

THE PRACTICE OF GENRE-BASED PEDAGOGY IN INDONESIAN SCHOOLS: A CASE OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS IN BANDUNG, WEST JAVA PROVINCE

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Abstract

This paper reports preservice teachers' knowledge and understanding about genre-based pedagogy in the curriculum and its implementation in their EFL classrooms. Six participants who were taking their teaching practicum program in two different state schools took part in the study. Employing a case study design, the data were collected through questionnaire, observations, interviews, and document analysis (lesson plans). The findings show that the preservice teachers had varying degrees of knowledge and understanding of what genre-based pedagogy is and how to apply it in the teaching and learning. All of them, though, believe that genre-based pedagogy is very useful and applicable in EFL teaching and learning. Out of the six participants, four employed the pedagogy in their classroom teaching and learning. There is, however, a gap between what the preservice teachers know and understand about genre-based pedagogy and how they apply it in the classroom. Most of the preservice teachers skip the most important part in genre-based pedagogy, namely building knowledge of the field. They also do not give feedback to their students' writing. These findings have some implications for the English teacher education in Indonesia. Teacher education institutes should pay more attention on preservice teachers' practices in the classroom. Cooperation between the teacher supervisor, lecturer, and preservice teachers is really needed.

Keywords: genre-based pedagogy; preservice teachers; national curriculum

Genre-based pedagogy, or genre-based approach, has increasingly gained popularity among teachers who teach writing in English, particularly in EFL and ESL classrooms. Hyland (2007) asserted that genre pedagogies help teachers in grounding their courses in the texts that their students will have to write in their own target contexts. Studies show the effectiveness of genre pedagogies to teach writing in different countries. In Iran, for example, genre-based pedagogy is effective for teaching academic writing because of its early stage of presentation process (Alidoost et al., 2014). In Korea, explicit writing instruction in genre-based pedagogy was effective to improve students' writing, and the students showed positive attitude towards writing (Bae, 2012). Meanwhile, in Thailand genre-based pedagogy is claimed to show promising results in terms of students' improvement in writing due to its helpful stages (Chaisiri, 2010). Similarly, Wang (2013) claims that the approach was effective in increasing EFL writers' awareness of genre and competence in writing.

In the case of Indonesia, where English is treated as a foreign language, genre-based pedagogy has been incorporated into the national curricula prevailing in the schools today (the 2006 school-based curriculum and the 2013 curriculum) through the inclusion of different kinds of texts to be

produced by students in written and orally. Students are expected to develop their language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) by ways of practicing the texts such as narrative, recount, procedure, information report, and exposition texts.

Despite its incorporation into the national curricula, the practice of genre-based pedagogy in the EFL classrooms is not yet satisfying. Teachers were reported to be confused with the implementation of genre-based pedagogy due to limited knowledge of how to practice the stages in their classrooms, regardless of their familiarity with the terms in the teaching and learning cycles of the approach (Emilia, 2010; Rahman & Tartila, 2013; Emilia et al., 2008; Kadarisman, 2014). Besides, teachers were also identified to have low level of competence in comprehending the texts that are presented in the curriculum (Luardini & Asi, 2014). One of the reasons of these findings is the absence of appropriate trainings for the teachers (Mahfud, 2011) so that they have no sufficient knowledge to practice the approach in their classrooms (Sundayana et al., 2013).

The fact that many Indonesian English teachers are not yet knowledgeable with genre-based pedagogy and its implementation in the classroom has prompted the need for investigating the teaching and practice of this pedagogy in the teacher

education programs that prepare professional school teachers. Monroe, Blackwell, and Pepper (2010) argued that teacher education programs provide “prospective teachers” assistance in ways of equipping them with necessary knowledge and skills to become effective teachers. Hence, it is important to find how the preservice teachers who have been taught genre-based pedagogy know and understand this pedagogy and apply it in the real setting, namely during their teaching practicum. As future teachers, they will be largely contributing to the successful implementation of the curricula.

However, not many studies have probed into how English preservice teachers know about, understand, and practice genre-based pedagogy in their teaching practicum. This type of research is essential, as preservice teachers are future professional teachers. If they have sufficient knowledge and understanding of genre-based pedagogy and are able to effectively implement this pedagogy or approach in their classroom teaching and learning, successful implementation of this pedagogy in the professional context will be guaranteed. Thus, this study attempts to fill the gap in the research on genre-based pedagogy applied by preservice teachers. As a pilot study, the study specifically seeks to find out about preservice teachers’ knowledge and understanding about genre-based pedagogy. This study also investigates the practice of genre-based pedagogy by preservice teachers in their teaching practicum and sees to what extent their knowledge and understanding of the pedagogy is reflected in their practice.

Theoretical Framework

Genre-Based Pedagogy

Genre-based pedagogy refers to teaching learners how to use language patterns to produce coherent, purposeful piece of writing (Hyland, 2003). This approach, Hyland explained, derives from the theoretical work of Michael Halliday which is known as Systemic Functional Linguistics. It elaborates the function of language as a system of choices to communicate certain functions, in which people can express their experiences of the world, interact with others, and create coherent messages (Hyland, 2004), because the approach sees writing as social and cultural practices (Hasan & Akhand, 2010).

Genre-based pedagogy has been developed based on the theory of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) by M. A. K. Halliday in 1978 and 1985. It emphasizes explicit teaching of grammar and text to develop students’ literacy outcomes (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). These two important foci, grammar and text, are underpinned by the principle of functional model of language, that is the relationship between text and context. Derewianka (2003) highlighted that the principles of genre-based pedagogy lie in its focus on text, purposes for using

texts, meaning and choice, and language in context. Thus, a genre-based approach sees the connection between text and context as its central notions.

Text and context are interrelated to one another. Text is viewed as a meaningful passage of language that hangs together to serve some special purposes, and context refers to the environment that surrounds the text (Christie, 2005). Every text has a purpose, and its function is determined by its context (Johns, 2002). Thus, the two terms are interconnected in ways that “texts are always produced in a context” (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 18). People produce texts for specific purposes, particularly in a social environment.

The critical aspects of context are classified into genre, field, tenor, and mode (Johns, 2002; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Eggins, 1994; Christie & Derewianka, 2005). Genre is concerned with how text is organized to achieve its social purpose. Therefore, genres are “stage and goal oriented language processes” (Johns, 2002, p. 221). Different genres are used in different situations in order to get things done in language. The use depends on the purposes of the users so that the users will construct appropriate type of text accordingly. For example, a recount is a genre that has the purpose of telling past events. The stages of this genre are Orientation-Events-(Re-orientation). Meanwhile, field refers to “what is going on”, or the topic that is being talked about. The relationship between users who are talking about a topic is called the tenor. It includes the status, familiarity, and degree of feeling between the users during the interaction. The last is mode which refers to how language is being used, be it written or spoken.

In relation to classroom practices, genre-based pedagogy draws from the work of Lev Vygotsky (Hyland, 2004; Christie, 2005), namely Zone Proximal Development (ZPD). This concept is central to this theory, that is the area between what students can do independently and what they can do with more knowledgeable persons’ assistance or teachers’ assistance. The teacher scaffolds the students to reach their potential development through a cyclical process of teaching and learning. The present study follows the cycle from Feez & Joyce (1998a) in Feez (2002), focusing on the first four stages.

The learning starts from the stage of building the context. This stage provides opportunities for students to experience and explore the cultural and situational aspects of the social context of the target text. Moving to the next stage, students are introduced to model texts that belong to the target genre. They are led to pay attention to the structure and linguistic features of the models. In this stage, they learn the grammar in context. In Joint Construction stage, students in groups, guided by the teacher, develop a text of the target genre. This stage supports students to go to the next stage,

where they construct their own texts independently. The final stage is that students explore the relation of what have been learned to other genres and contexts. These stages are commonly taught in courses that include genre-based pedagogy as one of its topics.

Teacher Education

Teacher education is very important because teaching, as argued by Ball and Forzani (2009), is not natural. Teaching skills are not merely acquired through experiences; instead, they should be taught or trained. Hence, teacher education plays a key role in creating effective teachers. In the specific case of language teacher education, especially second/foreign language teacher training and education, it is important to equip preservice teachers with the necessary knowledge and experience of teaching. In this regard, Burns and Richards (2009) contended that:

There have traditionally been two strands within the field of SLTE (Second Language Teacher Education) – one focusing on classroom teaching skills and pedagogic issues, and the other focusing on what has been perceived as the academic underpinnings of classroom skills, namely knowledge about language and language learning. (p. 4)

In the university under study, the curriculum of English teacher education program has made attempts at compromising these two strands, where equal emphasis is given on the teaching skills and concepts or theories of language and language learning. Students will have to take courses on the theories and concepts of language and language learning, and in the upper semester, they will take courses with more emphasis on teaching skills and pedagogic issues. The teaching skills are accommodated in the peer teaching and teaching practicum courses. Teaching practicum is, indeed, very important to help students connect the theoretical knowledge they have gained from their previous courses and the practical experiences in the real settings (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Hudson, Nguyen, & Hudson, 2008; Mayer & Austin, 1999). It serves a significant role as well in students' professional growth (Haigh, Pinder, & McDonald, 2006).

Genre-based pedagogy is one of the pedagogies taught to the preservice teachers in the university under study, as the 2006 and 2013 national curricula include text types in the language learning. Thus, teacher education program in Indonesia is assumed to be familiar with genre-based pedagogy, among other approaches of teaching, because this approach has been incorporated into the national curricula for more than a decade. Thus, it is essential for preservice teachers to understand and practice this approach, among other approaches, in their teaching practicum

program. There might be flaws of their practice, but the moments of teaching practicum program are expected to familiarize preservice teachers with schools, curricula, classrooms, and students. Therefore, in our study, we would like to investigate how the preservice teachers know and understand about genre-based pedagogy from their previous courses and how this knowledge and understanding is applied into their teaching in the real setting.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative approach with a case study method. The participants of this study consisted of 6 (six) English preservice teachers of a state university in Indonesia who were taking their practicum course in two state junior high schools in West Java Province, Indonesia. The participants taught grade 8. Although genre-based pedagogy was not taught in a particular course, the participants had some exposure to genre-based pedagogy, as it was embedded in pedagogic courses, such as Lesson Planning and Teaching Methodologies. The participants carried out their teaching practicum program for four months under the supervision of school teachers and teacher educators or associates.

In the first stage of the study, the researchers distributed questionnaires to find about the preservice teachers' knowledge and understanding about genre-based pedagogy. In the subsequent stage, the researchers conducted observation in the preservice teachers' classes to find whether what they know and understand about genre-based pedagogy is reflected in their teaching practice. The researchers also analyze instructional documents, namely lesson plans, to find more about the implementation of genre-based pedagogy. An interview was carried out by the end of the research to clarify the preservice teachers' knowledge and understanding of genre-based pedagogy and their practices.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Preservice teachers' knowledge and understanding about genre-based pedagogy

The questionnaires distributed to the participants in the beginning of the study show that in general the preservice teachers' knowledge of GBA varies. Some participants seem to understand partially and some comprehensively. Some preservice teachers as the participants, or henceforth PST, for instance, only know a small portion of the genre-based approach. This is especially true for PST 1 who answers that genre-based pedagogy is "An approach focusing on the understanding of text types, either written or spoken." Here, the participant assumes that genre-based pedagogy is only concerned with different kinds of texts, and that students are only required to understand the text types. Another participant (PST 3) shares the superficial

understanding that genre-based pedagogy is only about text types, more particularly s/he states, "Genre-based pedagogy is a learning approach in which the learning materials are delivered through different text types." Unlike PST 1, PST 3 treats text as a medium for the delivery of learning materials, not as the materials to be taught to and understood by students.

Meanwhile, other participants provided answers that show more comprehensive knowledge of genre-based pedagogy. PST 2, for instance, provides the following answer: "Genre-based pedagogy is an approach in which the teaching activities develop linguistic skills, both in terms of structure and grammar, through texts." Although, again, like PST 1 and PST 3, PST 2 believes that texts in genre-based pedagogy is the medium to develop students' language skills, this participant shows some understanding that the teaching activities in genre-based pedagogy can help students develop their linguistic knowledge and skills.

PSTs 4, 5, and 6, have more accurate definitions of genre-based pedagogy, in which all of them understand that one of the final goals of genre-based pedagogy is to help students produce texts. To start with, PST 4 defines genre-based pedagogy as "a text-based teaching method. The teaching method aims to make students master and produce different kinds of texts both orally and in written. Examples of the texts are procedure, descriptive, narrative, recount, report texts." This participant clearly understands the end goal of genre-based pedagogy and is even able to provide examples of the kinds of texts to be taught.

Participant or PST 5's response to the question on genre-based pedagogy definition is as follow: "An approach that is used especially to improve students' writing. This approach includes the communicative competence and language structure." This participant does not only understand the final goal of genre-based pedagogy, but also the fact that genre-based pedagogy is concerned with communicative competence and language structure. This definition is in line with the one put forward by Hyland (2003), in which he claims that genre-based pedagogy aims to teach learners how to use language patterns to produce coherent, purposeful piece of writing. This approach, Hyland explains, is derived from the theoretical work of Michael Halliday, known as Systemic Functional Linguistics. It elaborates the functions of language as a system of choices to communicate certain functions; that is a system in which people can express their experiences of the world, interact with others and create coherent messages (Hyland, 2004), because the approach sees writing as social and cultural practices (Hasan & Akhand, 2010).

Similarly, PST 6 understands that in genre-based pedagogy students are expected to be able to produce their own texts after they become familiar

with the structure, as reflected in the following response:

In each teaching and learning session, this approach prioritizes the structure of a text, both spoken and written, and puts forward the text's content. In the teaching and learning activities, students are introduced to a text and its structure, and then they produce their own text.

Here, the participant's focus is on the text and its structure, and how students should be able to produce their own texts.

The preservice teachers' knowledge and understanding of genre-based pedagogy corresponds to their belief that genre-based pedagogy is very useful and applicable in EFL teaching and learning. PST 3, for instance, argues, "Students can learn language according to the context. It can help students master English, starting from easy materials, such as descriptive texts using simple sentences. In addition, this approach helps students in their productive skills, especially writing." Although one needs to be careful with the labeling of "easy materials", it is important to note that the preservice teacher believes that genre-based pedagogy is an approach that is very helpful in developing students' productive skills, ultimately writing. Another preservice teacher (PST 4) stresses on students' activated knowledge of text structure through genre-based pedagogy. In particular, s/he states, "Students know when certain materials can be used in a text. For example, when teaching simple past tense using narrative or recount text, they know that these types of texts use past tense." What this participant means by "certain materials" are language features or grammar. The participant believes that using genre-based pedagogy, students' knowledge of language structure will be activated. They will know which language or grammatical features to use for certain text types, as each text requires different language features.

Preservice teachers' practices of genre-based pedagogy

Despite the fact that all participants present their knowledge and understanding of genre-based pedagogy, not all participants practice the approach in their classrooms. Out of the six participants, four were identified to apply the approach. Three (PSTs 1, 2 and 3) of them practiced the approach in 6-7 meetings of teaching different types of texts and one (PST 4) practiced it once to teach reading narrative texts. PST 4 taught narrative text through the activities of reading a narrative text, explaining the structure of narrative text, answering the questions based on the text, and arranging jumbled paragraphs of another narrative text.

PST 1, PST 2 and PST 3 who taught English in the same school used genre-based pedagogy in their classrooms. They taught narrative and recount texts in 6 meetings, and PST 1 had an additional meeting

to teach descriptive text in the last session of her/his teaching practicum program. Observing closely their practices, in average they had 2-3 meetings for each text, within 80 minutes class session per meeting. Their focus of teaching was to ask their students to write the texts, in groups or individually. Identifying their practices of genre-based pedagogy using the teaching and learning cycles, it was found that not all stages were implemented in the classroom.

PST 1, for example, had three meetings to teach narrative text to his students. He started his teaching of narrative text by telling the students the function and structure of narrative text, asking his students to write their favorite stories, and reading the stories to the class. This activity was followed by reading a narrative text and answering the questions that follow the text. In the next meeting, PST 1 played a film and asked his students to write the story they had just watched. The activity in the last meeting of teaching narrative text was to read a narrative, write a different text, and answer the questions following the text. Based on the observations, many of the activities PST 1 showed in his classroom were dominated by reading and writing narrative texts. However, the activities did not reflect teaching cycles of genre-based pedagogy. Despite the close relation between reading and writing, the activities of reading and writing in his classroom did not seem to have connections. It can be assumed that PST 1 put the focus of building the context by reading different narrative texts and independent construction of narrative texts. Nevertheless, the first stage of the cycle did not show an indication to scaffold the students to be able to write a narrative text.

In the meantime, PST 2 put the emphasis on teaching grammar that was relevant to the target text type; for example, recount text. The activities in the first meeting were staged for explaining what recount text is, explaining *past tense*, and having his students write their weekend experiences in 5 sentences and ask each other's weekend activities. The second meeting was delivered by re-explaining the concept of recount text and having students write 5 sentences in groups. The activities in the last meeting were quite similar to those of the second meeting. But, the students wrote their stories in five paragraphs in groups. Different from PST 1, PST 2 seemed to stress on the grammar and the product of writing. In the confirmation, he was worried if his students' grammar on writing recount text was not satisfying. This concern indicates that the participant believes grammar plays a significant role to make a meaningful text. This seems to be in line with Christie's (2005) argument that in language learning children develop some conscious knowledge about the language system and how it works to create meanings.

Explaining recount text to his students prior to writing was also the main concern of PST 3 in his

classroom, which happened in the first meeting. What is interesting is that the students inserted illustration for their recounts. In the next meeting, the students went out of the room and observed their school environment. Here, they had opportunities for vocabulary exploration as resources to their writing because they could look up their dictionary for English words. After that, their writings would be based on their observation.

Based on the activities that the four preservice teachers conducted in their classrooms, it is found that they tend to focus on the product of the target texts (narrative and recount), although PST 4 did not reach that stage of writing. The tenet of genre-based pedagogy, on the other hand, is to present text and context in writing a text or a genre (Derewianka, 2003). Context is built through the stages of the teaching and learning cycles. There was limited time, if not none, for the students to get the exploration of building knowledge of the field. Nevertheless, the students were introduced to the texts through the explanation of the function and structure of the target texts. It is an important part of writing a text to explore the purpose and function of a text (Christie, 2005; Johns, 2002). The stages of modelling and deconstruction of the text mainly focus on reading narrative and recount texts and grammar that is to be used in the process of writing the texts. As the product of their teachings, the participants who applied genre-based pedagogy went to the stage of independent construction.

The findings clearly show that there is a gap between what the preservice teachers know and understand about genre-based pedagogy and how they apply their knowledge and understanding in the classroom. Similar gap was found, though not in the context of teaching writing through genre-based pedagogy in Hudson, Nguyen, and Hudson's study (2008). Their study revealed that more specifically highlighted the gap between students' knowledge and classroom practices in terms of writing genres, writing topics, and student's motivation. To find the causes of this gap, an interview was conducted to the participants after the teaching practicum program was completed. The participants clarify their practice of genre-based pedagogy. The explanations are as follows:

The first reason is the load of the materials to be covered or learning targets to meet in the teaching practicum program. Upon closer observation, it was found that the preservice teachers under research began their teaching practicum in the middle of the semester, meaning that some of the materials had been covered by the supervising teachers. The participants could not keep up with the pace of the supervising teachers, hence making them perceive that the materials were too much to be covered in a half of the semester. The same problem of teaching load was also

discovered in the context of Turkish preservice EFL teachers' teaching practicum (Merç, 2010).

The second reason is actually much related to the previous one, namely time allocation. The participants perceived that the time allocated for each topic was not sufficient; therefore, they did not provide any feedback to student writing, and writing was treated as a single activity, instead of a continuous one. In other words, the focus is on the product, not on the process.

The third reason is a lack of practice due to the fact that it was their first time applying genre-based pedagogy in real settings. Although they have sufficient knowledge of genre-based pedagogy, the lack of practice has made it difficult for them to understand how the pedagogy should actually be applied in teaching and learning. That is why, the four preservice teachers applying genre-based pedagogy skipped some of the stages, especially the most important stage, namely building knowledge of the field. This stage is essential to lead to the knowledge of when and where to use the text, for whom, why, and for what purposes, so that the text will be meaningful for the students.

The fourth reason is the less-than optimal supervision of both the visiting lecturer and supervising teacher, a problem found in other similar studies on EFL preservice teachers (Merç, 2008; Noel, 2007). The supervision given by the visiting lecturer and supervising teacher is commonly in the forms of observation and consultation. The consultation the participants have with the visiting lecturer is more into the best teaching practices, such as motivating activities and how to engage students in the teaching and learning. Meanwhile, the supervising teachers mostly let the preservice teachers teach in their own ways, and consultation was usually done merely for reporting. It can also be case that the supervising teachers were not themselves knowledgeable or experienced in teaching using genre-based pedagogy; hence, they could not really help the preservice teachers in the practice. This problem is also claimed to be the case in preservice EFL teaching practicum in Turkish context (Mutlu, 2014). Supervision is also deemed a major source of problem for preservice EFL teachers in Indonesian context as reported in Pasaka, Emilia, and Amalia's research findings (2014).

The four aforementioned problems encountered by the preservice teachers participating in this research seem to be commonplace. Although not in the same context of practicing genre-based pedagogy in the teaching of writing in EFL classrooms, similar problems were discovered by Merç (2008) who found that preservice teachers mostly have problems with themselves, the students, teaching, supervision, and Noel (2007) who added the school, learning, and preparation to the problems.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has shown that the genre-based pedagogy is potential to be further developed in teacher education. However, some problems need attention such as preservice teachers' perceived difficulties in managing the teaching and learning practice using genre based pedagogy in terms of time allocation and learning targets, and the less-than optimal supervision from the supervising teachers and visiting lecturer.

To address the above problems, here are some recommendations to be taken into consideration. Preservice teachers need more practice in genre-based pedagogy. With more practice, the preservice teachers will be able to adjust the genre-based pedagogy to the time allocation and targets set in the curriculum. They will be able to design classroom teaching and learning with genre-based pedagogy that is especially suited to the situations they encounter. This way, the preservice teachers will no longer see time allocation and learning targets as constraints; rather, these are the challenges they need to address in their teaching. There is also the need for a strong collaboration among preservice teachers, visiting lecturer, supervising teacher, and students because as Haigh, Pinder, & McDonald (2006) suggested, "The most frequently mentioned enabler was the development of professional relationships, whether they be between the associate and student teacher, the visiting lecturer and student teacher and the children and the student teacher" (p. 17).

Meanwhile, with the limited studies on the practice of the genre-based pedagogy by preservice EFL teachers, further studies will be needed to find solutions to the gap between preservice teachers' knowledge and classroom practices.

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