

Inquiring into A Teacher's understanding of Genrebased Pedagogy A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English through texts is one of the keys focuses of the current Indonesian education curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which has been informed by systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and genre-based pedagogy (GBA). This approach highlights the importance of teachers' roles in achieving the objectives of the curriculum. In view of this, teachers' understandings of genre-based pedagogy become of prime importance in achieving a successful teaching and learning process. Due to the limited studies on this topic, the present case study explores one novice teacher's conception of genre-based pedagogy and how her understanding of the concept evolves throughout her professional journey. Through a series of interviews, this study reveals that the teacher's understanding of genre-based pedagogy evolved within three distinct phases, which were classified into (1) the early years of teaching, (2) growing awareness through continued academic and professional experience, and (3) genre-based pedagogy in practice. It was evident that the teacher's understanding of genre-based pedagogy within the three phases was greatly influenced by the contexts in which she studied and taught. This study emphasizes that in order to develop teachers' understanding of genre-based pedagogy, it is imperative that they be given ample exposure to theory and practice.

Keywords: Genre-based pedagogy, SFL-GBA, teacher's understanding.

1. INTRODUCTION

Genre-based pedagogy or genre-based approach (GBA) has drawn much attention in Indonesian education. This is mainly due to the adoption of GBA into the teaching of English in the Indonesian curriculum. It first was adopted in the 2004 Curriculum and continued to be the approach to draw on in the 2013 Curriculum and in today's *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Due to its importance, several studies have revolved around the implementation of GBA in Indonesia within a variety of contexts, grades, and academic levels (see Angraeni & Wirza, 2021; Angraini & Rozimela, 2019; Aunurrahman, Hikmayanti, & Yuliana, 2020; Emilia & Hamied, 2015; Graves & Garton, 2017; Maknun, 2019; Mastura, Arsyad, & Koto, 2020; Mbau & Sugeng, 2019; Widodo, 2006).

Crucial to the success of curriculum implementation is the pivotal role of teachers in effectively adopting genre-based pedagogy. Aligned with the principles of GBA, teachers play an instrumental part in providing explicit instruction to facilitate students' comprehension and meaning-making processes (Rothery, 1994; Rose & Martin, 2012; Suharyadi, Widiati, & Basthomi, 2021). This explicit teaching approach involves in-depth discussions on text structures and linguistic features, enabling students to master genres and understand the intricacies of textual construction (Emilia, 2011; Hyon, 1996). By delivering explicit instruction, teachers can provide essential support and scaffolding to students who may encounter challenges during the learning process.

The efficacy of teaching practice largely depends on teachers' depth of understanding and knowledge of genre-based pedagogy. As stated by Neumann, Kind, and Harms (2019), the harmony of knowing and doing can be a portrait of ideal classroom teaching. In view of this, teachers' understanding of GBA can significantly impact its classroom implementation. In the absence of a comprehensive socio-rhetorical grasp of genre and its instructional processes,

teachers may inadvertently convey genre-based pedagogy as rigid patterns, restrictive grammar models, or misaligned teaching cycles (Emilia, 2005; Hyland, 2007; Kartika-Ningsih & Gunawan, 2019; Rini, Gunawan, Emilia, & Kurniawan, 2021). Therefore, a robust comprehension of genre-based pedagogy serves as a foundational prerequisite for effective teaching, empowering teachers to raise awareness regarding how texts convey social functions and objectives, and how to adeptly implement the teaching cycle.

The teaching cycle, as proposed by Derewianka (1990) and Rothery (1994), and later expanded by Feez (2002) and Martin (2010), comprises four phases: building knowledge of the field, modelling the text, joint construction, and independent construction (as cited in Emilia, 2011). This model, currently adopted in Indonesia, involves providing students with experiences to explore cultural and situational aspects of the topic (building knowledge of the field), introducing the organizational structure and linguistic features of the text (modelling the text), guiding learners in constructing texts collectively (joint construction), and empowering students to work individually on genre-based writing (independent construction).

Teachers' understanding of genre in this study derived from the notion of pedagogical content knowledge of genre by Worden (2019) adapted from pedagogical content knowledge of genre (PCK) by Shulman (1987). According to Worden's scholarly work, a comprehensive framework of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) pertaining to genre encompasses four key components: genre-specific content knowledge, knowledge of learners, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of the curriculum.

The four key components are portrayed as teachers' interconnected understanding that is crucial to success in achieving the curriculum objective of teaching English. Genre-specific content knowledge refers to teachers' understanding of the features and conventions of different genres of writing. It involves identifying different genres, reflecting on genre uses, and either reading articles about genre or reading articles in different genres (Driscoll, Paszek, Gorzelsky, Hayes, & Jones, 2019). Knowledge of learners refers to teachers' understanding of their students' backgrounds, interests, and abilities. By understanding the students, the teacher can provide explicit teaching and scaffolding (Rose & Martin, 2012; Rothery, 1994; Emilia, 2011), fitting the need of the students during the teaching of the genre. Pedagogical knowledge refers to teachers' knowledge of effective teaching strategies and methods along with the teaching cycle of genre-based pedagogy. With this knowledge for teaching, teachers can better create lessons that engage and challenge students while also helping them understand the material and build successful learning experiences. Hence, it provides a foundation that enables teachers to make ideas accessible to others (Shulman, 1987). Knowledge of curriculum refers to teachers' understanding of the content and goals of the curriculum they are teaching.

While studies concerning the practical implementation of genre-based pedagogy abound, there is a limited exploration on how teachers develop their understanding of genre-based pedagogy in the Indonesian context. While studies conducted in other countries, such as Tardy, Buck, Pawlowski, & Slinkard's (2018), Worden (2019), de Oliveira and Lan (2014), Gebhard, Chen, Graham, & Gunawan (2013), and Hedgcock and Lee (2017), have contributed valuable insights on such development, similar studies are yet to be done in the Indonesian context. Hence, this research aims to address the aforementioned research gap by exploring an Indonesian teacher's understanding and knowledge of GBA.

2. METHOD

This study employs a case study research design. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined case study research as "an indepth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 37). Likewise, Yin (2014) highlights that case study research retains holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events during investigation. This research design is a way of understanding how people construct meaning and make sense of their experiences, which in this case is a teacher's understanding of genre-based pedagogy. Hence, a case study research design is deemed to be suitable for the present.

The selected participant is a novice teacher at a junior high school in West Java with four years of teaching experience. The selection criteria include prior teaching experience and ongoing postgraduate education. These criteria are assumed to be able to indicate the teacher's growing understanding of genre-based pedagogy.

This study gathered the data through semi-structured interviews conducted three times. Interviews are relevant to acquire an understanding of the information through sharing knowledge, experiences, and emotions (Hyde-Clarke, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, the semi-structured interviews using the participant's native language was aimed at allowing teachers to express themselves without the pressure of perfect grammar or sentence structure. It also allows for a more personal and authentic connection to be established. The interviews revolve around exploring the teacher's understanding of genre-based pedagogy, and how her understanding evolved over time, throughout her experiences as a student and teacher. The discussion delves into her experiences, insights, and reflection. The aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors and processes contributing to her evolving comprehension of genre-based pedagogy.

Furthermore, the interview data is also recorded using audio recording for further analysis. The analysis includes a thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) pointed that thematic analysis is an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data, through which the researcher identifies and analyzes patterns, topics, or ideas (themes) that emerge across the qualitative data collected. The analysis involves multiple readings of the interview transcripts, immersing the researcher in the content and gain a comprehensive understanding of the participant's responses. By employing thematic analysis, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the teacher's evolving understanding of genre-based pedagogy, unravelling the underlying meanings and experiences expressed in her narratives.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis yield three major patterns in relation to the teacher's understanding of genre-based pedagogy: (1) the early years of teaching, (2) growing awareness through continued academic and professional experience, and (3) genre-based pedagogy in practice. Those will be discussed in the following.

3.1. The Early Years of Teaching

The teacher's initial knowledge of the notion of genre before teaching and during her first-year teaching experience is little. The notion of genre is said to be "a new term" for her. This initial belief is derived from her statement (excerpt 1).

Excerpt 1.

"... in the past, I knew the notion of genre in novel or film such as fiction non-fiction, horror, action, or romance..."

Following that statement, the teacher revealed that her prior knowledge of genre was limited to literary works such as novels or films. This typical answer commonly occurs since the term of the genre is varied according to its context such as in Biology science and literature works (see Dirgeyasa, 2016). A similar finding by Tardy, Buck, Pawlowski, and Slinkard (2018) found that among teacher participants, about three-fourths of teachers stated that genre tended toward literary text, fiction, or non-fiction genre. The variety conception of genre may occur as this notion has its own meaning based on the context uses.

As the teacher narrated her teaching experience (excerpt 2), especially in her first-year experience, she had taught her students about text types such as recount text, narrative text, and procedure text as curriculum 2013 mandated. Hence, the teacher's initial understanding is assumed to be partially about understanding text types focusing only on writing. As stated in the statement:

Excerpt 2.

"... my main focus of teaching is to teach student types of text based on the linguistic features and its general structure just like a math formula, it has its own linguistic characteristic... I just explained the text types and give example of text then analyzing them... students are unhappy studying English because of the writing assignment..."

Teaching students text types, believing it as a math formula, and explaining the linguistic features, generic structure and characteristics of text are typically found in novice teachers' genre knowledge (see Kartika-Singh and Gunawan, 2019); and Rini, Gunawan, Emilia, & Kurniawan, 2021). According to Worden (2019), this typical perception is derived from a teacher's content knowledge of the genre, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of the curriculum. Little is known by the teacher that the text type is based on the genre term, which highlights not only the linguistic features or the generic structure but also the social function of the text, which leads to such different characteristics. Genre means the usage of language in certain social circumstances (Christie & Martin, 2000), and it has become a focus of the English teaching curriculum in Indonesia for two decades. As the teacher narrated how she taught the text type (excerpt 2), it is assumed that her knowledge of the teaching cycle is limited. She only performed one to two phases of the teaching cycle of genre pedagogy, modeling of text, and joint construction. Hence, these lead to the assumption that a teacher's understanding of genre in their first-year experience as a teacher is only partial.

Further investigation reveals that the teacher has limited knowledge of the concept of genre due to their past academic experience and identity before teaching. Tardy, Buck, Pawlowski, & Slinkard (2018) and Hedgcock and Lee (2017) emphasize that teachers' capacity to teach and comprehend genre is shaped by their academic experiences and personal identities. Educators who have been exposed to a diverse range of genres and possess a profound understanding of their linguistic characteristics tend to excel in implementing genre-based pedagogies in their classrooms. The leading

assumption regarding teacher's limited knowledge is manifested in the teacher's claim about the term of genre in the excerpt 1 and excerpt 3 below.

Excerpt 3.

"In my bachelor's study, I did not learn genre-based approaches. We did not have a systemic functional grammar course. I learned text types in the writing and reading courses... a bit about language use and its function from discourse analysis course."

The teacher stated that the notion of text types and language use based on its function is partially learned from courses in her bachelor's study, which are in writing, reading, and discourse analysis. Being explicitly taught theories of learning underpinning the concept of what to teach is essential for teachers to develop their professional development. Wood and Sithamparam (2014) framed the lesson and learning study as significantly affecting teachers' professional development. Hence, the teacher's first-year teaching experience is greatly affected by her prior study experience as a bachelor's student.

3.2. Growing Awareness through Continued Academic and Professional Experience

The teacher then shared her experience on how she gradually gained insight into the origins of genre-based pedagogy. It is focusing mainly on her journey in pursuing the post-graduate study. The following excerpt:

Excerpt 4.

".. I first learned Systemic Functional Linguistics as one of my master studies courses, where I just understood the context of culture and context of situation principle as explained in SFL... then I understand the term of lexico-grammar choice and social function of text... We even had a short teaching practice implementing the GBA teaching cycle under our lecturer's guidance."

The teacher's further shared experience shed light on her own journey, continuing her study. The genre pedagogy is originally informed by SFL-GBA or systemic functional linguistics that then developed genre-based approach as teaching language approach. She reflected on what she has experienced during her systemic functional course, as excerpted below.

Excerpt 5.

"Learning through group discussion and presentation, and getting insight from lecturer, I gradually understand the origin of genre and its principle... moreover, I also trained to analyze students' text using SFL and write my own essay based on the concept of genre and SFL that I've learnt."

The development of genre awareness, as well as an understanding of genre pedagogy, grows as the teacher gets repeated exposure to disciplinary content as embodied in genres and deductive guidance provided explicitly through instruction (see Devitt, 2009; Flowerdew, 2015; Johns, 2015), as shown in the excerpts above. In line with previous studies (e.g., Artemeva & Fox, 2010; Tardy, 2009), such insight is obtained through explicit instruction, students' text analysis, and the reproduction of writing. Further, as the teacher trained to implement the teaching cycle of genre pedagogy under expert guidance, she gradually developed pedagogical knowledge of the genre.

Having to learn with her classmates which also dominated by English teachers is seen to be a part of actively engaged with professionals with the same field. Similarly, Tardy et al. (2022) recommended that strong and ongoing teacher preparation and support be provided to ensure that teachers' pedagogical content knowledge of genre develops in interaction with their practice. According to Walsh and Mann (2019) continuous professional learning is an opportunity to professional growth of teachers. Further, her statements highlight that learning language and learning about language is socially constructed as it is in line with the principle of a genre-based approach; learning about language, learning of language, and learning through language (Emilia, 2011; Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Webster, 2007). Further, it can also be assumed that teachers not only learn the theory of genre pedagogy to comprehend it but also need explicit training regarding how to teach genre as promoted in the teaching cycle of genre pedagogy.

The excerpts can be linked to what Artemeva and Fox (2010) called as disciplinary genre competence, a kind of creative understanding of a genre or discursive performance resulting from "embodied experience of action, interaction, and... dialogue" with a discipline or profession and, crucially, with its practices (Gee, 2008, p. 140). Similarly, teachers must comprehend how language functions to create meaning in their field in order to openly and critically apprentice students to reading and writing disciplinary texts in the ways Martin suggests (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). Hence, the teacher grows her content knowledge of the genre, her pedagogical knowledge, and her knowledge of the curriculum during her continuous study.

3.3. Genre-based Pedagogy in Practice

Throughout the third semester, the teacher's understanding of genre pedagogy shifted into actual implementation in her classroom. Thus, what she had learned during three semesters of studying while also implementing genre pedagogy in her teaching context remains prominent. Previously, in the first semester of studying genre pedagogy through the Teaching Methodology course and not yet implementing it, the teacher perceived genre as a strict approach to teaching. Such claimed is derived from excerpt below (Excerpt 6).

Excerpt 6.

"...I first thought genre based as approach as a strict language teaching template because it has step by step need to be followed... teacher may not easily express her own teaching style."

The typical statement is assumed to be natural since several experts have critiqued the GBA as well, such as Dixon (1987), Freedman, and Medway (1994), who stated that the GBA is a static formula with strict templates that teachers need to follow. However, she opposed her first assumption of genre pedagogy after getting knowledge from the Systemic Functional Linguistic course in her third semester and implementing the approach in her teaching class. The teacher said:

Excerpt 7.

"... as I implemented the GBA in my real classroom context, I changed my mind about the strict step-by-step."

As seen above (Excerpt 7), she emphasized her change of belief. Further, she repeatedly talked about how she perceives the genre pedagogy during and after she teach her students. When she reflected what she had done to her classroom, she directly linked it to her learning experience (Excerpt 8).

Excerpt 8.

"Last semester I implemented GBA based on the SFL principle that I've studied as well as its teaching cycle, then I got that the genre pedagogy is not strict templates to be followed, it is actually helping teachers with the right direction to teach students. It is also not a teacher-centered teaching, it is actually teachers' responsibility to actively provide scaffolding and explicit teaching to students since students basically need guidance to comprehend foreign language... the teaching cycle is actually flexible and harmonious, it is actually a proper step to guide students."

Those excerpts represent the teacher's reflection on what she has been studying and experiencing through teaching. She makes confident judgement on the actual principle of genre pedagogy during her real teaching practice. She explained a lot about what she had learnt enthusiastically showing changes of her knowledge and understanding regarding genre pedagogy. These can be assumed as teacher has already adequate understanding of genre. Teacher with adequate genre expertise is in a better position to offer content, linguistic, and structural scaffolding through genre analysis and modeling, and to connect these generic features to the writing purposes and contexts (Kinderberg, 2021; Liu & Chen, 2022; Worden, 2018). Further, she explained (Excerpts 9 and 10):

Excerpt 9.

"... I realize that the building knowledge of field phase which I tended to skip in the past, is crucial part in teaching genre text. My students need to be provided lots of vocabulary and grammatical sources regarding the topic to be presented in genre text. It will help them learn better and write better. I gave them encouraging activities such as listening to stories and reading simple text that has interesting pictures."

Excerpt 10.

"As s teacher, I also need to acknowledge my students' individual strength and weaknesses... Joint Construction means my students and I work together to write genre text, or work them in groups after they have understood the structure of organization and the language feature of text ... writing assignment is not give as homework anymore, but I provide one special meeting to practice independent construction where I also actively engage to students' revision and editing process of writing... as a result, my students writings are better, yet this implementation of GBA is tiring." (participant's excerpt, 2023)

According to the narration above, the teacher is aware of the importance of acknowledging her students' individual competence regarding the content to be taught and applying appropriate strategy to deliver the teaching materials, which is typical pedagogical content knowledge of the genre. Tardy (2009) acknowledges this distinctive understanding of teacher as having knowledge of learners and pedagogical knowledge. Knowledge of learners refers to awareness of students' current understanding of the genre. Pedagogical knowledge refers to knowledge of instructional strategy that

is about comprehending the teaching cycle. By developing these two understandings, the teacher has tried to provide a strategy that may work for students. Hence, it leads to advancing the teacher's role to apprentice her students better.

In the last narration, the teacher stated a challenge in the implementation of the teaching cycle "...yet this implementation of GBA is tiring" (Excerpt 10). This can be assumed that implementing genre-based pedagogy can be a demanding and energy-intensive task for educators, as it involves planning, developing instructional materials, and providing ongoing support to students. However, from her narration, it can be assumed that implementing of genre-based pedagogy is rewarding and effective.

Furthermore, reflecting on what the teacher has learned as a student and implemented as a teacher shows that such perspectives may signify a mature sense of competence and autonomy (see Johnson, 2009). How she frames genre pedagogy as she applies it in her real context of teaching also shows her knowledge of language and knowledge about language (Borg, 1998, 2001, 2006), pedagogical content knowledge, and teaching skills (Richards, 2010; Tsui, 2009) which contribute to the evolution of her understanding of genre pedagogy. These show how the contexts in which teachers learn as students and later work as teachers have a significant impact on their socially constructed knowledge (Freeman & Johnson, 2005).

4. CONCLUSION

As the English curriculum in Indonesia is oriented toward genre-based pedagogy, understanding teachers' conception of it becomes of prime importance. This single case study has highlighted the 'development' of a novice teacher's understanding of GBA through three major phases: (1) the early years of teaching, (2) growing awareness through continued academic and professional experience, and (3) genre-based pedagogy in practice. The teacher participant narratives indicate that her understanding of the notion has evolved, and it has significantly been mediated by her experiences as a student and a teacher. As this study only focuses on the experiences of a single teacher, it would be useful if future studies involve a larger number of teacher participants.

There are some implications emerging from this study. The study, as the teacher's narratives indicated, highlights the importance of reflection as part of making sense of one's learning and teaching experiences. It also underlines the importance of continuous engagement in professional development to be better exposed to the current trends in education. Further, the study emphasizes the need to incorporate discussions on genre-based pedagogy into the preservice teachers' curriculum very early on and that they need to be provided with ample opportunities to apply the theories into practice through teaching practicum. That way, teachers can be more confident in their teaching practices and, consequently, are able to maximize learning outcome.

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