CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates the background of the research, problem identification, research objectives, research significance, research scope, research assumption, and limitation. Research background portrays the reasons for selecting the topic of the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies for teaching English online to Junior High School students. Problem identification explores theoretical and empirical records as a basis for the necessity of exploring the effectiveness of the implementation online scaffolding in teaching EFL to Junior High School students and understanding students' opinions on how the scaffolding strategies are implemented. Research objectives outline the measurable research outputs. Finally, research significance describes the theoretical and practical outcomes of the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

The sudden outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major disruption in every aspect of human life, including the field of education. The pandemic has forced human beings to practice physical distancing, which results in travel restrictions and the closing of public facilities including educational facilities. This condition requires policymakers to shift the routine. Workers are required to work online from home, and consequently, students also learn from home with the aid of online learning. Online

learning is not a novel concept in the educational field (Anderson & Garrison, 2003). The initial concept of online learning had been first introduced back in 1981 (Harasim, 2000). Online learning has been thriving ever since due to its apparent advantages, namely time and access flexibility and cost reduction. Most studies found that online learning is (at least) as effective as face-to-face classroom meetings (Siemens et al., 2015). Given the circumstances of the pandemic period and considering the benefits offered by online learning, it is inevitable that the educational paradigm will continue to shift into online modes.

While some aspects of the traditional classroom are different from online classes, the essence of teaching and learning in online education does not shift much. Both in face-to-face classroom and in online elarning, teachers (instructors) have a role to guide students to acquire new knowledge and skills. However, compared to traditional face-to-face classroom meetings, online learning is lacking in several aspects. One of them is the direct interaction between teacher and students. In a face-to-face meeting, the teacher can directly support the students whenever they encounter obstacles in learning. In online education, participants (teacher and students) do not meet physically. Therefore, it is a challenge for teachers to spot problems encountered by students right away. Teachers need to employ specific strategies for the teacher to support students' online learning.

The abrupt shift of the educational paradigm is a challenge faced by English teachers of SMPN 1 Mengwi in conducting teaching and learning activities online.

SMPN 1 Mengwi is a Junior High School in Badung Regency, Bali Province, Indonesia which is appointed by the Indonesian Ministry of Education as a reference school. This means that the school is often being the subject of the governments' piloting project of education. At the beginning of the pandemic (March to June 2020), the sudden implementation of online learning had brought quite confusion to both teachers and students. Teachers employed any resources available to accommodate students' learning. There had been no clear guidance, plan, or preparation to conduct online learning. Consequently, students' achievement could not be optimized.

On the new academic year of 2020/2021, Indonesian government issued a series of guidance on how online learning is to be conducted during pandemic (*Surat Edaran Nomor 15 Tahun 2020, Kepmendikbud no 179/P/2020, Panduan Penyelenggaraan Pembelajaran Pada Tahun Ajaran 2020/2021 dan Tahun Akademik 2020/2021 di Masa Pandemi Coronavirus Disease 2019*). Based on these regulations, the management of SMPN 1 Mengwi decided to conduct a fully online mode of learning with the aid of Google Classroom as the asynchronous platform of learning, and Google Meet is used for the synchronous meeting. Due to its' convenience, WhatsApp group is also allowed to support online discussions. Despite having implemented online learning in blended mode these past three years, the sudden shift to total online mode requires teachers of SMPN 1 Mengwi to adapt to the new teaching and learning environment. The blended model of online learning still leaves room for direct interaction between teacher-student and student-student during face-to-face classroom

meetings. However, in a fully online course, there are mainly six challenges encountered by students and teachers which includes: students' social background differences, students' level of digital literacy, students' presence, social interaction, spotting students' problem in learning, and provision of timely feedback. In learning English as a Foreign Language context, these challenges are possible hindrances of successful learning. On the side of the students, the main challenges are their lack of digital literacy and social background differences. These problems hinder students' optimum performance in online learning. On the other hand, teachers also find difficulties in identifying students' problem and provide sufficient support to help them learning.

As the essence of teaching and learning activities, teachers are required to help students overcome problems they face so that they would be able to move from their current state of ability to a new state of ability. The zone in which students can do with help and what they can do independently is what Vygotsky (1986) refers to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). To help students pass their Zone of Proximal Development, the instructor's presence and support are much needed. The support given by teachers to help students to move from their current state of development to the next level is known as scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Sufficient scaffolding given by teachers helps students reaching their potential level of development (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). Learning English requires the learners to master four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading,

and writing. The mastery of the four skills calls for sufficient scaffolding which can be provided through teachers' presence and feedback as well as social interaction (Gibbons, 2015). Since direct interaction and contingent support are lacking in online learning, specified scaffolding strategies were employed by English teachers of SMP Negeri 1 Mengwi Junior High School in order to support students' online learning.

Upon the implementation of online strategies in teaching English to junior high school students, reviews of how scaffolding is implemented in both traditional and online classroom had been conducted. Due to its importance, the implementation of effective scaffolding strategies in various subjects has been widely investigated. To name a few, elaborate review articles have been conducted by van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, (2010) and Belland, Walker, Kim, & Lefler, (2017). Van de Pol et al., (2010) focus the investigation on how scaffolding strategies are employed in a traditional face-to-face classroom. As the educational paradigm shifts into online modes, the implementation of scaffolding strategies in online learning environment is also investigated. Therefore, Belland et al., (2017) conducted a meta-analysis to find out how online scaffolding is performed in STEM education. In the context of online learning environment, Hannafin, Land, & Oliver, (1999) propose four types of online scaffolding to support and guide learning which includes procedural, conceptual, strategic, and metacognitive scaffolding.

More specifically in EFL context, there is also ample of research regarding scaffolding strategies. To name a few, there are studies conducted by De Guerrero &

Villamil (2000), Padmadewi and Artini (2018), Hanjani (2019), Piamsai (2020) which investigate scaffolding strategies in EFL writing and those conducted by Salem (2017), Ling (2018), and Sholeh et.al. (2019) in EFL reading. In the integration of learning English and other subjects, Mahan (2020) investigates scaffolding strategies in Content-Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The implementation of technology-enhanced scaffolds in EFL context is investigated by Tan (2018) and (Chen & Tseng, 2019) resulting in students' improvement of students' achievement and satisfaction towards learning. However, despite the in-depth investigation regarding the implementation of scaffolding in both traditional and online classrooms, only a few research are conducted to find out how effective scaffolding strategies are conducted in a fully online EFL context. Therefore, a thorough investigation regarding the implementation of scaffolding strategies in a total online mode of classroom is needed. The result of this study is expected to provide a substantial insight on how scaffolding strategies in online learning

1.2 Problem Identification

The sudden shift to a total online mode of learning has affected educational institutions greatly. Students and teachers are required to adjust to the current situation since teaching and learning activities mainly revolve around them. Despite having been introduced to the blended mode of online learning, the sudden change of learning mode into fully online has caused learning problems for the students. Without sufficient preliminary training to navigate the online learning environment, students are in a state

of confusion which hinders their learning processes. The impact of the abrupt shift to online mode is more complex in English subject. Learning English requires the mastery of knowledge and skills in listening, reading, writing, and speaking in addition to mastering the mandatory basic competence as stated in the National Curriculum. The fulfillment of these requirements is already challenging in traditional, face-to-face classes. In online learning context, the additional challenge in learning English is students' lack of ability in using online learning platforms. To make learning English online less challenging, specified teaching strategies should be employed. Teacher can give gradual support (scaffolding) to help students navigating online learning environment and consequently, learn English more effectively. The implementation of scaffolding strategies plays a significant role in ensuring the success of online learning. Departing from the problem identification above, this research is aimed at exploring the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies for teaching English online to Junior High School Students during the COVID 19 learn from home period in SMP Negeri 1 Mengwi. Moreover, students' opinion on the implementation of scaffolding strategies was also investigated. A mixed-method research was conducted in which students' pretest and posttest score is compared using paired sample t-test and students' opinion regarding the implementation of scaffolding strategies was collected through questionnaire.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows

1.3.1 How does the implementation of scaffolding strategies give any effect to students' achievement during COVID 19 learning from home period in SMPN 1 Mengwi?

1.3.2 What are students' opinions on the implementation of scaffolding strategies during COVID 19 learning from home period in SMPN 1 Mengwi?

1.4 Research Objectives

In accordance with the research questions, the present study is aimed at:

1.4.1 To measure if the implementation of scaffolding strategies give any effect to students' achievement during Covid-19 learning from home period in SMPN 1 Mengwi

1.4.2 To describe students' opinion on the implementation of scaffolding strategies during COVID 19 learning from home period in SMPN 1 Mengwi

1.5 Research Significance

Considering the aims of the research, the significance of the study can be described as follows:

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance.

The theoretical significance of this research is twofold. First, the result of this study is aimed at adding up the existing theories on the implementation of scaffolding strategies. Second, with the growing needs of high quality online education, the result of this study is aimed at providing theoretical significance to the implementation of effective online scaffolding in EFL classrooms.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

a. Students

Students are able to get procedural, conceptual, strategic, and metacognitive support they need for learning English online during Covid-19 learn from home period. The scaffolds provided help them navigating online learning environment, understanding the concept being taught, overcoming problems encountered during learning English online, and build up their thinking skills.

b. Teachers

Teachers can apply scaffolding strategies to help students cope with online learning environment they abruptly encountered, emphasize important points of the lesson, develop students' problem solving and critical thinking skills. Through understanding students' opinion on the implementation of scaffolding strategies, teachers may also gain insight regarding what strategies work best to help students to learn English online.

c. Future Researchers

The future researchers may develop deeper analysis on the implementation of scaffolding strategies in online learning.

1.6 Research Scope

This research was scoped down to EFL learning in the junior high school. Due to the Covid-19 learn from home policy, the present research was limited in terms of research subjects, objects, and schedule as follows.

a. The research subjects were a group of ninth grade students consisting of 35 students who were randomly chosen by using lottery. This sample represents the whole population of the ninth grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Mengwi which consists of 363 students who were learning from home during Covid-19 pandemic.

b. The research objects were limited to measuring the effectiveness of the scaffolding strategies to junior high school students' achievement in learning English through online learning and to understand their opinion regarding the strategies.

c. The framework for the scaffolding strategies is developed from the synthesis of research regarding scaffolding strategies in online learning. The strategies are further being elaborated into criteria for the integration of online scaffolding. In order to compile data regarding the implementation of

scaffolding strategies, the following databases were searched: Education Resources Information Center (https://eric.ed.gov/), Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.com), and Research Gate (https://www.researchgate.net). The articles included as the source are (a) written in English, (b) refer to Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and Wood, et al. (1976), (c) contain the keywords online learning environment, scaffolding strategies, online scaffolding, technology-enhanced scaffolding, scaffolding in online learning, online learning scaffolding strategies, scaffolding online education (d) published in Scopus Indexed Journals. The articles were then analyzed by following types of online scaffolding based on Hannafin, Land, & Oliver's (1999) classification of online scaffolding namely procedural, conceptual, strategic, and metacognitive scaffolding. Based on the analysis, a criteria for the implementation of effective scaffolding strategies is developed.

d. Students' opinions regarding the implementation of scaffolding strategies through online learning were gathered through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of five sections (four sections based on the types of scaffolding provided and one general remarks section). In the types of scaffolding section, twenty six item questions with yes/no option were distributed. In each sub-section, students were given a chance to elaborate their answer by writing down their reasons. While in the general remarks section, three open ended questions were asked to measure students' opinion

qualitatively. Before distributions, the instruments were validated by two experts.

e. The process of data collection was held during the months January and May 2021.