

INTEGRATING GENRE SKILLS AND READING SKILLS IN TEACHING READING TO INCREASE STUDENTS' COMPREHENSION IN EFL CLASSES

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at discussing the way how to integrate genre skills and reading skills in teaching reading at EFL classes in Indonesia. These two skills should be taught simultaneously in the classroom by the teacher as genre-based approach is applied in teaching reading today at junior and senior high schools. By this approach, the students are expected to be able to comprehend some kinds of monologue texts, such as narrative, recount, descriptive, procedure, explanation and exposition and functional texts like advertisement, announcement, letter, invitation and so forth. On the other hand, the students are also demanded to acquire the reading sub-skills in order that they are able to comprehend the text well. These reading sub-skills are unavoidable to get by the students because they will help them to read more effectively, quickly and easily. For this reason, a reading teacher should be able to find the way how to integrate the genre skills and reading skills in reading classes. If the teacher cannot do that, he/she will fail in his/her job. In this paper, the writer will discuss more deeply about this issue, so that the reader, especially teachers later on will get more information and knowledge in teaching reading. To do the integration, the teacher does not only need appropriate teaching techniques, but also media and materials chosen. In addition, how the teacher designs teaching and learning activities will determine the success in the classroom.

Key terms: Reading skill, genre, EFL

A. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of reading at junior and senior high schools today is still viewed as hard job by some teachers. This is not only caused by the fact that the teacher should teach various genres but also caused by the demand of syllabus known as Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP). In the syllabus, for instance, the teacher is required to achieve a wide range of competences in his/her teaching. For this purpose, the teacher has to seek suitable techniques and methods and also relevant activities. Moreover, because there are several genres that must be taught, the teacher should have sufficient knowledge about those genres he/she is going to teach.

Based on some observations in many schools in West Sumatera and Teacher's Educating and Training Program (PLPG), the majority of English teachers still found problems in preparing lesson plan or Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP) as a guide for them in teaching. They found difficulties in formulating competence achievement indicators and instructional objectives. Besides, the teacher also faced problems in choosing appropriate techniques or methods and arranging teaching and learning activities. It seemed that the teachers were still unable to prepare teaching activities in every stage of teaching and learning process. The difficulties are found in designing activities for exploration, elaboration and confirmation.

The terms exploration, elaboration and confirmation in teaching reading often make the teachers confused. This happens because the teachers are influenced by the terms pre, while and post-reading activities. As a matter of fact, whatever terms are given, teaching reading should be related to pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stages. Some of pre-reading activities can be given in exploration and elaboration stages, and some while-reading activities can be done in elaboration and confirmation stages and post-reading activities are done in confirmation stage. The main aim of teaching reading is that the students gain the expected competences as stated in basic competence (Kompetensi Dasar).

A. DISCUSSION

The Nature of Reading

In order to be able to teach reading well, a teacher should understand and have enough knowledge about the concept of reading. This understanding and knowledge will help the teacher to arrange and design appropriate activities for his/her reading class. For this reason, some latest concept of reading are given by some experts in this section. Alderson (2005) states that it is commonplace to make a distinction between the process of reading and the product. The process is the interaction between reader and the text. During that process, presumably, many things are happening. Not only is the reader looking at print, deciphering in some sense the marks on the page, deciding what they mean and how they relate to each other, but the reader is presumably also thinking about what he is reading, what it means to him, how it relates to other things he has read, to things he knows, to what he expects to come next in the texts.

He is presumably thinking about how useful, entertaining, boring, crazy, the text is. He may be consciously reflecting on the difficulties or ease he is experiencing when reading, and on ways of overcoming the difficulties or of continuing the pleasure. He may be completely unconscious of how he is reading, and of what is happening around him; he may be fully absorbed in reading. Evidently, many different things can be going on when a reader reads: the process is likely to be dynamic, variable, and different for the same reader on the same text at a different time or with a different purpose in reading. It is even more likely, then, that the process will be different for different readers on different texts at different times and with different purposes. Understanding the process of reading is presumably important to an understanding of the nature of reading, but at the same time it is evidently a difficult thing to do. The process is normally silent, internal, and private.

What readers understand from text varies, so that it is still the case that different readers will develop somewhat different understanding of what a text means. This is at least in part because a text does not contain meaning which is waiting to be discovered by an able reader. Rather, meaning is created in the interaction between a reader and a text. The text has meaning potential and the potential is realized—in the product of understanding—only by readers reading.

The readers commonly have different levels of understanding, that is, literal understanding, inferential understanding and critical understanding. Literal understanding is the understanding of stated facts in the text, inferential understanding is the understanding about implied meaning and critical understanding is the ability of the readers to evaluate the message in the text. Such distinction clearly relates to the product of reading, and enable us to describe some of the observed differences in understanding among readers.

Harmer (2006) says that understanding a piece of discourse involves much more than just knowing the language. In order to make sense of any text we need to have ‘preexistent knowledge of the world. Such knowledge is often referred to as schema (plural schemata). Each

of us carries in our heads mental representations of typical situations that we come across. When we are stimulated by particular words, discourse patterns, or contexts, such schematic knowledge is activated and we are able to recognize what we see or hear because it fits into patterns that we already know.

When we see a written text our schematic knowledge may first tell us what kind of text genre we are dealing with. Thus if we recognize an extract as coming from a novel we will have expectations about the kind of text we are going to read. These will be different from the expectations around if we recognize a piece of text as coming from an instruction manual. Knowing what kind of a text we are dealing with allows us to predict the form it may take at the text, paragraph, and sentence level. Key words and phrases alert us to the subject of a text, and this again allows us, as we read, to predict what is coming next.

McWhorter (2009) says that reading involves much more than moving your eyes across lines of print, more than recognizing words, and more than reading sentences. Reading is thinking. It is an active process of identifying important ideas and comparing, evaluating, and applying them. Have you ever gone to a ball game and watched the fans? Most do not sit and watch passively. Instead, they direct the plays, criticize the calls, encourage the players, and reprimand the coach. They care enough to get actively involved in the game. Just like interested fans, active readers get involved. They question, challenge, and criticize, as well as understand.

Meanwhile, Hedge (2010) states that reading can be seen as a kind of dialogue between the reader and the text, or even between the reader and the author. By this, the reader will make sense of a text. To make sense of the text, the reader at least uses six types of the following knowledge, namely, syntactic knowledge, morphological knowledge, general world knowledge, sociocultural knowledge, topic knowledge and genre knowledge. Syntactic and morphological knowledge are to do with the language itself. As we have seen, these kinds of knowledge help a reader to decode the language of a text and can together be called linguistic or systemic knowledge. At the same time, general knowledge, sociocultural, topic, and genre knowledge, together often referred to as schematic knowledge, enable a reader to work with the language of the text in order to interpret its meaning.

In recent years the term interactive has been used to describe the reading process. The term can be interpreted in two ways, that is, describing a dynamic relationship with a text as the reader struggles to make sense of it and combining information from the text and knowledge you brought with you to reading it. In recent literature on reading, the term top-down processing has been used to describe the application of prior knowledge to working on the meaning of a text. On the other hand, the term bottom-up processing has been used to describe the decoding of the letters, words and other language features in the text.

Celce (2001) states that the ability to read requires that the reader draw information from a text and combine it with information and expectations that the reader already has. This interaction of information is a common way to explain reading comprehension, though it does not reveal much about the specifics of reading. Recently, there are some needs for readers to develop essential reading process and abilities such as rapid word recognition, vocabulary development, text-structure awareness, and strategic reading.

Harmer (2006) says that we use intensive reading sequences in class for a number of reasons. We may want to have students practice specific skills such as reading to extract specific information, or reading for general understanding. We may, on the other hand, get students to read texts for communicative purposes, as part of other activities, as sources of information, or in

order to identify specific uses of language. Reading is often a prelude to a speaking or writing activity.

Most reading sequences involve more than one reading skill. We may start by having students read for gist and then get them to read the text again for detailed comprehension. They may start by identifying the topic of a text before scanning it quickly to recover specific information; they may read for specific information before going back to the text to identify features of text construction.

Alderson (2005) states that the success in reading is determined by several variables. These variables derive from the readers and from the text itself. The variables come from the readers are as follows: 1. Schemata and background knowledge, 2. knowledge of language, 3. Knowledge of genre/text type, 4. Metalinguistic knowledge and metacognition, 5. Content schemata, 6. Knowledge of subject matter/topic, 7. Knowledge of the world, 8. Knowledge of culture, 9. Reader skills and abilities, 10. Reader's purpose in reading, 11. Reader's motivation, and 12. Reader affect.

Besides the readers' variables, another variables that influence the reading comprehension of a reader is text variable. This variable includes the followings: 1. Text topic and content, 2. Text type and genre, 3. Literary and non literary texts, and 4. Text organization.

Furthermore, the language of a text will also affect readers' degree of comprehension. The more complicated the structure of the text, the more difficult the reader will comprehend it. That is why; the teacher should pay attention to the language of the text before using it in the classroom.

Teaching Reading in Three Stages

Reading activities can be categorized into pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. These three stages should be conducted as well as possible by a teacher in order to achieve the reading goals.

Celce (2001) states that if the heart of learning to read is the act of reading itself, then the heart of reading instruction is the set of tasks that students engage in to achieve learning goals. Countless instructional tasks are used in reading classes; some are more effective than others. Teachers' choices should be guided by instructional goals, student readiness, text resources, and implications from research and theory. One major implication from theory is a general framework based on pre, whilst and post-reading instruction.

Pre-reading instruction can serve five important purposes. It helps students' access background information that can facilitate subsequent reading, provides specific information needed for successful comprehension, stimulates student interest, and sets up student expectations and models strategies that students can later use on their own. Some commonly used prereading activities include previewing, skimming, answering questions, exploring key vocabulary, and reflecting on or reviewing information from previously read texts in light of the topic of the new text.

Whilst reading or during-reading instruction guides students through the texts, often focusing on understanding difficult concepts, making sense of complex sentences, considering relationships among ideas or characters in the text, and reading purposefully and strategically. Some commonly used during-reading activities include outlining or summarizing, examining emotion and attitudes of key characters, determining sources of difficulty, looking for answers to questions posed during pre-reading activities and writing down prediction of what will come next.

Post-reading instruction typically extends ideas and information from text while also ensuring that the major ideas and supporting information are well understood. Postreading activities often require students to use text information in other tasks (e.g., reading to write). Some commonly used post-reading activities include completing a graphic organizer (e.g., table, chart, grid) based on text information, expanding or changing a semantic map created earlier, listening to a lecture and comparing information from the text and the lecture, ranking the importance of information in the text based on a set of sentences provided, answering questions that demonstrate comprehension of the text, require the application of text material, demand a critical stance on text information, or oblige students to connect text information to personal experiences and opinions.

Hedge (2010) gives some types of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities. In pre-reading, a teacher can encourage the students to do a number of things. For example, the students will be becoming oriented to the context of the text, tuning in to the content of the text, establishing a reason for reading, expressing an attitude about the topic, reviewing their own experiences in relation to the topic, activating existing cultural knowledge and becoming familiar with some of the linguistic features of the text. In this way, the teacher can prepare them in terms of both schematic and language knowledge, and ensure purposeful reading. A range of activity types are possible at this stage and teachers can select or combine from a repertoire, for examples, talking about pictures accompanying the text, predicting from the title, agreeing or disagreeing with a set of proposals about the topic, answering set of questions or a quiz, listing items of information they already know about the topic, or discussing the topic.

While-reading activities are aimed at encouraging students to be active as they read. Students can be given activities which require them to do any of the following: follow the order of ideas in a text; react to the opinion expressed; understand the information it contains; ask themselves questions; make notes; confirm expectations or prior knowledge; and predict the next part of the text from various clues. Meanwhile, in post-reading the teacher can ask the students to discuss their response to the writer's opinions or by using notes for a writing activity. After that, the students might do debate, role-play, reading of another text, or focusing on its language. In this stage, the teacher can also ask the students to work on language features as a part of a language-awareness activity.

In line with reading activities, Brown (2004) recommends some activities in pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. For pre-reading, the teacher can do these activities: reading the title of the text, knowing the author, reading publication facts, reading the first paragraph, reading the last paragraph, reading heading and subheading, reading highlights, reading chart, graphics, tables, picture, etc., brainstorming about the topic of the text, asking questions about topic and all graphical and typographical aids and answering pre reading questions. For while-reading, the activities that can be done are: identifying the meaning of the unknown words through context clues, identifying key ideas and core parts of the sentences, finding referents and word equivalents, finding the topic, finding the main idea, finding supporting details, finding transitional expressions, identifying paragraph patterns, finding wrong details in a paragraph, making semantic mapping about ideas, finding connectives, making inference, predicting outcomes, making generalization, making outline of a text, underlining and marking, summarizing, skimming and scanning, finding facts and opinions, and making judgment. Meanwhile, for post-reading, these activities can be done by the teacher: composing or writing a sentence, paragraph, passage or essay from key words in reading text, storytelling, debating, making outline, making a map of ideas, role playing, and playing a game.

From the previous discussion and explanation, it can be concluded that there are a large number of activities a teacher might do in pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stages. All of those activities should be designed properly in accordance with three kinds of teaching and learning activities, namely, exploration, elaboration and confirmation. In addition, the teachers have to be able to vary activities and tailor them to the students' needs and the characteristic of teaching materials.

The teaching of reading at junior and senior high schools in Indonesia today should be based on process standard (*standar proses*) as demanded by Diknas (2007), that is, following three stages or teaching: pre- teaching, while -teaching and post-teaching. In pre teaching stage, the teacher and students do some activities, such as greeting/praying, checking students' readiness physically and psychologically and checking learning environment, motivating students to learn, making apperception, informing instructional objectives and giving the description of materials.

In while-teaching stage, the teacher does exploration, elaboration and confirmation activities, and in post-teaching stage, the teacher does reflection, draws conclusion and giving the follow-up activities. Referring to these stages of teaching, the real teaching of reading happens in whilst-teaching stage. For this reason, the teacher should be able to synchronize the three reading stage toward the three teaching stage. It means that the pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities are done in while-teaching stage. The teacher should be able to place reading activities in right teaching and learning process.

Integrating Genre Skills and Reading Skills in the Classroom

Teaching reading at junior and senior high schools today is based on genres, that is, kind of texts. There are several texts that the students should learn, namely, transactional and interpersonal texts, functional texts and monologue texts. The transactional and interpersonal texts are taught in the form of dialogue or conversation. These texts include greeting, asking and giving opinions, giving directions, inviting, agreeing and disagreeing, like and dislike, etc.

Meanwhile, functional texts consist of announcement, advertisement, letter, memo, shopping lists, labels, pamphlet, poster, notice, etc. These texts are often found by the students in their real life. They function to give information or persuade people to do something. In junior high schools, these texts are categorized into essential texts because they are frequently tested in final examination or national exam. Because these texts are not too long, the students could read them better.

Beside transactional, interpersonal and functional texts, the students nowadays also learn monologue texts. These texts are more difficult to learn by the students because some of them are very long. The texts of these kinds are narrative, recount, descriptive, procedure, report, news item, spoof, explanation, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, review and discussion. The students often find difficulties in understanding these texts. The sources of difficulties might come from vocabulary, grammar, or ideas organization.

Due to the demand of understanding these genres, the students should have enough knowledge about them. It often happens that the failure of the students in reading class is caused by the lack of their knowledge about those genres. It can be called that the knowledge of reading skills is not sufficient in understanding the reading selection without being supported by genre skills. The students should know the concept and characteristics of each genre or text they are reading. That is why; a teacher cannot ignore this fact if he/she wants to be successful in his/her teaching.

Another thing that a reading teacher should realize is language skills. As a matter of fact, the teaching of reading does not only a matter of understanding the contents of reading, but also the sub skills which are needed to understand the reading texts. The students should be provided with the knowledge about how to read, not only what to read. This is important because if the students only know what to read, they will never read better . The reading skills will help them to read better and faster.

There are a lot of reading skills that the students should know. They are word attacking skills or context clues, key ideas, references, topic, main idea, supporting details, transitional expression, inference, prediction, preview, anticipation, generalization, fact and opinion, writer's techniques, outlining, and summarizing. In understanding genres, all of these skills are needed by the students. For instance, when they are reading narrative text, the students first should know the concept of this genre, such as, kinds of narrative, definition, generic structure, language features, social function, and its vocabulary. This is caused by the fact that different genre has different characteristics.

For this reason, a reading teacher is demanded to provide his/her students with both of these skills –genre and reading skills—if he/she wants the students to understand the reading text better. It is an inevitable that the teacher include in his/her teaching the two aspects. Reading at junior high or senior schools will influence the students ability in reading at the next level of their education. If the teacher can lie the reading foundation at junior or senior high school, the students will get advantages in the further education, like in college or university level.

Based on the explanation above, in integrating genre skills and reading skills in teaching reading the teacher should pay attention to the following activities in order that the students get thorough understanding and comprehension about the texts they are reading.

In integrating genre and reading skills, a teacher should have good preparation. They should design the teaching as well as possible. In a course design (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran, RPP*), the teacher state clearly his/her teaching activities so the students will learn better. Let's say the teacher wants to teacher a narrative text entitling "Mousedeer". In this case, he/she should know first the concept of narrative and the story chosen. In other word, the teacher does not only know the definition of narrative, but more than that he/she should also know all aspects about narrative, such as, generic structure, social function, lexicogrammar and its contents. Beside, the teacher should also know well about the story from several aspects, such as, the background of the story, socio-cultural aspect of the story, and the effect of the story in the society.

When the teacher has already had enough preparation, he/she should determine the method and media used for his/her teaching. These two things are very necessary in teaching reading. Method and media will be very decisive in the classroom. The teacher will not be able to reach instructional objectives unless he/she prepare appropriate method and media. There are several methods that can be chosen, such as direct instruction, discussion, modeling, task-based instruction, problem-based instruction, etc. In addition, the media can be chosen according to the condition of the school where the teacher teaches. The media can be picture, photo, video, realia, real object, etc.

Beside method and media, the teacher should also consider about the materials. Reading text chosen should be based on the local condition and situation. The materials are taken from several sources, not only from package book, but also from internet, expert, nature, and teacher-made materials. The teacher need complete materials so that he/she can vary the texts in the classroom.

At the first place, the teacher should ensure that the students get the concept of genre being taught better. The teacher should remember that different genre has different way of teaching. As soon as the teacher feels that the students have thorough understanding about the genre, then he/she goes on to the way of reading that genre. This is called the skills that are needed to read it. The skills are dependent on the syllabus or the teacher's consideration.

There are some reading skills that can be taught simultaneously, such as, context clues, key ideas and references. The students are given the way how to get meaning from the context. By this, they do not need dictionary so that the students can read faster and get the reading concept easily. Besides, the students are also given the chance to know the references and key ideas. For certain case, the teacher can also ask the students to find topic, main ideas or supporting details of the text. For the higher level students, they can be asked to identify implied meaning, distinguish fact from opinion or summarize the text.

In order that the teacher is able to integrate genre and reading skills, he/she should have good understanding about these two skills. It will sound funny if an English teacher does not know about reading skills and genre skills well.

To do the integration, the teacher should consider the following points.

Vocabulary instruction:

1. Words that are critical for comprehending the text and useful in other settings.
2. Words that are necessary for comprehending the text but not particularly useful for other contexts.
3. Words which are not necessary for comprehending the text, nor particularly useful in other contexts.

Careful Reading Instruction:

1. Filling in parts left blank in an extended summary.
2. Determining the attitude of the writer, the intended audience, and the goal of the writer and identifying clues in the text.
3. Listing examples that appear in the text, adding other pertinent examples to the list and explaining one's reasons for doing so.
4. Matching information or evaluating possible true/false statements.

Text Structure and Discourse Organization Awareness Instruction:

1. Identifying the sentences that convey the main ideas of the text.
2. Examining headings and subheadings in a text and then deciding what each section is about.
3. Adding information to a partially completed outline until all key supporting ideas are included.
4. Underlining transition phrases and when they signal major sections of the text, describing what the next section covers.
5. Explaining what a set of pronouns refers to in prior text.
6. Examining an inaccurate outline and adjusting it so that it is correct.
7. Reorganizing a scrambled paragraph and discussing textual clues used for decisions.
8. Creating headings for a set of paragraphs in the text, giving a label to each, and discussing the function of each paragraph.
9. Identifying clues that indicate major patterns of organization.

Use of Graphic Organizers to Support Comprehension and Discourse Organization Awareness.

1. Using a circle with arrows flowing in a circular direction to show an interactive process described in a text.
2. Using a Venn diagram to highlight differences and similarities between characters, places, events or issues in a text.
3. Using a flowchart to trace events or steps in a process highlighted in a text.

Strategic Reading Instruction

1. Using references to know the relation among ideas.
2. Knowing key ideas of a sentence to help the reader to read paragraph better.
3. Making inferences
4. Distinguishing fact from opinions
5. Previewing a text.
6. Predicting what will come later in a text.
7. Summarizing.
8. Learning new words through the analysis of word stems and affixes.
9. Using context to maintain comprehension.
10. Recognizing text organization.
11. Generating appropriate questions about the text.
12. Clarifying text meaning.
13. Repairing miscomprehension.

Integrated-Skills Instruction

1. Students keep journals in which reactions to readings are recorded and elaborated upon. Teachers collect journals periodically and add comments.
2. Students keep double-entry notebooks in which they summarize text ideas of particular significance on one side of the page.
3. Students write a simple response to some prompt (e.g minilecture, an object, a short video clip, a quick skim of the text to read) to prepare themselves for the upcoming reading.
4. Students created graphic organizers to identify main ideas from the text, restructure information or compare content from various texts. Students then write an explanation or critique of the readings based on the graphic organizer.
5. Students connect new texts to previously read texts through speed writes, graphic organizers, or discussions.
6. Students determine the author's point of view in a text and then adopt a different point of view.
7. Students make a list of ideas from the text, prioritize the list by level of importance, get into groups and prioritize a group list, and then develop a visual representation of their response to be shared with classmates.

C. CONCLUSION

Teaching reading at junior and senior high schools today should be competence-based teaching and genre-based teaching. It means that at the end of reading class, the students will acquire certain reading competences as stated in syllabus and genre knowledge and reading skills. Consequently, all activities in reading class should be in accordance with the target competence. These activities are categorized into exploration activities, elaboration activities and confirmation activities. For this purpose, pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities designed in teaching reading can be tailored to these three stages in teaching.

In teaching reading today, the teacher is recommended to integrate reading skills and genre skills in his/her teaching. For this reason, the teacher should be able to design his/her reading class well. This design is reflected in course design unit or *Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP)*. The end of reading class is the students get genre knowledge and reading skills. This will help the student to read better at the further level of his/her education.

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