



## Case Method and Scaffolding Technique Assisted by Supporting Technology: An Attempt to Train Students' Academic Writing

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**Abstract:** Students still have problems achieving adequate writing skills in academic writing. Hence, the case method, scaffolding, and supporting technology are applied to help students improve their academic writing skills in the English for Specific Purpose (ESP) course. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the case method and scaffolding technique assisted by supporting technology to train students' academic writing in ESP courses. The research was experimental research with a post-test-only non-equivalent control group design. The samples were 50 students of the Environmental Science Study Program. The instruments were the performance test of writing an essay and a questionnaire to determine students' responses to the learning process. The result shows Sig. (2 tailed) <0,05, indicating there is a difference between the academic writing of the experimental group and the control group. The mean score and writing aspect assessment of the experimental group are also higher than the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the case method and scaffolding technique assisted by supporting technology is effective in training students' academic writing, and it also reveals the case method's role in improving students' skills.

**Keywords:** academic writing, case method, scaffolding, ESP, technology

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## INTRODUCTION

The use of English as an official language and a second language in many countries makes English important in global communication (Ahmad, 2016; Crystal, 2003). English is one of the skills needed to access the international world (Lauder, 2008). Therefore, subjects in schools such as mathematics, science, and technology are taught using English as an international language and adapted to meet global requirements (Monkman & Stromquist, 2000). In the context of education, schools prepare their students to compete globally, not only in leading countries such as the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom but also in China, Singapore, and Indonesia (Mok, 2004; Ministry of National Education, 2006). Therefore, the Education unit prepares students or students to get English subjects or lessons.

In Indonesia's higher education unit, English courses are given for at least one year in two hours or credits using special materials according to their field of study to prepare students to compete in the working life (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006; Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). The ESP course is one of the development courses in every study program outside the English study program. The study of the material is designed for specific objectives because ESP is an English learning design to practice specific uses and purposes (Otilia & Brancusi, 2015). The teaching material is adjusted to the needs of students according to the field of study being studied. ESP has been a rewarding field for the last three decades as a student-centered approach, and its main goal is to meet the special needs of students to meet professional or vocational demands (Ramírez, 2015). ESP focuses on language used in real professional contexts rather than teaching unrelated grammar and vocabulary structures (Ma'mura et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, each university's policy requires students to write scientific papers. According to the Regulation of the Indonesian Minister of Education Number 17 of 2010, scientific works must be plagiarism-free. Currently, students are also prepared to have academic writing skills in English to write international publications or essays in English, so the readiness of their language structure becomes one of the challenges. Academic writing is also used to qualify for scholarships. Houfek et al. (2010) even conduct a study on forming scientific writing groups to obtain scholarships or research funds. Based on juridical and empirical studies, it can be concluded that academic writing in each field of study is indispensable.

Meanwhile, an adequate understanding of vocabulary and word structure is required to achieve writing skills. Christina (2021) finds a significant relationship or correlation between vocabulary mastery and sentence structure with writing ability. Lexical problems and sentence structure are challenges students face in learning English as a foreign language/EFL (Chen, 2002; Rahmatunisa, 2014). Moreover, in academic writing, students'

task is writing to solve a problem. The writing has a certain format with academic characteristics in content and language structure. If the writing aims to report on the research that the author has done, answer the questions that have been given, discuss the topics that are being discussed together, and provide the author's views to synthesize previous research, then the activity can be said as academic writing (Bailey, 2017). The content in academic writing also distinguishes the level of learning achievement for high school students and college students (Giltrow et al., 2021).

However, the problem with the academic writing skills of non-English department students, in this context environmental science students, was that only 40% of students achieved scores above the average seen from the test of sentence structure, grammar, and vocabulary mastery. Students, of course, experience many challenges to meet the criteria for creating scientific writing. This supports the finding that the problem that arises is mastering English (Chen, 2002; Rahmatunisa, 2014; Al Mubarak, 2017), so a strategy is needed to help develop student abilities. In this study, the scaffolding technique was used as a means of helping students build their writing skills. The scaffolding technique in the writing process of EFL students is a tool to help students transition from guided assignments to independent assignments (Faraj, 2015). In scaffolding, students are guided until they can learn the process, and direct students to check their assignments independently.

Moreover, scaffolding techniques include pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Laksmi, 2006). At this stage, students are expected to be able to exchange ideas and revise their writing step by step so that appropriate writing can be created in terms of content and sentence structure. The scaffolding designed is expected to provide context, teaching materials, and guidelines for student learning in the interaction between lecturers and students that learning actually occurs (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Interactions between lecturers and students can be planned to some extent, especially for the needs that require responsive interaction (Kuiper et al., 2017). The purpose of scaffolding is to help students with a mentoring plan, and in the end, they will work independently to complete the task.

Writing also includes creative inspiration, problem-solving, reflection, and revision (Defazio et al., 2010). The case method or case-based learning can be applied to other methods that support academic writing abilities. The case-based learning method is a long-standing pedagogical method, defined in several ways depending on the discipline and type of 'case' used (Thistlethwaite et al., 2012). The learning paradigm is student-centered, and various active learning methods are applied in the learning process. Case-based learning can make students actively involved in the learning process (Nair et al., 2013). Besides, effective writing skills require understanding, application, and synthesis of new knowledge. Writing also includes creative inspiration, problem-solving, reflection, and revision, which results in the final manuscript (Defazio et al., 2010) instead of only mastering composing a good sentence structure. Problem-solving ability is significantly related to writing ability (Danesh & Nourdad, 2017). One method to develop student problem-solving skills is to apply the case-based learning method.

Case Method is used as a learning method at the college level. Rosidah and Pramulia (2021) find the benefits of the case method to develop student skills. This is in line with the Regulation of Minister of Education 03 Year 2020 Number 754/P/020 that the case method must be implemented in the learning process at the higher education level. In previous studies, the case method was usually applied to problem-based learning on science subjects. In this study, the case method will be combined with the scaffolding technique to train academic writing, which is expected from the achievement of student grades with good achievement targets. Rosidah and Pramulia (2021) find the benefits of the case method to develop student skills. An interesting finding also shows that case-based learning, usually intended for face-to-face meetings, can increase student participation in online learning (Chen et al., 2006).

In the era of online learning, students are required to develop technology as training material and learning support. Supporting technology is also very useful in supporting the development of English because frequently searching for English content makes you closer to the English environment. In the case of academic writing development, several pages can be used to help improve and correct writing. Some supporting technologies that can be used are Grammarly and Write & Improve with Cambridge applications. Those applications are known to be effective in improving writing skills, but teacher feedback is still needed (Kostikova & Miasoiedova, 2019; Tursina et al., 2021). In addition, Write & Improve and Grammarly can also be used as an alternative because of the ease of access and features that help correct even though sometimes there is inappropriate feedback (Nova, 2018).

Step 1: *Pre-writing*  
 Determine the topic of writing from a case (**Build the Case**).  
 Collect and arrange essay writing ideas based on the given case (**Develop the Discussion**).  
 Determine the topic sentence.  
 Outline the essay (**Reflect on Responses**).  
 Step 2: *Drafting*  
 Write a rough draft.  
 Emphasis on content, especially on solving cases.  
 Step 3: *Revising*  
 Reread the essay.  
 Share the writings with lecturers.  
 Discuss the results of essay writing with the lecturer.  
 Make changes based on suggestions from lecturers substantively.  
 Step 4: *Editing*  
 Proofread the essays with the help of the application (Grammarly, Write and Improve, etc.).  
 Revise the essay.  
 Step 5: *Publishing*  
 Finalize the essay.  
 Share the essay.

**Figure 1.** The Learning Process

The learning design in this study adapted from [Laksmi \(2006\)](#) is described in [Figure 1](#). This design combines the case method (see the bold part), scaffolding techniques (see the italic part), and technology use (see the underlined part). Moreover, students are more familiar with the technology that can help learning activities. Various supporting technologies can be used to assist their academic writing activities, such as Grammarly and Write & Improve with Cambridge applications. Those applications are free applications that can be used to help students in writing. Technology use positively impacts students' writing skills ([Wahyudin & Sari, 2018](#)). Based on the problem description, this research aims to explore the effectiveness of applying the case method and scaffolding approach assisted by supporting technology to train students' academic writing skills in the English for a Specific Purpose course and see students' responses to the learning process.

## METHODS

The type of research used was quasi-experimental research ([Sugiyono, 2013](#)). This study was applied because the research variables were not fully controlled. This design has a control group but cannot be fully used to control external variables that affect the experiment. The research design used is the posttest-only non-equivalent control group design. [Table 1](#) shows the flow of the research design.

**Table 1.** Posttest Only Non-equivalent Control Group Design

| Group      | Pretest | Treatment | Posttest |
|------------|---------|-----------|----------|
| Experiment | -       | X1        | Y1       |
| Control    | -       | X2        | Y2       |

X1: The case method group

X2: Discussion and practice (the usual method) group

Y1: Experiment Group posttest results

Y2: Control group posttest results

The population of this research was environmental science students who took English for Specific Purpose courses or English for Environment. Determination of the sample is done by simple random sampling technique by calculating the sample size using the formula by [Taherdoost \(2017\)](#). Hence, the population was 99 students. Then, based on the sample calculation, it was obtained 50 students as the samples. They were divided into 25 students in the control group and 25 students in the experiment group.

Data collection used the test and questionnaire techniques. The test was used to obtain essay scores, and the questionnaire was used to see the involvement of students in responding to the cases given, their activeness in carrying out the steps provided in creating essays, and the use of supporting technology. The instrument used was a performance test of an essay and questionnaire using the Likert Scale. The control and experiment groups were administered as the research subjects to find out the effectiveness of the treatment. The experiment group received treatment for implementing the case method and scaffolding technique in the learning process to train the students in this group to develop their academic writing performance. In addition,

the students were also encouraged to use supporting technology such as Grammarly to help their writing process. Meanwhile, the students from the control group received the regular method, which was discussion steps and revision process in their academic writing process. Students had to submit their final essay in the 10th week after the training using those methods, and then their performance scores were compared to see the effectiveness.

The essays were assessed based on the indicators presented in Table 2, adapted from Khatib and Meihami (2015), to obtain the score as the data. After collecting the data, some statistical tools were performed to analyze the data. Means and standard deviations were used to describe the students' performances in both groups. The t-test of the difference between means of independent samples was used to test the significance of the difference between the scores of students' essays in the experiment and the control group. Hence, the significance level was 0.05. The questionnaire data, which showed the students' responses to the learning process, were described in the graph.

**Table 2.** Essay Assessment Indicators

| Writing Aspect        | Indicators                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content               | Presenting adequate problem formulation<br>Proposing effective solutions<br>Writing relevant content                                           |
| Organization          | Ideas are arranged:<br>Cohesively and coherently<br>Clearly and smoothly<br>Briefly and effectively                                            |
| Grammatical Structure | Using the variations of sentence types<br>Writing the grammatically correct sentences (more than 70% of the essay)<br>Using various vocabulary |
| Mechanics             | Using the correct punctuation and capital letters<br>Writing the correct citation<br>Showing inconsiderable spelling mistakes                  |

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The application of the case method and scaffolding technique has been carried out in the ESP course. The topic of discussion is writing environmental-themed essays. Students in the experiment group were allowed to write by applying the case method, where they could determine topics based on the problems discussed. The steps in the case method were to build the case, develop the discussion, and reflect on responses. The learning process in the experiment group has implemented these steps. Figure 2 is an example of implementing the build the case and develop the discussion stages. Before students started writing essays, they were asked to analyze the problems that occur in the environmental field and determine the topic of the problem to be solved. There were two groups: the experiment group with the case method and the control group with discussion or learning as usual.

Issues on Environmental Science

Case method

Sharing Environmental Issue ☒

Reply this forum until 4 March 2022 at 9 AM

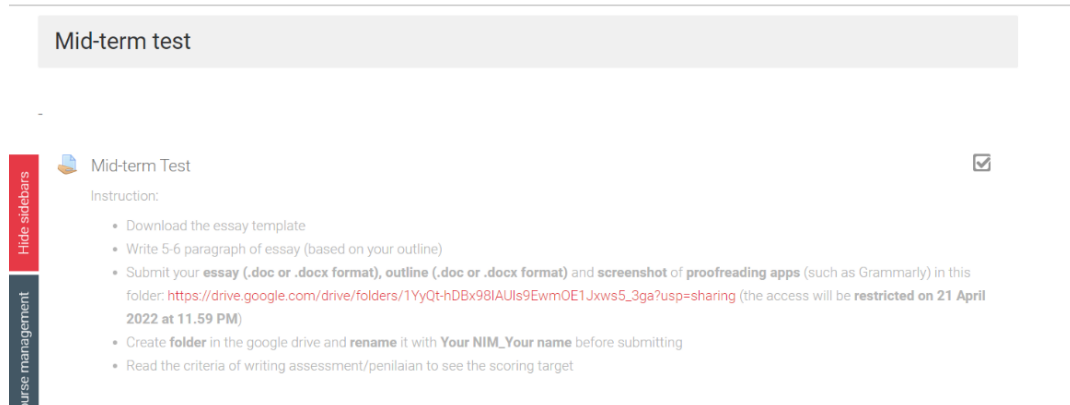
The topics or the problems that you should discuss in your essay are (please choose one): ☒

- *Human overpopulation*
- *Food waste management*
- *Marine pollution*

**Figure 2.** Build the Case and Develop the Discussion (Case Method Step 1)

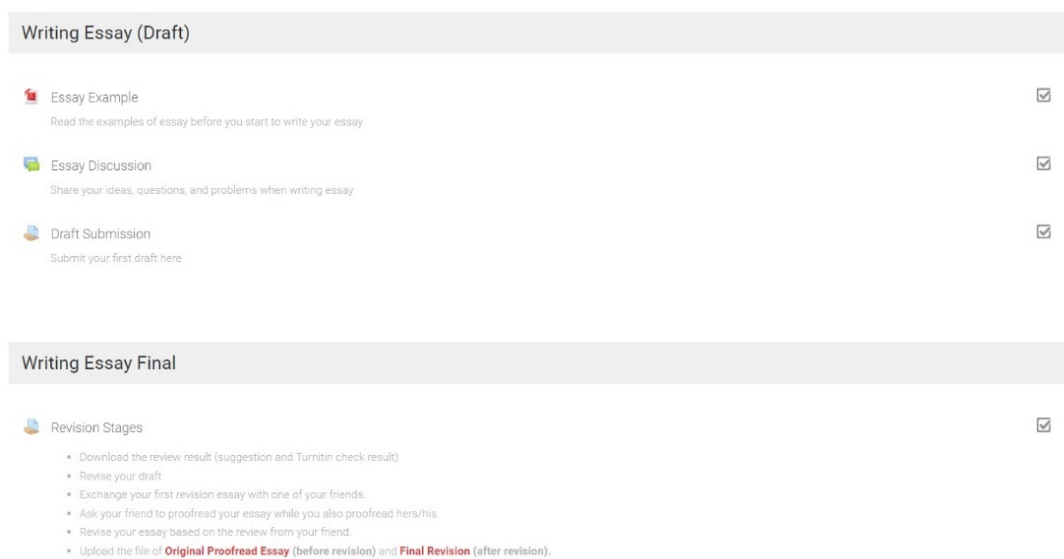
In this situation, the application of the case method was carried out in an academic writing course. Students were asked to write an essay, and they were guided by using the case method. Both groups made essays with the same theme but with different learning strategies. The assessment results showed that the average score in the experiment group was higher than the control group. This follows Forman (2006), who states that using cases can improve writing skills and investigative abilities and become more creative in the

writing process. Based on the study of the case method, the research findings can be concluded in line with previous research. Dorn (1999) also states that the case method is very useful for training problem-solving skills, especially for students who will work professionally.



**Figure 3.** First Essay Assignment (Scaffolding part)

The next case method stage was designing a response to the problem. The stages of reflecting on responses, which are also the scaffolding stages where students design solutions to problems in the form of outlines for writing or essay outlines, were conducted as the next step. After going through the case method stage and making an outline, the students then prepare to write by making a rough draft essay. The essay was designed according to the outline that students had made at the stage of implementing the case method. This early stage of essay writing was the task of describing the outline of an essay writing. Figure 3 shows the first essay assignment by providing opportunities for students to use supporting technology to help them write essays. The stage was then followed by the revision, where students can improve the essays that have been made based on suggestions given by the lecturer.



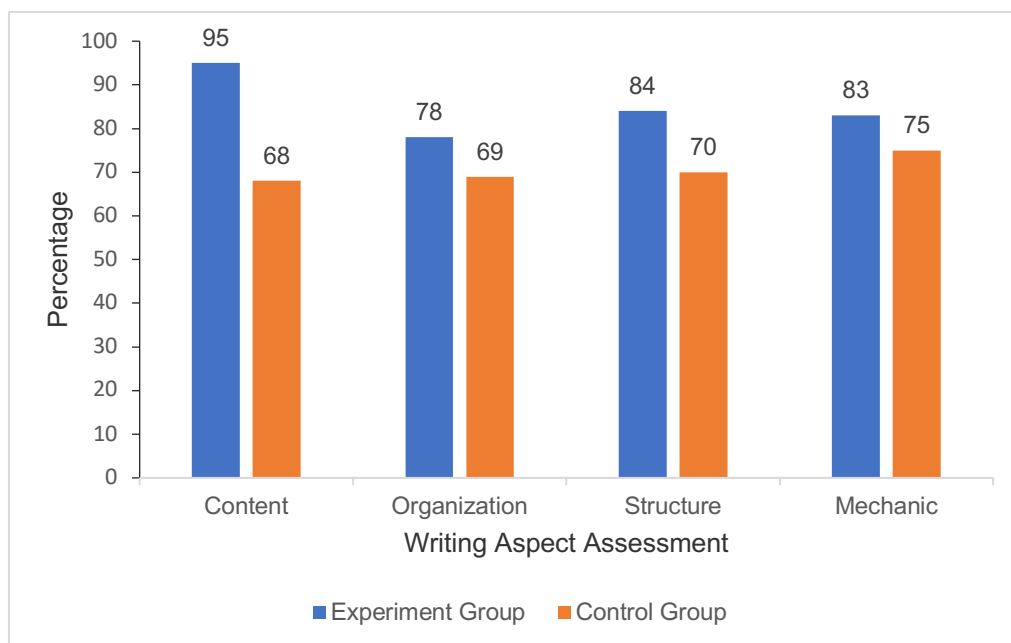
**Figure 4.** Control Group's Activity

Meanwhile, the activity in the control group was creating essays with practice methods and synthesis from previous essays, journals, or publications. Students were given an introduction to writing by looking at examples of scientific writing. They were allowed to ask and do the discussion during their essay writing. They also could revise their essay in the revision part. The activities in the control group can be seen in Figure 4. Moreover, to find out the significance, the hypothesis testing was performed using a t-test and obtained Sig. (2 tailed) <0.05. This result can be interpreted as H0 is rejected, and Ha is accepted, which means there was a difference between the means of the experiment and control groups. The result of the data analysis is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Data Analysis

| Group      | N  | Mean  | SD    | DF    | Sig. (2 tailed) |
|------------|----|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Experiment | 25 | 86,20 | 6,33  | 48    | .000            |
| Control    | 25 | 70,36 | 10,88 | 38,59 | .000            |

Moreover, the analysis of writing aspects was divided into four categories: content, organization, structure, and mechanics (see Table 2). The achievement of the experiment group was higher than the control group, especially in the content aspect, which is an assessment of the content of students' essays where students were asked to identify problems and find solutions. 95% of the experiment group students could formulate problems, find solutions, and write relevantly according to the content, and the achievement of the control group was only 68%. In the organization section, the explanation of cohesive, coherent, effective, and efficient ideas on achievement essays was not much different, where it was 78% in the experiment group and 69% in the control group. Meanwhile, in the structure aspect, which assessed the accuracy of sentence structure and grammatical structure, there was a significant difference of 84% for the experiment group and 70% for the control group. The last aspect or mechanic was the assessment of the use of punctuation, citation, and spelling; the percentages were also not too different, 83% in the experiment group and 75% in the control group. The experiment group generally produced a higher percentage in each aspect, which was more than 75%. The data presentation can be seen in Figure 5.

**Figure 5.** Writing Aspect Achievement

In the essay assessment results, the highest writing aspect achieved by the experimental group was the content aspect. The content aspect consists of analyzing problems, solving problems, finding solutions, and writing relevant content. Students succeed in formulating problems in their writing and finding solutions. The case method has been proven to improve students' problem-solving skills according to their field of science (Floyd & Bodur, 2006; Bi et al., 2019; Daryanes et al., 2023). Kandinskaia (2022) states that learning with the case method can improve students' professional abilities. It is useful in collaborating with the industrial world and improving accreditation quality at universities or schools that apply it. The use of the case method in Indonesia is currently also a part of the assessment of the main work indicators of a university. Therefore, each course is expected to use the case method to implement learning.

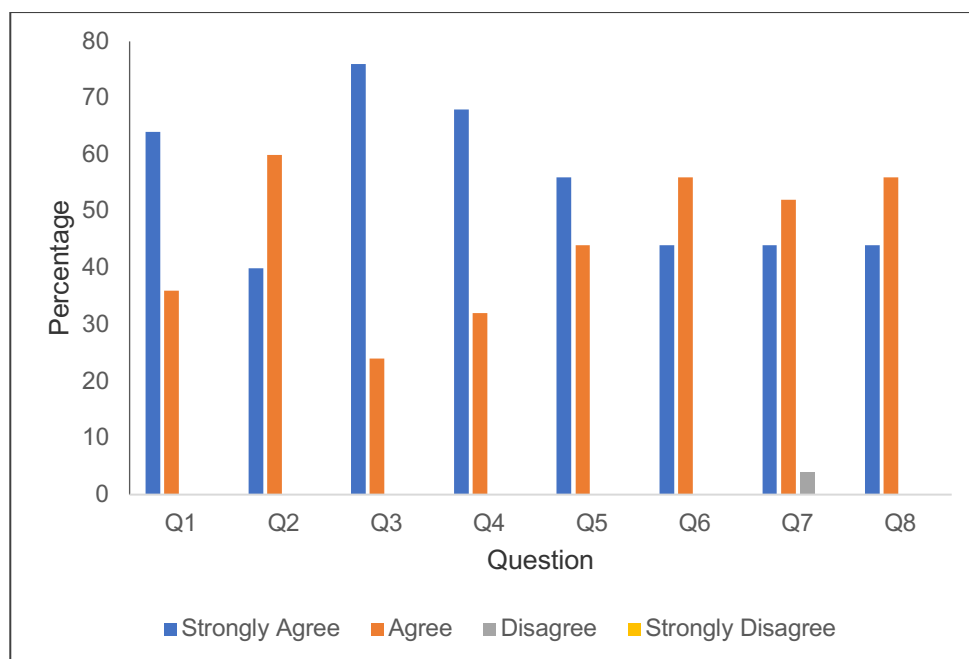
Learning with the case method provides an opportunity to improve students' critical thinking skills, problem-solving, and motivation to learn. The findings of Yu (2020) show that learning using the case method significantly influences students' learning motivation in ESP learning. This, of course, strengthens the findings in this study, which also applies the case method to the ESP subject, especially in writing essays. Student responses indicated that the use of the case method helped them formulate problems and determine solutions; in addition, most of the students found the use of the case method interesting to help them solve the problems they had to write in their essays. Case-based learning, or the case method, is widely applied to learning, especially in professional learning and adult learning. Students are usually invited to explore problems and provide recommendations or actions for future resolution (Cochran, 2018). The cases studied are usually based

on real situations where these cases are material given in learning (Servant-Miklos, 2019).

In helping students write essays, case method learning is combined with scaffolding techniques where students do not directly write essays but are preceded by outlining, and there is a revision stage to their essays. The scaffolding technique is useful in learning writing, according to Vonna et al. (2015), which shows that the technique can significantly improve writing skills. The assessment results also showed that students in the experiment group were helped in improving the quality of their writing compared to the control group. The scaffolding technique is especially useful for improving the essay writing draft, especially in the aspects of organization and mechanics. Before students submit the final essay, their writing gets feedback as a form of development. Hameed (2021) found that by using the scaffolding technique, students could improve the quality of their writing and help solve their difficulties.

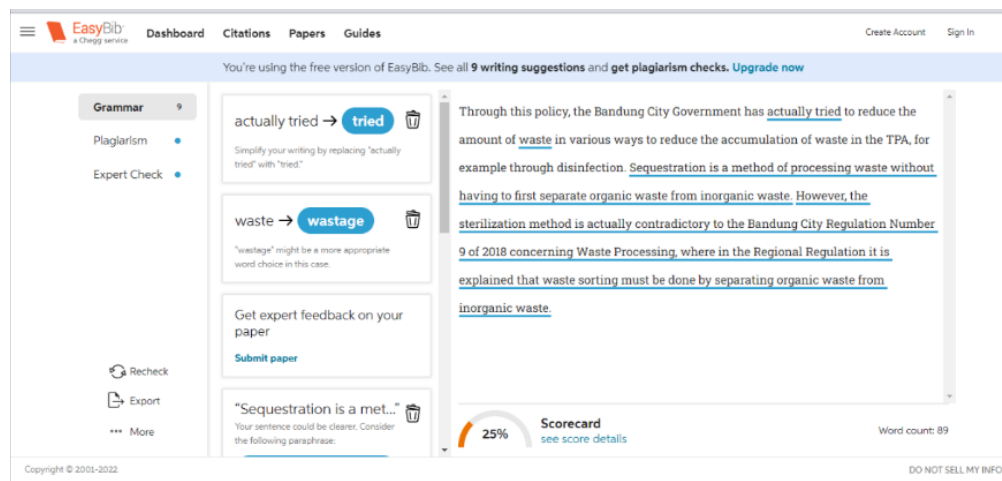
Krishnamurthi (2009) used scaffolding in teaching students to write techniques ranging from simple to complex writing, such as citations, academic quality, literature review, grammar, format, and writing process. It can develop the necessary writing skills and confidence in one's abilities. In general, the achievement of the experiment group was higher than the control group, which did not use this scaffolding technique comprehensively. Control group students were asked to make revisions without being asked to make an outline presentation at the pre-writing stage. Student responses also indicated that the revision section helped improve the quality of their writing because they had to write in English, a foreign language for Indonesian speakers.

The next result is student responses presented in Figure 6 about the usefulness of the case method, scaffolding technique, and application or supporting technology to their writing process. Students were given eight question items about the process of learning. The eight question items were about the facility to analyze the problem (Q1), the interest to find the problem (Q2), the motivation to find the problem (Q3), the facility to find the solution (Q4), the usefulness of outline (Q5), the usefulness of supporting applications (Q6), the usefulness of proofreading (Q7) and the usefulness of revision (Q8). The survey was intended to find students' responses to learning activities and the implementation of the method.



**Figure 6.** Students Responses

The results showed that most students responded with Strongly Agree and Agree. Questionnaires were given to determine the usefulness of the case method to help students analyze problems and find solutions in their essays. The questionnaire was also used to find out about the scaffolding technique's usefulness, from developing an outline to revising essays to improve their writing. Another aspect is using technology or supporting applications such as translation applications and sentence structure checkers. Students also showed positive responses that the application was useful in writing essays. They freely chose the supporting technology which assisted them in writing. They cannot totally rely on the tool's features, such as Grammarly; instead, they can use it to improve their writing quality. Figure 7 shows the sample of supporting technology (Grammarly) used by one of the students.



**Figure 7.** Supporting Technology Use for Writing

In addition to the case method and scaffolding technique, students were allowed to use supporting technology in writing. Students use proofreading technologies such as Grammarly or Write and Improve to write essays. All students answered strongly agree and agree with the use of this assistive technology to improve the quality of their writing, especially in the grammatical structure and spelling check sections. The structure aspect of the experiment group essays was known to be higher than the control group because, in the experiment group, they were introduced to using technology such as Grammarly to help them write. The control group was not required to use this technology. Dizon and Gayed (2021) revealed an effect on grammatical structure and vocabulary variation in L2 writing compared to the control group without Grammarly.

This research combines the case method, scaffolding technique, and supporting technology to assist students in writing essays. Those are combined because scientific writing is considered a difficult subject because it requires adequate cognitive and language skills (Maharani, 2018). Furthermore, the writing in this study is designed to use English, which is a foreign language for students. Therefore, the use of supporting technology has been proven to help them in writing. Teachers may encourage students to use appropriate technology to improve their writing skills (Abidah, 2023). It is known that based on the findings, these three elements can help students improve their writing skills in the ESP course. This, of course, can be a recommendation to be applied to other subjects because it can improve problem-solving skills, language skills, and the ability to use technology.

## CONCLUSION

The case method has been suggested to be applied in higher education instruction in Indonesia. In this study, the method has been successfully used to help students with their essay writing. This method was combined with the scaffolding technique to improve the quality of essay writing skills. As we know, writing in English is considered a difficult subject since it should involve writing skills and analyzing the topic, especially for Indonesian students. Case methods and scaffolding techniques can be used to help students improve not only their writing skills but also their problem-solving skills. In addition, supporting technology is also important to support the students' writing quality. They can use the application of proofreading to improve their writing quality.

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