to identify elements in the text discussed.

The last was when teacher affirmed student responses and students concurred. Elaboration occurred when teacher defined and explained new concept related to the condition in the story. Below is how the phase is conducted:

Teacher:	Now, look at the first sentence. A long time ago in the island of Madura there was almost nothing but forests. Okay, when did the story happen? When?	Prepare
Students:	A long time ago.	Identify
Teacher:	A long time ago. Okay.	Affirm
	Highlight A long time ago.	Instruct
	And where?	Prepare
Students:	In the island of Madura.	Identify
Teacher:	In the island of Madura.	Affirm
	Is it correct? In the island of Madura?	
Student:	Yes.	Affirm
Teacher:	Yes. Good	Affirm
	Okay. What information do we have there?	Prepare
	What information do we have there on the first sentence telling about the situation? Yes. There was almost nothing but forests? Is it true?	
Student:	Yes.	Affirm
Teacher:	Nothing but forests. Highlight nothing but forest.	Instruct
	If we read the sentence carefully, we will find the information that the situation at that time was nothing but forest. (Explaining in Indonesian)	Extend / Elaboration
Student:	Nothing but forest. (In Indonesian)	Affirm
Teacher:	And the most important thing is the time. When is the time? A long...?	Prepare
Students:	Time ago	Affirm
Teacher:	And where is the location?	Prepare Extend / Elaborate
	Okay, can you imagine a long time ago in Madura when there was almost nothing but forests? Can you imagine?	
Students:	Yes.	Affirm
Teacher:	No buildings?	Prepare Extend / Elaborate

Students:	Yes.	Affirm
Teacher:	No malls. Can you imagine?	Prepare Extend / Elaborate
Students:	Yes.	Affirm
Teacher:	No car?	Prepare Extend / Elaborate
Student:	Yes.	Affirm
Teacher:	Okay, you have to keep that in mind.	Instruct

As it can be seen from the study of Rose and this study, Prepare move or extend or elaborate occurred all the time in every step of the program. This had purposes to prepare students in understanding the context of the reading material and give overall meanings or language model (Rose, 2008).

3.2 Cycle 2

As in the previous cycle, Detailed Reading was also conducted in Cycle 2. This stage still focused on the discussion of the schematic structures and the language features showing the elements. The discussion can be seen from the transcript below:

Teacher	Ok, so, on the next sentence. There is a key word. A key word tells us that a problem is starting to happen. What is it? The key word?	Prepare
Students	My skin coloring was different to that of my family.	Identify
Teacher	Yes. My skin color. When did she notice that?	Affirm Prepare
Students	As I got older	Identify
Teacher	As I got older. You see, the sentence is very important because it tells us that 'she got older' creates problem. She realized that her color skin is different. When she was a baby she didn't care. If your sister is dark and you are not, and you are children, you don't care. But, as you got older, when things are different, you make that as a problem. Ok, now from there, you will see that the problem is starting, <i>yah?</i> Because she realized her skin color was different. Ok, what did she discover from her mother?	Affirm Elaborate Prepare
Students	She was adopted.	Identify
Teacher	She was adopted. Right. <i>I was adopted from Australia and part Aboriginal.</i> Highlight that one.	Affirm Instruct

The three preparation cues in Detailed Reading or Scaffolding Interaction Cycle (Rose, 2008, Acevedo & Rose, 2007:3), one of which is 'wh' question functioned as to give position to learners where to look for wording. One of the wording that indicate the complication or problem is the time shift (see Knapp & Watkins, 2004, Butt et al., 2000, & Derewianka, 1991), here was *as I got older*. It was expected that when later students wrote their individual or independent writing, they would select the time shifts to show the complication or problem.

3.3 Cycle 3

In Cycle 3, Detailed Reading was conducted differently to the previous two cycles. Here, the activity was rather in a long duration as the text was longer than the two previous ones. The reason was because the teacher would like to show explicitly to the students how the long orientation or the story started and how the long resolution or the story ended went differently to the two previous stories.

On the orientation, students were explained about the long explanation of the characterization of the two characters and that what happened to the student, Albert, was not the turning point of the story. The discussion can be found as follows:

Teacher	These long lines haven't reached the story yet. What are they then? They introduce the Principal's characters and where he worked. How he loved to hit the students was just the orientation. It is not the real story.	Prepare Elaborate
Students	Yes.	Affirm
Teacher	It was only the explanation of what kind of person Mr. Brown was, how he felt about his students. So, it made a long orientation, right?	Elaborate
Students	Yes.	Affirm
Teacher	From that long orientation, we should have known that the story started here when there is a phrase saying: <i>something went wrong. The sea didn't feel the same, or smell the same.</i> You can highlight that.	Elaborate Instruct Elaborate

From the discussion above, the teacher explicitly showed that the paragraphs that they had been discussed had not yet reached the real story. From the orientation of the story, it was told how Albert was being hit by the Principal using his belt. At first, it seemed to be the complication of the story that the problem was Albert had to get punished by his Principal. However, as the story was continuously being read, they found the phrase showing the complication of the story, which is *something went wrong*.

As it has been explained in the previous sessions, the teacher focused the students on the complication as something went wrong, seen from the transcript below:

Teacher	Do you still remember that a story starts if there is something wrong in the story? If the Principal hits the students every day, it is not something that goes wrong for him. So, it is not the real story. Don't you think so?	Affirm Instruct Elaborate
Students	Yes.	Affirm
Teacher	For the Principal, it was the ordinary, every-day thing he always did. It is like you come to school and then you go home. Ordinary things you do every day. So, hitting the children had been his routines and there was nothing wrong with it according to the Principal. Something went wrong when he was?	Elaborate Prepare
Student	In the sea.	Identify
Teacher	At the sea. So from this sentence: <i>something was wrong</i> ; we knew that the story started at the sea? Don't you think so?	Affirm Elaborate
Students	Yes.	Affirm

From the transcript above, the teacher stressed again how the story started differently and at the level of sentence or lexico grammar (see Acevedo & Rose, 2007, Martin & Rose, 2005) the sentence *something went wrong* can give model of past tense to students and the context in starting a problem in a story. Furthermore, the setting was very important to show that the story started when it changed to at the sea. This model was hopefully can be imitated in their writing in Joint Rewriting, Individual Writing, and Independent Writing Stages.

On the resolution, students thought that the story ended when the Principal woke up from his dream and did not feel sorry for what he had done to his students. However, it was not actually the end of the story because the real ending was when after he woke up. The setting also changed again from at the sea to at his office again, which means that students needed to follow the setting in order to see the development of the story.

On predicting meaning in the story, one high achiever could catch up the meanings from several words on his own and some by the help from the teacher, seen in the transcript below:

Student	Then he trudged slowly up the stairs	Identify
Teacher	Trudged slowly. What does <i>trudged</i> means?	Prepare
Student	<i>Menaiki</i> . (Answered correctly in Indonesian)	Select
Teacher	Yes, we can guess the meaning from the other words in the sentence. We see the word 'up' and 'stairs', so logically trudged means went up. Slowly up. Why not quickly? Perhaps he did not want to go. If he wanted to go, he would go quickly. (Translated)	Elaborate

From the transcript above, it can be seen that one of the student knew the meaning of unfamiliar word: *trudged*. At the level of syntactic or graphophonic system (see Gibbons, 1991), the student was able to make the meaning of the word. However, in order to give model to the other students, the teacher showed how as a reader they can also make such prediction by focusing on the word 'up' and 'stairs' in the sentence to guess the meaning of *trudged*. Here, the teacher prepared the student to deal with the complexity of reading task at the level of sentence or lexico grammar (see Acevedo & Rose, 2007, Martin & Rose, 2005).

Moreover, the teacher also tried to build the context by discussing the word 'slowly' by giving the idea to the student that when someone did not want to do something quickly means that he did not want to do it for some reasons. In the story, Albert did not want to go to the Principal's office because he was afraid to be hit again. By going there slowly, the reader could feel that he was reluctant. The preparation happened in this stage was hopefully to be the model for the students in dealing with complexity in future reading and enrich the vocabulary that they can use in their writing.

4. CONCLUSION

From the discussions above, we can see that scaffolding deals with many tasks or identifying and with elaboration by the teacher in term of context, meaning, structure and language used. The result of this research shows that such program can also give significant contributions to improve students' skill in reading and writing. In reading, students are given preparation in comprehending texts and in writing they are given models for examples to look up for. In addition, scaffolding plays the most important roles in preparing students to comprehend reading and practicing writing, so that teachers should have more understanding about scaffolding in classroom.

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