

# INCORPORATING GENRE ANALYSIS IN TEACHING WRITING

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## Abstract

Regarding the improvement in previous studies of implementing genre approach in English classes, this study was aimed at incorporating genre analysis in teaching writing. Genre analysis is a systematic analysis used to present patterns of language to students so that they can get sufficient understanding of the given genre. A particular genre is specified by moves describing how a text stretches to achieve its communicative purposes. By understanding the moves, students are expected to produce English written text. Through a classroom research, this study reported (1) how to incorporate the genre analysis to teaching writing of the job application letter, and (2) what students' response to incorporating the genre analysis in the teaching of writing job application letter in English. Data were collected through students interviews, classroom observation, and reflective journals.

**Keywords:** *genre, genre-analysis, teaching writing*

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching writing has always been the “apple” to many English Language Teaching (ELT) researchers. It might be because writing is considered the last and most advanced skill to be mastered. However, writing can only be a meaningful activity when other skills: listening, speaking and reading, have been scaffolded (Nation, 2009). Hyland (2003) asserted that the essence of teaching writing and the writing might be explained on basis of its focuses: language structures, text functions, creative expression, writing process, content and genre. But, Harmer (2007) summed the focuses into three main approaches: product, process and genre.

Genre approach, at some points, is similar to the product approach in terms that both approaches focus on the end-product instead of the writing process. But, students' ability to recognize different genres regarding its different social situation is the foundation of this approach. This approach puts emphasis on any social situation at which the writing can take

place in and the particular purpose that it carries (Clark, 2012; Paltridge, 2013 cited in Han & Hiver, 2018). It provides a sophisticated pedagogical framework focusing on the teaching of communicative purposes, structures, and language features of particular genres (Hyland, 2016 cited in Han & Hiver, 2018).

Incorporating genre analysis in English Language Teaching was proposed by Bhatia (2013). Responding to this, many studies were carried out and improvement in students' writing was shown when genre-approach incorporated. Chen & Su (2012) showed through their empirical study that incorporating genre analysis in teaching EFL writing was proven to be a feasible and effective model to enhance students' summarization performance of a narrative source text; Azaz (2016) claimed that genre-based lesson maximizes some pedagogical activities to raise students' awareness of genre structure; and Cai (2016) found that genre analysis was effective in facilitating the acquisition of academic lexical phrases.

Based on the researcher's experience, it was typical that most students' difficulties were also in writing. Not knowing how to express themselves in English written text, problems in using English grammatical aspects, language styles that are different from those in Bahasa Indonesia are common reasons for encountering difficulties in writing. Also, when teaching writing, the process approach was usually implemented concerning the time-efficiency. Students did the prewriting step in class, and continued the writing process as the home assignment. Groupwork was also applied so that it could save more time.

Regarding the improvements made in previous studies and taking into consideration the researcher's experiences, this study was aimed at incorporating genre analysis in teaching writing. This study will also try to find out students' responses toward incorporating genre analysis in a General English class for undergraduate students.

### **Approaches in Teaching Writing**

Pincas (1982 in Badger and White, 2000) described that in product approach, there are four stages utilized to teach writing: familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. It is at the familiarization stage, students are exposed to a particular text in order to familiarize them with the text and its features. At each stage, students' freedom is increased so that in the last stage, they are ready to write with less control and specific guidance. The goal of this approach is to develop students' knowledge about the structure of language by imitating the provided texts (the end-product). What has been the weakness of the approach is that this approach tries to maintain students'

satisfied feeling in a sense of they have created a writing of their own during the stages. Students' initiatives are less developed as stimulus (a complete text) has been provided in every stage. On the other hand, process approach concerns more about students' taking the sequential procedure to produce a piece of good writing. In this approach, a teacher will assure that students follow four steps: prewriting, writing, revising, and editing (Kim, 2007). At the last step, teacher and students might collaborate in completing the writing or they can go back to either of the previous steps to achieve the final product.

### **Genre and Genre Analysis**

To get in-depth understanding of this approach, it is imperative to first discuss genre and genre-analysis. Genre is defined as a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) and formal properties identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs (Swales, 1981; cited in Luna, 2016). Bhatia (1993) added that each genre is an instance of a successful achievement of a specific communicative purpose using conventionalized knowledge of linguistic and discoursal resources. Although, in its simple definition, genre might be considered types of texts (Firkins, et.al.,2007), Biber (1988 in Paltridge, 1996) has clarified that genre and types of texts are two different terms. The term "genre" refers to the categories of texts based on their external criteria, while "text types" refers to the groups of texts based on their similar linguistic forms. Paltridge (2006) explained genre in a more practical

description as “ways in which people get things done through their use of spoken and written discourse. Regarding all definitions on genre above, it could be concluded that genre is recognizable ways to achieve specific communicative purpose successfully.

Dudley-Evans (1987 in Wang, 2005) believed that genre analysis is “a system of analysis that is able to reveal something of the patterns of organization of a genre and the language used to express those patterns in the light of communicative purposes”. Taken from Bhatia’s book “*Analysing Genre*” (2013), incorporating genre analysis in the teaching was a necessity. No one can argue that teaching writing is time-demanding and therefore, it needs special attention especially for students who are still in the low-level of proficiency (Kim, 2007). Students could be exposed to many references so that students could refer on reliable sources and manage their anxiety in completing a writing task. Moreover, through the analysis, not only common patterns of grammar usage, key vocabulary, and text structure in particular text types could be obtained (Bradford-Watts, 2003 in Zahra 2013) but also specific context and purposes.

Flowerdew (2015) emphasized that the goal of utilizing genre analysis within academic pedagogy helps students/ learner to get sufficient understanding of academic discourse and develop both native and non-native academic communicative competence. The genre analysis could scaffold students with any strategies emerging from the top-down and bottom-up approaches (Cai, 2016). To sum, genre analysis is a systematic analysis used to present patterns of language to students so that they can get sufficient understanding of the given genre.

## **Incorporating Genre Analysis to Teaching Writing**

In this study, the genre introduced was promotional genre specifically job application letter. Kern (2000) affirmed that writing letters is the perfect way to introduce English writing skills to non-native speakers. Hence, writing letters can provide authentic writing goals, involving the use of a broad range of functions (for example, greeting, making questions, explaining, clarifying, apologizing, showing approval etc.), integrating reading and writing and motivating students to pay attention to the form (because it is aimed at the "real" reader).

The communicative purpose of job application letter is to promote the applicants. A job application is meant to clarify the enclosed or attached Curriculum Vitae (CV) as it cannot stand alone sent to the prospective employers. This letter is closely related to a sales promotion letter not simply because they share the same communicative purpose (i.e., to promote a particular product or service) but also use the same medium, and exploit the same form. The difference between the two letters is that the job application letter is to respond a job advertisement. On the other hand, both job application letter and the sales promotion letter have a similarity that is they can be unsolicited (Bhatia, 2013).

Bhatia (2003) in his book stated that to achieve the communicative purpose of a job application letter, the applicant should use the following moves:

Table 1. Moves in A Job Application Letter

Move 1	I wish to make application for a lectureship in the Department of English at this University.	Introducing candidature <i>Offering candidature</i>
Move 2	<p>I have a Ph.D. in English from the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, where I studied under such distinguished scholars as Professors K.R. Sisson and P. Hogg. I also have an M.A. in English from Napoli University.</p> <p>I have taught English at a number of American and Canadian educational institutions, including Purdue and Oklahoma universities. I have also taught at Lohis College in Tehran, Iran, where I had experience teaching English as a second language. Currently, I am on the staff of Riyadh University in Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>I have written about ten research articles in the last seven years, all of which have been published in scholarly journals. I have also written two books, one on Shakespeare and the other on the teaching of writing, which are being published by Guelph University and will be out in a few months.</p>	<p>Establishing Credentials</p> <p><i>Essential detailing of candidature</i></p> <p><i>Indicating value of candidature</i></p>
Move 3	My speciality is Shakespeare and Renaissance drama in general, but I am also qualified to teach a wide variety of other courses, including the Novel, Poetry, Composition, writing and teaching of writing and ESL.	Offering incentives
Move 4	I hope this letter of 'application' will clarify some of the information on the enclosed C.v., which outlines my qualifications, experience and research interests.	Enclosing documents
Move 5	I am required to give notice to Riyadh in early April and therefore look forward to hearing from you soon!	Using pressure tactics
Move 6	Since I do not have a telephone, I will be happy to call you should a telephone discussion become appropriate.	Soliciting response
Move 7	Thank you very much.	Ending politely

Moves are used to describe a sequence where each move represents how a text stretches to achieve its particular communicative purpose Swales (1981, 1990 in Upton & Cohen 2009). According to Bhatia (2013), a move gives specific

characteristic to a particular genres, so that it allows people to obtain greater understanding of the genre.

The following explanation of moves in a job application letter was paraphrased from Bhatia (2013). A job application letter begins with *establishing the applicant's credentials*. In Chart 1, the applicants established it by giving references that is his professors with whom he completed his Ph.D education. But, it is also common applicant establishes his/ her credentials by referring to the job advertisement. Another way to establish credentials is through what Bhatia (2013) called self-glorification or adversary glorification where the applicants tends to glorify the credentials of prospective employer or self-degradation where the applicants persuade the prospective employer to accept them.

The second move is *introducing candidature* with three parts to be fulfilled i.e, offering the candidature, essential detailing of the candidature, and indicating value of the candidature. Every part realizes what has been conveyed in the first move. This move is considered the most difficult and crucial one. In this move, the applicant emphasize that he/ she has all the required qualification, therefore he/ she is one of the potential candidates to be hired for the job offered. This part is equal to what Bhatia (2013) called self-representation in written text. This is also a form of self-appraisal at which the applicant promotes himself through the positive view (Bhatia, 1989 in Bhatia 2013).

The function of *offering incentive* is to make what has been offered either from a sales promotion letter or a job application letter more attractive This is the major difference between the sub-genre,

this is rarely used in job application because the applicant has offered his/ her relevant qualification in the previous move (Bhatia, 2013). However, it is not uncommon when this move is found at some application letter.

The next move in a job application letter is *enclosing documents*. There are two functions of this move, namely: to clarify what document has been enclosed with the letter and to refer to the documents. Furthermore, the move of soliciting response is an aspect of job application letters to reflect the applicant's action drive (Lesikar, 1984 in Bhatia, 2013). Here, the applicant showed his effort to achieve what he has targeted, getting the job. It progresses in the next move, *using pressure tactics*. At this move, the applicant tends to be more aggressive in persuading the employers. The last move is closing at which the applicant ends his/ her goodwill in applying the job. It can be as simple as saying "Thank you" or more elaborative such as "I hope you will find my qualification and experience of use to you".

Incorporating genre analysis to the teaching writing in this study would resemble to the study conducted by Kim (2007) to Korean students. First, teacher introduces samples of a specific genre During this introduction, teacher points out linguistic characteristics (common patterns of grammar usage, key vocabulary, and text structure) of the given genre so that students could aware of the specific context and purpose of that genre. Next, students produce their first draft by imitating the given genre. Teacher's significantly contributes through control and and guidance during the process. The control and guidance will finally diminish when students have arrived to the sufficient understanding of the given genre.

The application of a genre-based approach to class provides several advantages, namely explicit, systematic and based on needs (Hyland, 2002). *Explicitly*, this approach makes clear what will be learned (because it is tailored to the needs of students) to facilitate the acquisition of writing skills. *Systematically*, this approach provides a coherent framework for focusing on language and context or systematically this approach leads directly to the text and its context. *Based on needs*, this approach determines goals and content of learning tailored to the needs of students in the future.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Context**

This classroom research has been carried out in the three-credit course of General English for undergraduate students majoring in Mechanical Engineering program at a state university in Jakarta. The course is a compulsory course designed for sophomore students. The key objective of the course as expressed in the syllabus is: to develop students' language skills required for their academic study with emphasis in developing reading skill. Initial interviews were conducted with the students, program management, and industries. It was found that students' weaknesses were in written communication, through letters or e-mail. They demonstrated consistent difficulties with both the mechanics and organization of writing. Thus, the researcher decided to focus on enhancing student's English language writing especially the sub genre of business correspondence: job application letter.

Determining writing letter as the sub-genre to be taught was based on the belief that writing letter is the perfect way

to introduce English writing skills to non-native speakers (Kern, 2000). It can provide authentic writing goals, involving the use of a broad range of functions (for example, greeting, making questions, explaining, clarifying, apologizing, showing approval etc.), integrating reading and writing and motivating students to pay attention to the form (because it is aimed at the "real" reader).

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were 14 male students with ages ranging from 18 to 20 years. All students are native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia where English is a foreign language.

### **Research Questions**

The aim of this study was to answer the following research questions:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: How to incorporate the genre analysis to teaching writing of the job application letter?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: What are students' response to incorporating the genre analysis in the teaching of writing job application letter in English?

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### **Classroom Procedure**

Following the decision to focus on scaffolding students' knowledge in getting sufficient understanding, incorporating the genre analysis to teaching writing was done in a teaching-learning cycle based on genre-approach.

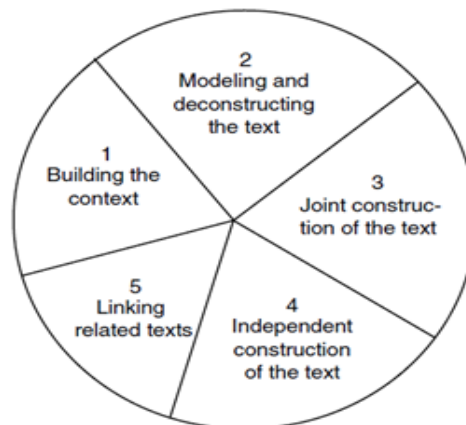


Figure 1. Stages of the Teaching/ Learning Cycle (Feez, 1998)

The learning-teaching cycle as shown in Figure 1 involved five stages. All procedures in this study were adapted from Feez (1998). At the first stage, **Building the Context**, students were introduced to the authentic models of a job advertisement. Students explored the context by investigating the register of the models. Students also explored the roles

and relationship of the job-applicants and prospective employers are established and maintained and understood the channel of communication being used: email, phone or face-to-face interviews. A typical sequence of text in the social context of applying for a job. The sequence in Figure 2 was adapted from Feez (1998).

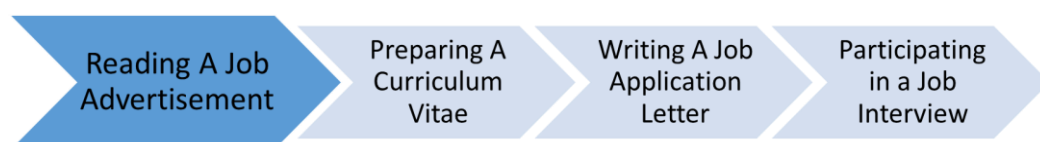


Figure 2. Sequence of Applying for a Job

The context-building began with reading a job advertisement. Students picked and brought their own ad. The ad should be in relation with students educational background. Here, reading strategies were applied. A Curriculum Vitae (CV) was prepared based on comprehending the ad's requirements. Then, it was progressing into comparing

the models of solicited application letter and the unsolicited one.

In the **Modelling and Deconstructing Text**, students investigated the structural pattern and language features of the model. Activities in this stage were done from the levels of text, clause and expression.

Table 2. Activities at each level of language

<b>Text-level activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Presentation activities using charts</li> <li>✓ Labelling stages/ moves in an authentic model of job application letter</li> <li>✓ Activities focusing on cohesive devices.</li> </ul>
<b>Clause-level activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Presentation and practice activities relating to the grammatical features of the authentic model</li> </ul>
<b>Expression-level activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Spelling, giving feedback to expressions used in the authentic model</li> </ul>

At the third stage, *Joint Construction of the Text*, student began to contribute to the construction of the application letter through information gap activities and small-group construction of the application letter. At this stage, teacher's contribution to the construction

began to diminish as students' independence increases.

Stage of *Independent Construction of the Text* includes activities for students to work independently with their own letter. Students' performance are assessed at this stage. Below assessment was adapted from Silva (2014).

Table 3. Rubrics for Assessing Students' Letter Writing

Aspects	4	3	2	1	0
<b>Relevance and Content</b>	The letter fully satisfies the requirements of the job ad. The letter includes all relevant information.	Student's letter mostly covers the requirements of the given task. It includes most of the relevant information.	The letter addresses some of the requirements. It includes some relevant information but not clearly focused	The letter attempts to address the topic but few relevant information. Digresses often from the topic.	Does not attempt the task/the answer is completely irrelevant.
<b>Organization</b>	Includes an inviting introduction and a satisfactory conclusion. Skillfully manages paragraphing. Logical arrangement of ideas. Manages all aspects of cohesion well.	Includes an introduction, body and conclusion. Uses paragraphing successfully. Uses a range of cohesive devices but may look mechanical.	Attempts to include an introduction, body and conclusion. Main idea is not clearly supported with details. Less attention given to organization. Rare use of transitions.	Begins abruptly. No paragraphing or inappropriate paragraphing. No attempt to maintain logical arrangement of ideas.	No clear message is communicated



<b>Vocabulary and Word Choice</b>	Uses a sophisticated range of vocabulary which is appropriate for the purpose and audience. May use figurative language.	Uses accurate vocabulary which suits the audience and purpose with a mixture of precise and general words. Occasional errors in word choice.	Uses a fair range of vocabulary to express ideas. May be inappropriate for the audience and purpose at some occasions	Uses a limited range of vocabulary. Mostly inaccurate for the purpose and audience	Inappropriate and inaccurate vocabulary
<b>Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation</b>	Uses a variety of grammatically correct sophisticated sentence structures. Perfect spelling and accurate punctuation.	Uses mostly correct sentence structures with 1-2 mistakes. Correct spelling and appropriate punctuation with occasional errors.	Uses basic sentence structures with some errors. Uses spelling and punctuation with some errors.	Uses mostly sentence fragments with frequent errors. Frequent errors in spelling and punctuation.	Writing incomprehensible.
<b>Presentation</b>	Neat, easy to read, error free	Mostly readable, neat, minimum errors	Fairly readable. Some strain on the reader.	Not clear. Considerable strain on the reader.	Illegible

### Students' Response

Students positively responded to the incorporating genre analysis to teaching writing. Although the focus of genre analysis is to give students' understanding of writing application letter, their reading comprehension increased as well. Students began to apply such reading strategies as previewing, scanning and skimming. In general, this affected students' willingness to use English more active during classroom interaction. At last, incorporating genre analysis satisfied and scaffolded almost all students' language skills.

### CONCLUSION

Incorporating genre analysis in teaching writing was a necessity. However, the time-demanding was a weakness found through the research. There should be a further study in time-management so that each meeting shall be time-efficient. Regardless the weakness, students' sufficient understanding to produce text was obtained and students' positive response was brought forward.

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