

Genre Pedagogy to the Teaching of Academic Writing in Tertiary Level and Cognitive Empowerment

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Abstract

This paper reports a small part of the study which focuses on the use of genre pedagogy to the teaching of writing research proposal as one of academic texts in tertiary level. This study aims at finding out how genre pedagogy can empower students cognitively through their abilities in writing research proposal. A case study involving fifteen students in one university in Banten taking Research on ELT subject was conducted using classroom observation and related documents, such as researcher's field notes and students' journal. The classroom observation and related documents analysis result showed that the students were cognitively empowered through the teaching cycles of genre pedagogy through various activities which encouraged their cognitive processes. Thus, genre pedagogy can empower students cognitively through its various learning activities and texts examples.

Keywords: *academic writing; cognitive empowerment; genre pedagogy*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching writing to the second or foreign language learners has been the concern of language educators and researchers. As Silva (1993: 669) noted that "L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing", a number of teaching writing approaches have been developed. Gradually, Hyland (2003) posits that the development of teaching writing to the second or foreign language learners focuses on structure, text function, creative expression, process, content and genre.

For the last decade, the teaching of second or foreign language writing focuses on genre and context of writing. In Indonesian context, genre pedagogy has been implemented in the secondary schools since 2004 as the basis of English curriculum. Based on research done by Emilia (2005, 2010, 2011), genre pedagogy can improve students literacy skills. As literacy is a tool for empowerment (Stromquist, 2009), genre pedagogy can empower both students and teachers. Research done by Emilia (2015) indicates that genre pedagogy can empower the students psychologically and cognitively. Furthermore, the teachers will also be empowered psychologically, cognitively, economically, and politically (Emilia, 2014).

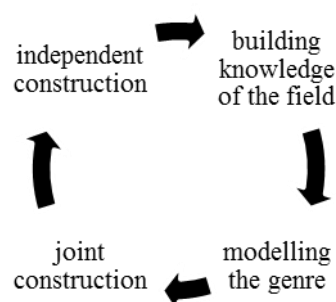
However, in Indonesian context, genre pedagogy has not yet been widely explored and implemented in tertiary or university level. Only a limited study (e.g. Emilia, 2005, 2015) had been conducted to find out the values of genre pedagogy in teaching academic writing. Thus, this study aims at filling the gap by trying to investigate the values of this approach in teaching academic writing in tertiary level, especially in writing a research proposal.

As one of academic texts, a research proposal, as Swales (1990) suggests is the 'occluded' genre; that is, genre which is difficult for students to write, but plays an important part in the students' lives. Research proposal is important as it is often the key element to the success of writing a thesis and the most important step in the whole process (Madsen, 1992; Baker and Foy, 2008). Therefore, the present study aims at investigating how genre pedagogy can empower students through the development of their abilities in writing research proposals.

There are three main theories used in this study, they are genre pedagogy, cognitive empowerment, and academic writing. The central belief of genre pedagogy is that the students do not only write, but they write to achieve some purposes as an attempt to communicate with readers (Hyland, 2003). Rooted from the work of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which is developed by Halliday (1994), this genre pedagogy is motivated by language and literacy education (Feez, 2001). The model of SFLGP used in the present study is that of Derewianka and Jones (2012)

Figure 1: A teaching and learning cycle

(from Derewianka and Jones, 2012)



The second theory is the theory of empowerment. As literacy is a tool for empowerment (Stromquist, 2009), genre pedagogy can empower both students and teachers. Related to literacy skill, Stromquist (1995, in Stromquist,

2009) defines empowerment:

... must mean the set of feelings, knowledge, and skills that produce the ability to participate in one's social environment and affect the political system. This ability can be seen as comprising four dimensions: the cognitive dimension, or the knowledge of one's social reality and the mechanisms that make it function the way it does; the economic dimension, or access to independent means of support, which help make individuals more autonomous in their decisions; the political dimension, or the skills to participate in and modify institutions and policies of one's community or nation; and the psychological dimension, or feelings that individuals are competent, worthy of better conditions, and capable of taking action on their own behalf (p.2)

Finally, the theory of academic writing used in the study is that of Swales, 1990; Swales and Feak, 2004; Paltridge and Starfield, 2007; Emilia, 2008

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in one university in Banten, Indonesia, involving fifteen students taking Research on ELT course unit in their third year. The study used a case study design as it tried to understand the case in depth and natural setting (Punch, 2009). Further, a case study design is suitable with this study since as one of qualitative studies, the aim of this design as suggested by Punch (2009) is "... to understand the case in depth, and in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its context..."(p.119). The researcher acted as the teacher in implementing genre pedagogy to the teaching of writing a research proposal as one of academic texts. The data were collected through classroom observation and related documents, such as field notes written by the researcher right after the teaching process and journal written by the students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In general, classroom observation and related documents results indicated that genre pedagogy could empower the students cognitively. This cognitive empowerment process was realized through several ways which can be described in the following table:

Table 1 Cognitive empowerment process in every teaching cycle

	Cognitive Empowerment Process	Teaching Stages			
		BkoF	Modeling the genre	Joint Construction	Independent Construction
Learning activities	Brainstorming	√			
	Questioning	√	√	√	√
	Discussing	√	√		
	Giving feedback			√	√
	Doing collaborative work			√	
	Analyzing	√	√	√	
	Listing			√	
	Classifying		√		
	Comparing and contrasting	√	√		
	Recalling	√			
	Creating			√	√

Table 1 describes the cognitive empowerment processes which seemed to be reflected in every teaching stage. The next section elaborates the cognitive empowerment processes reflected in every stage of the teaching cycle. In the interest of the space, this paper will only present the first cycle: the teaching of the first part of research proposal writing.

Cognitive Empowerment Reflected on Building Knowledge of the Field (BkoF) Stage

Building knowledge of the field stage was intended to construct the students' knowledge about writing research introduction as Derewianka and Jones (2012) suggests that BKOF is meant to engaging the students to a certain topic to build a shared context in preparation to the collaborative learning. In general, based on the observation and researcher's field notes, it seemed that the cognitive empowerment processes were realized through several learning activities, such as brainstorming, questioning, recalling, discussing, analyzing, comparing and contrasting.

At first, the students were asked about their familiarity with the elements of introduction of research proposal. This leading question was set as the tool for empowering the students cognitively. Questions given by the teacher is substantial in learning instruction (Adedoyin, 2010; Hamiloglu & Temiz, 2012). Since at the preliminary stage of the teaching program they had been asked to find journal articles and under graduate thesis or *skripsi*, most of the students could mention correctly the elements of introduction. It

seemed that they could perform their knowledge by recalling what they have read before. Recalling fell into remembering category at the cognitive domain in Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001). Only few students who mentioned different elements on introduction, such as the scope of the study and organization of the thesis. Finally, the elements agreed by the teacher and students were: Research background, Research Questions, Research Objectives, Scope of the Research, and Research Significances. The agreement was necessary as the English department hadn't yet provided the research proposal outlines.

After discussing about the elements of introduction, the students discussed the research background part. The teacher brainstormed the students' knowledge on objective and the elements of research background. She recalled what the students had read before this meeting. She asked her students to report the article they have read. Each group representative reported what they found in the article. Further, another group which had the similar topic was also asked to present as the comparison.

Then, one group representative mentioned that research background was intended to introduce the study. Another group representative added that background part mentioned about why a study was conducted. Together with the students, the teacher agreed both uses of background part.

When asked about the elements of the research background, the students remained silent. The teacher then asked the students to observe the articles they got (they had been asked to bring the articles based on their topics). She asked them to observe carefully every paragraph of research background. A student mentioned that background consisted of the importance of the study and the purpose of the study. She was then asked to read the part of those elements. Another student stated that background consisted of the numerous research of the same field. Again, the teacher asked her to read the part he mentioned. However, another student said that in *skripsi* she read, she did not find several studies on the background part, only reference supporting that the study was important. Most of the students reported that they found problems in background part. The teacher did not conclude this activity as she intended to give students task following this

activity in order the students found out themselves about the elements of research background.

Based on the classroom observation, it was found that most of the students did not mention previous studies. It is in line with the research conducted by Zakiyah (2015) which indicates that mentioning previous studies is the least occurred on the students' background. They only mentioned the importance of the studies they would conduct. When being asked about the issue, one student argued that previous studies should be stated in the literature review part, not in background part.

That cognitive empowerment seemed to be found during the class session was captured very well through classroom observation and supported by the video recording. Further, the cognitive empowerment was also found through student journal written right after the class. In relation with cognitive empowerment. Writing journal is important as one of benefits of learning journal as stated by Park (2003) that learning journal has good potential to improve the students' engagement with course material. Further, Heimstra (2002) adds that writing learning journal can encourage students' reflection or critical thinking.

Two questions asking what they have learnt from the lecturer and their friends showed that they had been empowered cognitively. This meant that they could recall what they have learnt before. One student (Desi), wrote about what she had learnt:

"What I learn from the lecturer today: the elements of research proposal, the procedures to make a background research." (Desi)

"Today, I learn from my friends about the other topics that is different from one to another friend. (Desi)

Another student (Hasan) could also recall the things they had learnt at this stage:

"What I learned from my lecturer are about all steps to write a research paper. How you classified your umbrella in research should be clear. Therefore, we can find the gap there. In the while activity, we are focusing more on the material how to make background" (Hasan)

"What I learned from my friends: we are discuss how to take the gap in research." (Hasan)

Cognitive Empowerment Reflected on Modeling the Genre Stage

The second meeting was prepared to model the genre. Students learned how to write a research proposal at this stage as Derewianka and

Jones (2012) mention that this stage concerns with the development of students' conscious knowledge of language and how it works. This stage allows the teacher to explain the structures and linguistic features of research proposal background. Cognitive empowerment processes in this stage seemed to be realized through questioning, discussing, analyzing, and classifying. After the students gained sufficient knowledge about research background, they were given a text of research background entitled "Thomas Eakins and the Marsh Pictures" taken from Swales and Feak (1994).

They were given time to analyze things written in the background and discussed with their partner. This analyzing activity fell into higher order thinking of revisited Bloom Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwol, 2011). Later, they were asked to present what they had discussed

After the discussion, carefully the teacher explained the structures of research background. The teaching of research background structure was done explicitly as it was believed that it can help students to know what to learn and enhance their writing skill (Hyland, 2004). The explanation of research background structures was based on the rhetorical pattern the Create-a-Research-Space (or CARS) model proposed by Swales and Feak (1994). The CARS model shows that there are three moves in background: establishing a research territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche. The teacher also showed how to write those three moves. For example, in establishing a research territory, students might write the importance of their studies and review the previous research. Based on the observation, at this part, students seemed very surprised, some of them mentioned that so far they knew that writing previous research was not in the background part, but only in literature review. The argument proposed by the students showed their cognitive empowerment as they recalled what they had known before as stated in Bloom Taxonomy (1956) which was revisited by Anderson and Krathwol (2001) as remembering domain.

The second move of background: establishing niche was explained. Some students asked what 'niche' was. Then the teacher explained by mentioning the examples of how to establish niche. At this time, the students seemed to understand why previous studies were important to be reviewed to find out the gap of the study.

The last move: occupying the niche for the students were relatively easy. They knew that mentioning the purpose of the study was necessary. Based on the observation, the students did not posit questions at this move.

The next activity was a discussion on identifying moves in a background and its linguistic feature. Students were given a background text They were asked to discuss with their partners using the following leading questions:

- a) Identify three moves in the text!
- b) What does the writer write in move 1?
- c) How can the writer convince you that the research is important?
- d) How does the writer show the research gap in move 2?
- e) What are the purposes that are shown in move 3?
- f) What tenses that the writer use in writing research background?

(Field notes, April 15th, 2015)

This activity seemed to show the cognitive empowerment reflected by the students. Identifying belongs to remembering domain of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001). Identifying research background structures and linguistic features is the first step for the students to write their own research background following the good pattern.

The next activity was a reflection which encouraged students to think aloud on their own background. They were asked to create expressions that they could use to express the research gap. Based on the observation, it seemed that most of the students could mention the expressions correctly. This activity seemed to suggest that the students were cognitively empowered.

The journal written by the students also seemed to show the students' cognitive empowerment. They recalled what they have learnt from their lecturer and friends. Observe the following excerpts:

The lecturer taught me how to write a background of my proposal. Before that, she had introduces us the content on the research proposal. (Iwan)
The discussion with my friend about the research paper and we cooperate in analyzing the background move from a paper that lecturer gave to us. (Iwan)

Iwan could recall chronologically what he had learnt from her lecturer about the content of research background and how to write it. Further, he mentioned that he could cooperate with his friend in discussing the research background text.

Empowerment Reflected in Joint Construction Stage

The next meeting was joint construction stage. The teacher again set the context by reminding the students of several moves that should be written in research background. In general, the cognitive empowerment processes at this stage were realized through questioning, discussing, giving feedback, listing and doing collaborative work. First, the teacher asked the students to work in groups of 3 in 15 minutes to write down things they were going to mention in research background. This activity required hard thought and effort as they had to create new things which belonged to the higher level of thinking of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001).

Based on the observation, one student mentioned that they would write why reading was important and the new way to improve reading skill. Another student who also chose reading as the topic argued that two things were not enough. He added problems that the students faced dealing with reading skills. The student who chose applied linguistics as the topic mentioned that things stated in the research background part was the existence of switch code in linguistics area and switch code found in the classroom activities. Another person who chose the same area would write what switch code was and how switch code was found in a novel.

The collaborative work seemed to show the empowerment process, especially cognitive empowerment in which they shared information and argument as well. This highlights what has been posited by Vigotsky (1962) that collaborative work can cause individual cognitive change through the internalization of this social interaction.

The next activity was the teacher started to guide students each move of background. Again, the students worked in groups. Together with the students, the teacher gave example of things that might be written in the move 1 of background. The teacher asked the students to choose the topic as an example. Reading was finally chosen as an example. On the whiteboard, the teacher gave one example of the things should be written in move 1, then several students were asked to continue the list.

This activity was then continued by listing thing which could be written in move two and three of research background. Based on the observation, the students at this stage did not have difficulty to mention the next moves.

The knowledge they got from the previous stage helped them understand more on the moves found in research background.

Empowerment in Independent Construction Stage

The process continued to independent construction in which students were asked to write their research background independently. Previously, they were reminded the process of writing, such as drafting, editing, revising, rewriting, and consulting to teacher (Gibbons, 2002). They were given time at home to write and send their draft through email to the teacher. Feedbacks were then given to the students.

The feedback given to the students fell into these categories. The first category was that whether the students had fulfilled all moves required in the background. The second category was that whether the students wrote every content of the move correctly (Beach & Friedrich, 2006).

Having been given feedbacks, the students were asked to revise their background. Several students found it difficult to understand and even misunderstood the written feedbacks given. This is in line with numerous studies done by many researchers (see Duncan, 2007; Lizzio and Wilson 2008). They then directly confirmed the teacher through email. Later, they met the teacher outside classroom to discuss what they had written. This conference was conducted outside classroom or not counted as the formal session of classroom. It was necessary to conduct this activity as based on the observation, some students did not do as the feedbacks suggested by the teacher. Again, they needed to revise their writing. This conference activity seemed to show the process of cognitive empowerment as the students had to answer the questions given by the teacher. They also had to prepare arguments why they wrote the background in such a way.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The present study suggested that genre pedagogy through its activities in each stage, such as questioning, discussing, analyzing, comparing and contrasting could encourage the students' cognitive processes. These activities lead the students to be able to write a sound research proposal. It is therefore concluded that genre pedagogy seemed to cognitively empower the students.

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