

A Sociocultural Perspective on EFL In-Service Teachers' SFL/Genre Knowledge Development

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ABSTRACT

SFL/genre knowledge is considered as an effective tool for teacher candidates or pre-service teachers to prepare to give instruction in their teaching activities. It can also be used as conceptual tools for teacher candidates or pre-service teachers to develop their linguistic knowledge. This study investigated on how EFL in-service teachers develop their SFL/genre knowledge as a tool for their English language usage, as in how they employ SFL/genre knowledge to deliver instructions and information in their language teaching. This case study involved EFL in-service teachers who were a part of an SFL/genre based interventional program held by one of the universities in Indonesia. Questionnaire, observations, and teachers' document from the SFL/genre based interventional program were collected and analysed. The result of the analyses of this study showed that SFL/genre-based approach has the potential to be further developed and implemented in teacher education and teaching practices. However, there are still some difficulties faced by the teachers that never had an SFL/genre-based teaching training before. The learning of SFL/genre-based approach by EFL in-service teacher reveals how they may come to acquire and actualize the aspects of language development indicated by a sociocultural perspective on language teacher development.

Keywords: *EFL teachers, genre knowledge development, sociocultural perspective, teachers' development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

SFL/Genre-based pedagogy, also known as the SFL/genre-based approach, has grown in popularity and influence among English teachers, and it has been adapted for use in a range of instructional contexts, particularly in EFL and ESL classes as in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand (Derewianka, 2003; Emilia & Hamied, 2015; Nurlaelawati & Novianti, 2017; Nurlaelawati, Lengkawati & Gunawan, 2020). SFL/genre-based approach was established in Australia with the goal of teaching and learning writing with an emphasis on producing various text genres and the social purpose of language and how the linguistic qualities of specific genres promote this communicative goal (Martin & Rose, 2008; Ivanič, 2004; Lin, 2006). Genre-based approach is also more concerned with the text as a full unit than than the sentence (Lin, 2006). This approach has been widely used in English classes such as primary school, secondary school, and postsecondary contexts due to its simplicity and clarity of the purpose (Derewianka, 2003).

SFL/genre-based approach was employed in Indonesia in 2004, when the curriculum was changed to

a competence-based with a more language-based orientation (Emilia, 2011). Because of the curriculum shift, English language education has shifted from the sentence level and oral practice (brief texts) to written text-based techniques that stress writing various types of texts (Kadarisman, 2014). Since its inception, text type has been a key emphasis of content in the English curriculum as the government attempts to increase students' English literacy while keeping up with worldwide trends (Kartika-Ningsih & Gunawan, 2019). Since then, SFL/genre-based approach was implemented in Indonesian EFL classrooms. SFL/genre-based approach focuses not only on how to teach language learners, but it also helps preservice and in-service teachers employ language patterns to generate purposeful piece of writing (Hyland, 2007). It also enables teachers to engage in more specific genres such as lesson plans, student reports, and class assessment, while also offering a level of understanding to how teachers read or produce common text (Hyland, 2004). With the new curriculum applied in Indonesian EFL classrooms, teachers need to acquire and adapt the knowledge of teaching text-based activities. This shift may have caused new challenges and obstacles in teaching learning activities.

The obstacles faced in teaching learning activities might have surfaced from several reasons, one in particular is EFL teachers' unpreparedness in facing the curriculum shift, precisely in the teaching learning activities shift. The unpreparedness is caused by the fact that EFL teachers lack adequate linguistic and pedagogical expertise of how academic texts work to generate meaning in specific fields, as well as knowledge of how to design successful classroom instruction that is accessible to all students. Special case with EFL in-service teachers, they tend to rely on traditional ways of understanding grammar, which does not facilitate their academic literacy development (Gunawan, 2020). Another cause of teacher unpreparedness is the lack of in-service teachers training in functional and meaning making conception of language (Emilia, 2005; Rose & Martin, 2012 as cited in Gunawan, 2020). A way of helping in-service teachers with the SFL/genre-based approach is through teacher training or apprenticeship to assist in-service teachers in staying current with changing pedagogical viewpoints, in-class dynamics and so on (Arslan, Miricin and Hüseyin, 2019). With the proper training, Indonesian EFL teachers could develop their knowledge of SFL/genre-based approach and applied the approach better in teaching learning activities as it considered as an effective tool for teachers or pre-service teachers to prepare to give instruction in their teaching activities (Semiante, Cavallaro and Troyan, 2020).

Since the implementation of SFL/ genre-based approach along with the challenges is considered important, a growing body of research on the integration of genre-based approaches in English classrooms is being conducted in both ESL and EFL contexts (Accurso & Gebhard, 2020; Emilia & Hamied, 2015; Herazo, 2020; Kartika-Ningsih & Gunawan, 2019; Nurlaelawati & Noviyanti, 2017, 2020; Nagao, 2018; Shi, 2017). A significant number of research on the implementation of SFL/genre-based approach are seen through the lens of sociocultural theory, as genre-based approach and theory cater to each other's context (Accurso, 2017; Achugar, 2017; Lin, 2006; Semiante et al., 2020). The examples of the studies of genre-based approach viewed from sociocultural perspective is by Herazo (2020) on student level. The study about the implementation of genre-based pedagogy is also investigated at teacher or instructor level on a non-English language course (Allen, 2020). On preservice teacher level, there is a study by Semiante et al., (2020).

Those recent studies examined the implementation genre-based approach at students, teacher or instructor, and preservice teachers' level on their conceptual development through genre-based instruction. Thus, there is a gap on the study on the conceptualization of EFL in-service teachers' SFL/ genre knowledge development grounded by sociocultural perspective through an interventional program. For this reason, this study investigated on how EFL in-service teachers

develop their SFL/ genre knowledge as a tool for their English language usage, as in how they employ functional language elements to deliver instructions and information in their language teaching.

2. METHOD

This study adopted a case study approach due to the consideration that the approach not only provides aids for the researcher to explore the case occurred in a detailed manner but also provides an example in a real-life context (Cohen, 2007; Shi, Baker and Chen, 2019). Another reason for using a case study as the research approach is that this study involves several teachers who have had similar experience, as well as multiple data sources as interviews and document analysis (Creswell, 2016; Shi et al., 2019). Teachers who have undergone SFL/genre-based training program from one of the universities in West Java, Indonesia, participated in this study. The teachers' backgrounds range from public senior school to vocational school. The diversity in age, teaching experience, and living as well as teaching place was considered. The teachers were investigated in terms of their genre knowledge development from a sociocultural perspective before and after the SFL/genre-based approach training program.

The data for this study is gathered using a variety of methods, including a questionnaire for initial survey, training program observations, and field notes. The items in the questionnaire consist of teachers' prior knowledge of SFL/genre-based approach, and teachers' learning experiences. The observations and field notes were used to collect the data on teachers' SFL/genre-based knowledge development, through the interactions between the instructor and the teachers. The data was analysed using systematic coding to provide an indepth result of teachers' SFL/genre-based knowledge development as well as the relationship between the concepts and principles of SFL/genre-based approach before and after the SFL/genre-based training program (Kartika-Ningsih & Gunawan, 2019).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study adopted sociocultural perspective to look deeper into teachers' SFL/genre knowledge development from before and after the SFL/genre-based training program. Sociocultural perspective highlights the socially situated, contextual character of how teachers learn to teach; accounts for the dynamic, continuing, and experiential aspects of teacher learning; and addresses the complexities that exist between what teachers think, what they do, and why (Johnson, 2009). the results of this study present two main themes, EFL in-service teachers' prior knowledge of SFL/genre-based approach and EFL in-service teachers' SFL/genre knowledge development.

3.1. EFL In-service Teachers' Prior Knowledge of SFL/Genre-Based Approach

In-service teachers' prior knowledge of SFL/Genre-based approach can be seen through multiple diagrams as the result of the initial survey from the questionnaire. The first and second questions were asking the teachers whether if they knew and understand about SFL/genre-based approach before the training program. Most of the teachers knew about SFL/genre-based approach already, although there are some in-service teachers that answered

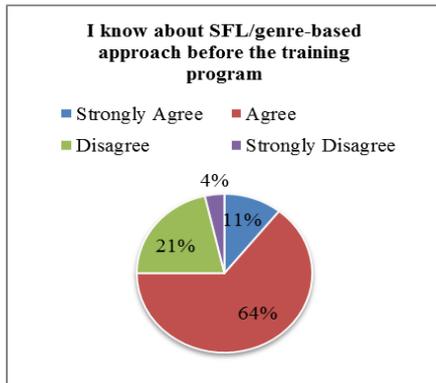


Figure 1 Teachers' familiarity with SFL/genre-based approach.

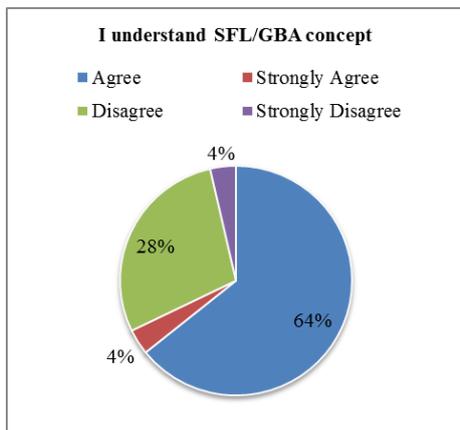


Figure 2 Teachers' understanding of SFL/genre-based

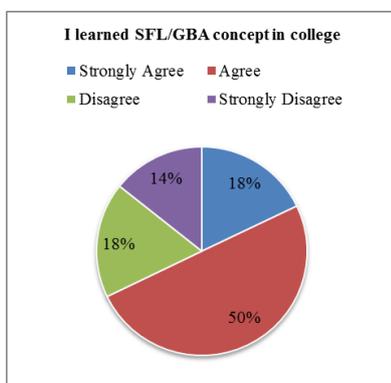


Figure 3 Teachers' previous learning of SFL/genre-based approach concept

that they don't know about SFL/genre-based approach before the training program (figure 1). SFL/genre-based approach refers to how to teach students to use language patterns to produce meaningful and coherent writing (Hyland, 2004). In addition, the understanding of the teachers' SFL/genre is also related to the understanding of the types of text used in learning English. Based on this theory, the teachers' initial understanding of SFL/genre-based approach can be seen through interactive activities during training. Most of the teachers were able to answer basic questions related to SFL/genre knowledge such as what text and context is. Some teachers have been able to answer correctly, although there is still minor misunderstanding about text.

From the table 1, the teachers emphasized that text is a writing that has meaning. There was also a teacher who answered that text is 'anything', then explained that what was meant by everything were language signs that had meaning. NS' answers indicated that the prior knowledge possessed was more comprehensive than the others. Teachers' prior knowledge of SFL/genre-based approach represents the notion that teacher education starts long before a teacher enters a teacher training program. As a result, teacher knowledge is dependent not just on pre-service and in-service teacher education, but also on long term and contextual learning (Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Reeves, 2009). The data collected showed that some of the teachers had already received knowledges on SFL/genre-based approach concept in their college days or from another in-service teacher training program, as in mentioned by several teachers, PISA training (figure 3). However, there are still some teachers' that do not understand about SFL/genre-based approach concept yet (figure 2) approach concept

Even though not all teachers had the exposure to SFL/genre-based approach during their college days or while they were teaching as an in-service teacher before, a huge number of presentation showed that they used SFG/genre-based approach in their teaching. From the question-and-answer sessions during the training

Table 1. Teachers and instructor interaction

Instructor:	So, all of you teach text at school, right? This is an English and Indonesian teachers, right? Ladies and gentlemen, have you ever heard of text? What is text? Who can answer? You can write it in chat or you can say the answer, just unmute.
NS:	Anything that has meaning.
GM:	A complete set of meaning.
LA:	A collection of words that has meaning.
NS:	Any signs of language that has meaning.
WK:	A set of language unit that has meaning.
Instructor:	Good! What else?

program, turned out that in-service teachers were familiar with the term text-based teaching, or text based activities, as most of the teachers also understand the varieties of text used in English teaching-learning activities.

Regarding the teachers' prior knowledge of text, the questionnaire also provides an overview of whether the teachers have implemented their knowledge of SFL/genre concepts with classroom teaching practices. (See picture 4)

In this aspect, most of the teachers have applied the SFL/genre-based approach to their teaching activities, starting from applying genre-based approach in their respective lesson plans. Although many have applied SFL/genre-based approach to the lesson plan, there are

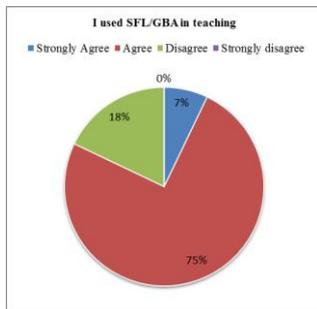


Figure 4. The use of SFL/genre-based approach by the teachers in their classroom.

Table 2. Teachers' implementation of SFL/genre-based approach

Aspects	%	Information
Implementing text types in English teaching	82	The percentage indicates that the majority of the teachers already implemented SFL/genre-based approach through the text types they taught.
Facing some difficulties in understanding SFL/genre-based approach concept	57	SFL/genre-based approach appeared to be not an easy concept to understand for the teachers. The training programs they participated help them in understanding the concept more.
Facing difficulties in implementing the text types in teaching	64	Although in the previous discussion the teachers are said to have understanding of SFL/genre-based approach concept, there are still difficulties faced by the teachers in implementing the approach in classroom practices.
Text types aid the teacher in teaching English	82	Text types or the grouping of the text makes it easier for in-service teachers in Teaching text in classrooms.
The teaching context makes it possible to teach using SFL/genre-based approach	89	The percentage represents how in-service teachers' teaching environment makes it possible for them to implement SFL/genre-based approach in their English teaching. However, there are small percentage of the teachers' environment that does not support the implementation of SFL/genre-based approach in the classroom.

still a number of teachers who have not applied the approach to the lesson plan. To see whether the application of SFL/genre-based approach is in the teachers' lesson plan, we can look for the teaching learning cycle (TLC) implemented in the lesson plan. The TLC in SFL/genre-based approach is divided into several stages, namely building knowledge of field (BkoF), modeling of the text (MoT), joint construction of the text (JCoT), and independent construction of the text (IcoT) (Martin, 2009). From the interventional program, the teachers are asked to submit their lesson plan before the explanation on lesson plan. After the explanation on the lesson plan topic, the teachers are asked to reupload the lesson plan that the participant had corrected. It can be seen what development or changes there are in the composition of the lesson plans made by the teachers. After seeing the result on how the in-service teacher understand the concept of SFL/genre-based approach, the questionnaire also revealed more into the in-service teachers' implementation of the approach. Other factors such as their teaching environment also revealed in their response. See table 2.

In this context, in-service teachers acquired their knowledge base for teaching, according to the sociocultural perspective on language teacher learning, by mediation in activities and interaction with language teacher educator (Sembiante et al., 2020). For this study, language teacher educator shared the SFL/genre-based approach material with interactive method so dialogues happened frequently during the training program. It was not only the question-and-answer sessions, but the teachers also got to share their experiences in the classroom and had the instructors explaining the situation with SFL/genre-based approach view. Other teachers could reflect on their own teaching from the shared teaching experiences by fellow teachers. The teachers were also given assignments to do to put what they had from the training into practice. These activities as explained by Johnson and Golombek (2011) is building teachers' awareness which develops through socially constructed activities and/or a constellation of practices in which they participate, such as being learners in classrooms and schools, in teacher education programs, or as teachers in institutions with language as the eminent symbolic artefact mediating and constructing human mind. Both conventional and ongoing experiences in social situations with dynamic positions as learners or teachers imply that a sociocultural perspective emphasizes socially, historically, and culturally created meanings.

3.2. EFL In-service Teachers' SFL/Genre Knowledge After Training Program

After knowing in-service teachers' prior knowledge of SFL/genre-based approach viewed from sociocultural perspective, the second result is about EFL in-service

teachers' SFL/genre knowledge after the training program.

3.2.1. EFL In-service Teachers' SFL/Genre Knowledge Development and Professional Development

As sociocultural perspective reveals, the SFL/genre-based knowledge base's development is not linear, it represents the complexity of change as non-linear, tumultuous, and continuous (Johnson & Golombek, 2020). The first result is that the teachers were able to decipher the meaning of text (Halliday, 1993). This preliminary interpretation, which served as the ground for subsequent analysis by in-service teachers was based on their meaning-making abilities as language users and served as a foundation for applying and communicating SFL/genre-based principles (Halliday, 1993; Sembiente et al., 2020). This first result came from in-service teachers' prior knowledge of the concept of SFL/genre-based approach which contains text types in it, and the teachers' understanding that each text type contain different meanings. The next result is to use SFL/genre terms to link text meaning to language features. In-service teachers must link their interpretations of meaning in order to understand and use SFL/genre-based approaches (Halliday, 1993). From being able to decipher the meaning of the text used in teaching-learning activities, in-service teachers were also able to improve their knowledge in terms of language features such as grammar. During the interactive session, some of the teachers admitted that they tend to change course when teaching text, meaning that they tend to get trapped into teaching grammar instead of teaching the language features for the whole context of the text since it is easier to teach. This case demonstrated that grammar is not integrated into meaningful text is a wide range of contexts, which may be more complex. This also relates to the ability to select which grammar to teach in order to provide students with language knowledge as a resource for meaning making in a variety of circumstances (Gunawan, 2020).

The third is that in-service teachers are able to link language features to their SFL/genre functions (Halliday, 1993). In-service teachers used SFL terminology and metafunctions to capture the content of the text while refining their descriptions of how these elements provides insight into the function of the language being used (Halliday, 1993; Sembiente et al., 2020). Participants (subject, direct object, and other nouns), processes (verbs), and circumstances (prepositional, adverbial, and adjectival phrases conveying information of the text) were more likely to be implemented by in-service teachers. Textual metafunction features were the latest to be integrated by in-service teachers (Sembiente et al., 2020), as revealed by the the teachers during the training program. The last is in-service teachers are able

to use SFL/genre-based approach terminology to combine linguistics aspects, which supported by their capacity to comprehend and transmit meanings utilizing SFL/genre metalanguage (Halliday, 1993). In this part, teachers are able to pinpoint linguistic features of a text, and how they play a part in the text to transfer the meaning. From this finding, the teachers realised the need of shifting in their conception and teaching, especially in grammar and language features of text types they used to teach to their students.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that SFL/genre-based approach has the potential to be further developed and implemented in teacher education and teaching practices. However, there are still some difficulties faced by the teachers that never had an SFL/genre-based teaching training before. They encountered difficulties in understanding the concept of SFL/genre-based approach and text types especially the generic structures of text types and how to implement the SFL/genre-based approach in the classroom. One obstacle faced by the teachers is that although the majority of the teachers were supported to implement SFL/genre-based approach in their teaching environment, there are teachers who do not have the support to implement SFL/genre-based approach in their teaching practices. The learning of SFL/genre-based approach by EFL in-service teacher reveals how they may come to acquire and actualize the aspects of language development indicated by a sociocultural perspective on language teacher development. This may lead to EFL in-service teachers' development in their context knowledge for teaching, related to the teachers' awareness of their surroundings, which contributes to in-service teachers' shift in pedagogical expertise in the classroom (Gunawan, 2020).

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