

## GENRE-BASED APPROACH TO PROMOTE LEARNERS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

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### Abstrak

Untuk membuat siswa mempunyai pemikiran kritis dibutuhkan sebuah strategi yang dapat membuat siswa mampu mensintesis pengetahuan dan keterampilan di dalam konteks pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Artikel ini mendiskusikan implementasi pendekatan berbasis *genre* sebagai sebuah alternatif model pengajaran bahasa Inggris di level sekolah menengah atas. Beberapa isu yang menjadi pokok permasalahan di sini adalah konsep mengenai pemikiran kritis, pendekatan berbasis *genre*, dan implementasi pendekatan berbasis *genre* yang mempromosikan pemikiran kritis siswa di dalam kelas bahasa Inggris. Dengan menekankan pada paragraf argumentasi seperti eksposisi dan diskusi, guru sebaiknya mendorong pemikiran kritis siswa baik dalam bahasa tulis maupun lisan. Artikel ini juga memuat sebuah model pengajaran yang mengimplementasi pendekatan berbasis *genre* yang mengaktifkan pemikiran kritis di dalam kelas bahasa Inggris.

**Keywords:** *Genre Based Approach, Critical Thinking, argumentative texts, English Language Teaching*

### I. Introduction

In the recent years, the educational world has always been interrelating with developing learners' critical thinking (CT) skills. It is grounded to fact that society has changed its world views, norms and values. It demands educational institutions to create and establish the suitable way to educate learners in obtaining certain skills in order to respond the rapid change and increasing complex environments. Fisher (1992) presents an opinion that teaching for thinking skills is one of the most valuable and potential areas of recent educational research and development. It is a greater finding since the current education is more emphasizing on the learning needs to think critically, and to solve unpredictable problems in comparison to past theories, which tends to focus on simpler forms of learning. Educational practitioners have realized the importance of promoting higher-order thinking skills in ESL and EFL classrooms, in which it enables learners to reach higher levels of language proficiency. Kabilan (2000) emphasizes that in order to be a proficient language learner, they need to be able to think creatively and critically when using the target language.

Inquiries regarding how CT skills in English should be taught have risen. The notion of implementing genre-based approach (GBA) in building learners' CT skills has been a prominent idea. Educational practitioners of English in ESL and EFL contexts try to promote CT skills through GBA. This approach in which the teaching and learning processes focus on understanding genres of texts, has been considered as a trend in new ELT era. As a strategy to teach language skills and support the development of learners' CT, GBA ties both written and spoken language form. In literary construction, an effort to integrate the GBA interlinked with CT skills into higher-level language curricula: primary and secondary (Derewianka 1990), tertiary, professional and community teaching contexts (Bathia, 1993). Callaghan (1993) argues that the aim of implementing GBA is not only to teach the class and to produce a generic text types but also to use language in teaching the abstraction of the content knowledge and the skills of generalizing and synthesizing and hypothesizing. Hyland (2004) also highlights that GBA facilitates learners to construct and shape critical understanding through social frameworks.

This paper focuses on presenting how GBA should be implemented in ELT to develop learners think critically. To begin with, this paper aims to discuss and elaborate the concept of CT and GBA at secondary school level.

## **II. Discussion**

### **1. What is Critical Thinking?**

CT has been a debatable issue across disciplines for a very long time. Inspired by Socrates and John Dewey, Norris and Ennis (1989) point out that CT is reasonable and reflective which means it focuses on deciding what to believe or do. Paul, Fisher and Nosich (1993) also give coherent definition of CT as a model of thinking in any subjects both the contents and problems. Hence, it is needed to improve the quality of thinking by skilfully taking charge of the inherent structure in thinking and imposing intellectual standards. Thus, CT is defined as a way of thinking that generates processes of understanding, analyzing, and synthesizing ideas that people believe in.

### **2. Why is Critical Thinking?**

In higher education level, CT is regarded as an important competence for learners to acquire in academic language (Davidson, 1998). Kress (1985) further postulates that CT is a social practice and language itself. Both L1 teachers and L2 teachers have reasons to introduce the aspects of CT to their students because their students are faced

with the necessity of thinking critically, especially in an academic setting (Davidson, 1998).

EFL learners need CT to become proficient users of English. It does not mean that EFL learners lack the capability to engage in CT. CT is interpreted as an ongoing process involving the use of information, experience, and world knowledge in several ways. CT makes EFL learners to look for alternatives, make inferences, pose questions, and solve problems; thereby learners have signals in understanding a variety of complex ways. EFL teachers stimulate their students' CT skills by involving negotiation meaning in ELT classroom discussions.

**What Skills does Critical Thinking Underlie?**

CT skills are performed in skills or competence. Edward Glaser (1941), who works in the CT tradition, has produced a list of abilities that reflect CT skills, as follows:

“(a) to recognize problems, (b) to find workable means for meeting those problems, (c) to gather and marshal pertinent information, (d) to recognize unstated assumptions and values, (e) to comprehend and use language with accuracy, clarity and discrimination, (f) to interpret data, (g) to appraise evidence and evaluate statements, (h) to recognize the existence of logical relationships between propositions, (i) to draw warranted conclusions and generalizations, (j) to put to test the generalizations and conclusions at which one arrives, (k) to reconstruct one’s patterns of beliefs on the basis of wider experience; and (l) to render accurate judgements about specific things and qualities in everyday life”. (Glaser, 1941).

As a skilful activity, which may be done more or less well, good CT skills will meet various intellectual standards, such as clarity, relevance, adequacy, and coherence. Good critical thinkers should own aforementioned fundamental CT skills.

**3. Rubric for Assessing Critical Thinking**

The aforesaid idea about CT is that each individual should question and strengthen the underlying reasoning of knowledge remain strong. This view is in line with Norris and Ennis’s (1989) definition of CT rating. In order to build it, I tabulate and give my perspective how to assess critical skills.

<b>Critical Thinking Skills Rubrics for EFL Secondary Students</b>	
Rate student skills with an Excellent (4), Good (3), Satisfactory (2), or Insufficient (1)	
Student Name:	
Elementary Clarification	

<i>Score</i>	<i>Skills Assessment</i>	<i>Teacher's Comment</i>
	Focusing on a question	
	Analyzing arguments	
	Asking/answering questions that clarify & challenge	
<b>Basic Support</b>		
<i>Score</i>	<i>Skills Assessment</i>	<i>Teacher's Comment</i>
	Judging the credibility of a source	
	Making & judging observations	
<b>Inference</b>		
<i>Score</i>	<i>Skills Assessment</i>	<i>Teacher's Comment</i>
	Making & judging deductions	
	Making & judging inductions	
	Making & judging value judgments	
<b>Advanced Clarification</b>		
<i>Score</i>	<i>Skills Assessment</i>	<i>Teacher's Comment</i>
	Defining terms & judging definitions Identifying assumptions	
<b>Strategies &amp; Tactics</b>		
<i>Score</i>	<i>Skills Assessment</i>	<i>Teacher's Comment</i>
	Deciding on an action	
	Interacting with others	

The criteria can be used in multiple ways including written assignment, oral presentations, portfolio review, self-reflection and debate settings.

#### **4. What is Genre Based Approach?**

As a worldwide concept and a tool for developing L1 and L2 instruction, Genre Based Approach has been synthesized and applied in different ways based on different theoretical perspectives. These traditions give their views how genres should be interpreted and what specific terms for understanding them. The three concepts which have been seen as primary approaches to genre in applied linguistics are North American New Rhetoric studies (Miller 1984), Australian Systemic Functional

Linguistic ‘Sydney’ school (Martin 1984), and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Swales, 1990). The core differences amongst these three perspectives are seen from the definition, context, goals, and instructional framework for GBA.

The first definition of genre is from Miller’s North American New Rhetoric Studies perspective. Miller (1984) defines genre as rhetorical action based on recurrent situations and open principle of its classification based on rhetorical practice, rather than closed principles on structure, substance, or aim. The New Rhetoric tradition concerns on the composition studies and professional writing in an L1 context and focuses less on features of the text and more on relations between text and context (Freedman & Medway, 1994). Thus, it emphasizes on the socio-cultural aspects, which employs more ethnographic research (i.e. participant observation and interview) than linguistic or rhetorical methods.

Martin (1984) interprets genre from *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL) view. He sees genre as ‘a staged, goal-orientated, and purposeful social activity that people engage in as members of their culture’. SFL tradition has strong focus on analysing and describing textual patterns of different genres. Halliday (1994) has depicted SFL as theory of language represents the first attempt in applied linguistics to seek a systemic connection between the social context and text meanings which is determined by three contextual variables including field (the nature of social action), tenor (the roles taken up by participants) and mode (the channel of communication – spoken or written).

*English for Specific Purposes (ESP)* proposes different interpretation about genre. Swales (1990) has developed seminal ideas about genre i.e. both the social function and form of spoken and written language in academic and research settings, and most notably research article introductions and grant proposals. A genre should represent a class of communicative events with some shared set of communicative purposes. The core notion of genre in ESP tradition is the move structure for text analysis, which classifies segments of texts according to their prototypical communicative purpose such as survey articles, review articles, and state of art (Bhatia, 1993). Hence, the ESP approach is directed towards non-native speakers writing.

## **5. Genre-Based Approach in English Language Teaching**

GBA in ELT promises very real benefits for learners by pulling together language, content, and contexts. Here, teachers function as a means to introduce students with the explicit and systematic explanations about the ways of writing works

to communicate (Christie & Martin, 1997) and the ways of speaking needs to structure. Hyland (2004) elaborates the core advantages of GBA in ELT as follows:

“(1) Explicit: makes clear what is to be learnt i.e. to facilitate the acquisition of writing skills; (2) Systematic: provides a coherent framework for focusing on both language and contexts; (3) Needs-based: ensures that course objectives and content are derived from students’ needs; (4) Supportive: gives teachers a central role in scaffolding students’ learning and creativity; (5) Empowering: provides access to the patterns and possibilities of variation in valued texts; (6) Critical: provides the resources for students to understand and challenge valued discourses; (7) Consciousness-raising: increases teachers’ awareness of texts to confidently advise students on writing.”

Referring to the benefits, GBA facilitates students to reflect and criticize the ways of knowledge and information are organised and constructed in English in the form of argumentative text.

Argumentation refers to genre of text both spoken and written which involves arguments, facts or evidence, reasons, description or explanation, supporting ideas of the sides being argued, and references, in order to make the writer or speaker’s position seem indisputable (Feez and Joyce, 1998). It also concerns on analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the world around us and its emphasis on persuading someone to our point of view (Derewianka, 1990). Within SFL context, the terms analytical and hortatory are used to distinguish fundamental differences in argumentative purpose and strategy. Martin (1989) uses the term analytical for genre which present a well formulated claim or thesis, in which it is argued. On the other hand, the term hortatory is used for genre that aims to persuade others to do what the thesis recommends. In these texts, the relationship between writer and reader also speaker and listener is more interpersonally charged.

The analytical and hortatory forms have linguistic consequences on scholar structure (start, argue and conclude) of their argumentation. To elaborate the ideas in one-sided opinion or two-sided argument, it is demanded to determine limitation. The former text deals with supporting and exposing an idea and persuading others to harmonize with the writer perspective, or in SFL context it refers to exposition text, whereas the latter text conducts with opposing two debatable and controversial matters in sense of creating a judgement, discussion text.

## 6. Model of Genre-Based Approach Teaching in ELT Classroom to Build Critical Thinking

To activate students' CT skills, EFL teachers need to implement argumentative text both spoken and written simultaneously. Skills in giving argumentation have been considered as one of CT dispositions (Ennis 1987). Argumentation is the vehicle, in which justification is offered. Learning the argumentative skills enables students to reason effectively in various disciplines (Kurfiss, 1988). Model of GBA in ELT classroom pedagogy is usually developed in the form of a cycle of teaching and learning (Rothery, 1996) which explicitly involved four stages: Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF), Modelling of the Text (MOT), Joint Construction of the Text (JCOT), and Independent Construction of the text (ICOT) (Hammond, 1992). Thus, I propose a model of ELT activity as a guide of EFL teachers to develop students' language abilities which integrated productive skills, writing and speaking skills in coherent way.

## 7. Building Knowledge of the Field

BKOF is conducted to build up the students' background knowledge on the issue discussed (Derewianka, 1990). Teachers introduce text to build up students' understanding of the genres taught (Derewianka, 1990). Teachers need to encourage students to read relevant materials to the genre being discussed, to observe pictures or videos, and to take part in role play (Gibbons, 2002) as well as to highlight the expression and vocabularies used in the text (Feez and Joyce, 2002). Teachers need to bring in new words, and propose attractive topics which attract students to get into and give their opinion. The attractive topics such as private schools versus public schools, globalization's effects on technology and environments, healthy life are needed to build students' apperception of argumentative text.

In this step, teachers also should introduce target language in both spoken and written of exposition and discussion text. Teachers let students to make impersonal point of views (*there are those who say that..., it is often said that..., many commentators are of the view that..., a common opinion is that..., a popular belief is that..., one argument put forward is that..., it can be argued that ..., it is generally accepted that ...*); to deliver personal point of view (*my personal view is that..., it seems to me that..., I tend to believe that..., I am of the opinion that..., I would argue that..., in my experience*); to explain opinion (*what this means is..., in other words..., that is to say..., to be more precise..., in fact...*); to explain through examples and

introducing evidence (*for example..., for instance..., a good illustration of this is..., if we take an example..., evidence for this is provided by..., we can see this when...*); to explain cause and state effect (*one reason for this is..., the immediate cause of this..., one of the causes of this is..., this has resulted in..., as a result..., this has led to...*); and to conclude an argument (*to summarise..., in conclusion..., on balance..., this is a complex issue with no clear answers..., if we look at both sides of the argument...*). Thus, students acquaint themselves with prominent linguistic features of argumentation.

#### **8. *Modelling of the Text***

MOT is a stage in which teachers familiarize students with the genre discussed. Teachers approach students to spoken and written exposition and discussion text. In speaking context, teachers can play a recording of people discussing about global warming or a short video from a debate between candidates of US President Election, as examples. Whereas in written form, teachers provide and give texts of discussion or exposition on international issues. Teachers can gather information from official textbooks and advance with selecting from other sources such as VoA, BBC, CNN official websites.

To foster students in comprehending spoken exposition or discussion, teachers facilitate students with transcript of the recording. However, teachers may not give text freely. Students, at least, need to listen two times before the transcript given. Teachers possess their right to modify by giving incomplete text. Teachers demand to activate listening skills and focus on completing the text.

In prompting to master producing exposition or discussion writing, students need to read the text before constructing text and explore the social function and schematic structure to unfold the text (Derewianka, 2003). Teachers need to dig their creativity and to design familiar activities in order to encourage students to be more active during the classroom activity (Hyland, 2007). Teachers can empower activities involving ICT or other strategies such as screening jumbled sentences or paragraph in power point media.

#### **9. *Joint Construction of the Text***

JCOT is a stage in which students develop their understanding about particular theory with their peers. This activity can be jointly constructed by the whole class, by a small group, or by a teacher and students during conferencing (Derewianka, 1990). It is important to conduct the stage of joint construction, especially, when students still need support before moving onto the next stage. They can evolve their ideas of spoken or



written exposition and discussion. Teachers can empower students to share ideas and harmonize their concepts in a team. Teachers can implement strategies in order to boost students work collaboratively and cooperatively. Students need to demonstrate their speaking and writing ability integrated with CT. This step aims to engage students to expose and deliver in extended discussion about issues. Students should develop their opinions and provide strong arguments into spoken and written form. In spoken context, teachers can pump up the classroom atmosphere into debate room. Students need to familiarize themselves about the ethic debates, its principles and application. Or, teacher can bring into journalistic situation on which students act as journalists who try to put their argument into writing. In EFL classroom context particularly in Indonesia, Emilia (2005) argues that the application of JCOT is quite problematic since only few students give contribution during this stage. Thus, in order to minimize this problem and condition, in which some students who have insufficient competence prevent from being observed and some who have excellent ability dominate the classroom, teachers need to use their initiated turns to point weak students as a representative from the group.

#### **10. *Independent Construction of the Text***

Having steeply prepared in stage of JCOT, students are then encounter a step to construct ideas both speaking and writing individually. It has been highlighted that teachers need to guide students especially those with lower achievement to select the topic dealing with the genre taught (Derewianka, 1990). In both spoken and written form, teachers can employ aforementioned rubric to assess' students CT. Teachers also need to assist students to write which involve a recursive process or revising continually from first draft to final draft (Gibbons, 2002) and to speak and elaborate an argument systematically and fluently. In ICOT, teachers play major role (Hyland, 2007). Firkins (2007) suggests teachers should conduct ICOT more than one meeting in order to develop students accordingly.

The implementation of all teaching stages in ELT activities model that I offer emphasizes more on teaching argumentation both exposition and discussion which enables to integrate writing and speaking skills coherently.

### III. Conclusion

GBA teaching should be able to contribute to development of students' CT, particularly in EFL context teaching exposition and discussion. Teaching exposition and discussion will help students to express supporting and opposing opinion on certain issues. I believe GBA will be an alternative ELT model which fostering productive skills both writing and speaking. To implement the proposed model in ELT activities, it is suggested that teachers need to be more selective in choosing topics since not all of issues can promote students' CT.

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