DEVELOPING CHILDREN LITERATURE THROUGH GENRE BASED WRITING CLASS

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Abstract

This research is conducted to increase literacy awareness. It is based on two primary concerns, namely: to improve the writing skills of English Department students of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro Semarang and to develop a model of suitable reading materials for Indonesian children that are learning English as a foreign language. In the English Department, the writing class employs a genre-based approach in which the teacher applies the teaching and learning cycles. According to Callaghan & Rothery (1988), the learning cycle consists of four stages namely building the context, modeling, joint construction, and independent construction. Five genres are taught, one of which is Narrative. The goal is specifically to enable students to create stories or books for children. Therefore, there are some guidelines that need to be followed to develop a narrative text, such as the generic structure, the linguistic features of a narrative text, and the personal value of children stories. The method of this research consists of class observation and students' texts analysis. After the teacher and the students discussed examples of narrative texts, the teacher asked the students to create children stories with illustration in the form of a booklet. The result reveals that the students are able to create narrative texts that follow the generic structure and linguistic features appropriately, and they also present their texts in the booklet creatively.

Keywords: children, genre, literacy, narrative

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there is a big concern that the present Indonesian young generations lack the interest in reading. As reported in the online version of Kompas newspaper on August 29th 2016 (http://edukasi.kompas.com/read/2016/08/29/07175131/minat.baca.indonesia.ada.di.urutan.ke-60.dunia), according to UNESCO's survey of reading interest in 61 countries worldwide, Indonesia is in the 60th position. On the contrary, Indonesia is in the 34th position in terms of reading infrastructure, slightly higher than more developed countries such as Germany, Portugal, New Zealand, and South Korea.

The aforementioned phenomenon is closely related to literacy. Wells (in Hammond, et. al., 1992) proposes a number of levels of literacy. The first level is called *performative*, a view held in many adult literacy and ESL classes, where traditionally the teaching of literacy has taken a skills-based focus and where it is assumed that writing is simply speech written down. The second is *functional*, that emphasizes the literacy in interpersonal communication such as reading a popular newspaper and writing a job application. The third is referred to as *informational*, that is, being able to comprehend the text. The fourth level is called *epistemic*, meaning that to be literate is to have available ways of acting upon and transforming knowledge and experience that are in general unavailable to those who have never learned to read and write.

In a similar sense, Freebody and Luke (as cited in Hammond et. al., 1992) assert that the minimal elements involved in being literate must include:

1. ***learning to be a text user***. It deals with the ability to participate in social activities where written texts play a central part, learning what texts are for, and what counts as adequate reading for work or leisure purposes.
2. ***being a text analyst***. It relates with the awareness that all texts are crafted objects written by persons with particular orientations to the content of the text.
3.

Considering this issue, the Indonesian government has initiated the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah*) to increase Indonesian young generations' awareness in the importance of being literate. Therefore, increasing literacy in Indonesia will surely involve the teaching and learning process in schools and colleges. In addition, as English serves as an international language, the mastery of the language is crucial. The era of Internet has enabled people in the world to access various kinds of information, and many of them are written in English.

Furthermore, there is also a concern dealing with literacy in the university level especially in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. The English Department of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, Semarang is a case in point. Many students in this department still face difficulties in writing in English since this skill is closely linked to other knowledge such as grammar and vocabulary and possibly another skill like reading. Another problem is that students sometimes find it hard to organize their idea and sentences, thus creating incoherent texts. As an effort to overcome these problems, a genre-based approach is applied in the English Department of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro to help students to write better in English.

The term genre is used to refer to particular text types, not to traditional varieties of literature (Hartono, 2005). Genre-based pedagogies offer students explicit and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in social contexts (Hyland, 2003:18). Furthermore, from a genre perspective, people do not only just write but they also write to achieve different purposes in different contexts and this involves variation in the ways they use language, not universal rules (Halliday, 1994).

In the English Department of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, genre-based writing is taught in the 3rd semester. In the genre-based writing course, students learn five genres of texts which consist of Description, Report, Procedure, Recount, and Narrative. As Kim (2006:34) puts it, different text types involve distinctive knowledge and different sets of skills, hence teachers should introduce a variety of genres to get students to understand and practice different sets of skill.

The genre-based writing class involves the teacher's application of the teaching-learning cycles proposed by Callaghan and Rothery (1998). These cycles are broken down into four stages as follows:
1. Stage One – Building the context or field of the topic or text-type
2. Stage Two – Modeling the genre under focus
3. Stage Three – Joint construction of the genre
4. Stage Four – Independent construction of the genre

The elements of each stage are described in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. The Teaching-Learning Cycle
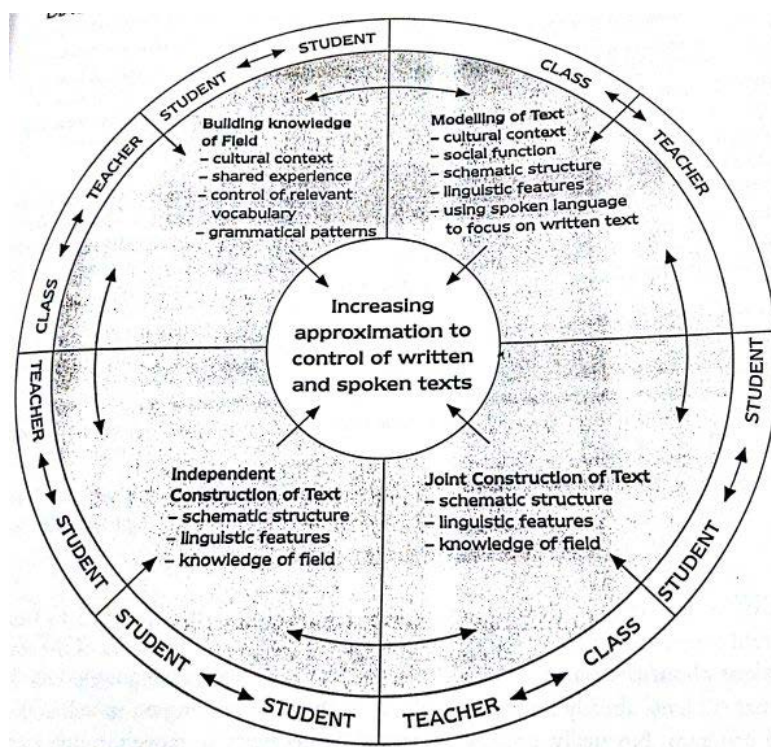
Source: Callaghan and Rothery, 1998

This research focuses on Narrative genre since the goal is students' ability to create stories in English for children. This is based on the consideration that currently many parents start to expose their children to English and many elementary schools in Indonesia give English lessons to their students. Therefore, there is a need to provide children with reading materials in English that are not only enjoyable but also educative.

Since students write narrative texts for children, there are some guidelines that need to be followed to develop a narrative text, such as the generic structure, the linguistic features, and the personal value of children stories. It should also be noted that children stories should involve enjoyment, imagination and inspiration, vicarious experience, understanding and empathy, heritage, moral reasoning, and literary and artistic preferences (Brown & Tomlinson, 1999:3-5).

Based on the explanation above, this research is conducted to increase literacy awareness and to accomplish the following objectives. The first is to improve the writing skills of English Department students of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro Semarang, and the second is to develop a model of suitable reading materials for Indonesian children that are learning English as a foreign language.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research employed two methods: class observation and text analysis. It took place in the Genre-Based Writing class of English Department, Faculty of Humanities of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro Semarang and was conducted in the twelfth meeting (November 2016). After the teacher and the students discussed examples of narrative texts, the teacher asked the students to create children stories with illustration in the form of a booklet/accordion/pop-up book. The data were collected from the students' writing assignments. Then, the linguistic features and the generic structured were examined.

3.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis reveals that the 21 texts produced by the students have followed the generic structure of a Narrative text, namely orientation > complication > resolution (Table 1). In terms of linguistic features, students were already able to implement the features of a Narrative text which are: focused on specific participant, the use of past tense, the use of temporal conjunctions and temporal circumstances, and the use of material (or action), mental and relational processes (Table 2).

Table 1. Generic Structure of Students' Texts

No.	Generic Structure	Description
1.	Orientation	Students were able to set the scene of the story. It consists of the following elements: Who: animals, princess and prince, imaginary creatures Where: forest, castle, house When: unspecified time (once upon a time, one day)
2.	Complication	Students presented problem and series of events. These range from friendship to family.
3.	Resolution	Students closed the story through characters' realization of their wrongdoings and the characters' happy life afterwards.

Table 2. Linguistic Features of Students' Texts

No.	Features	Examples
1.	Focus on specific participants	Jojo, Vanesha, Merry the Mermaid
2.	The use of past tense	Lived, lost, was, joined, jumped, made, heard, found, helped, asked
3.	The use of temporal conjunctions and temporal circumstances	While, when, the next day, once upon a time, one day
4.	The use of material (or action) processes	Brought, jumped, hit, hunt, made, helped, fell, played, took
5.	The use of mental processes	Realized, think, heard, looked
6.	The use of relational processes	Was, became

3.1 Teaching-Learning Cycle

Before the students wrote their own Narrative texts, the teacher implemented the four teaching-learning stages in the class. The stages can be described as follows.

1.   Stage One – Building the context

The teacher tried to gather the information from the student about the text they were going to talk about. The teacher also emphasized some points of the topics and the theories of narrative text in order to make the students understand. The teacher also gave information about children literature because this genre is different from adult literature.

2.   Stage Two – Modeling the narrative genre.

In this stage, the teacher gave an example of a narrative text. By examining the example, the student identified the generic structure and linguistic features of the text. This stage was implemented by the teacher and the students together to review the narrative text example.

3. Stage Three – Joint construction of the narrative text.
   In this stage, the students collaborated to create a narrative text based on the discussion from the previous stage. In joint construction, the teacher only became a facilitator that helped the students create their own text creatively.
4. Stage Four – Independent construction
   In this stage, the students created the narrative text individually. The students created children stories. Moreover, the students were not only assigned to write a text but they also had to present it creatively. The students made colorful pop-up booklets with pictures.

3.2 Text Analysis

The booklets containing narrative texts the students wrote were analyzed in terms of their generic structure and linguistic features. The examples of the students' texts are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Examples of Students' Texts

Text Samples	Orientation	Complication	Resolution
Sample 1 : Jojo's Story	Once upon a time, there was a bunny named Jojo. He was a cheerful bunny	One day Jojo joined a competition but when he jumped there was a big tree root that made him fall	He opened his eyes and he was already in his bedroom. He looked in his feet he decided to try to walk again. He became a cheerful bunny again and he was said in his thought thank you Fairy.
Sample 2: The Lion and The Mouse	Once upon a time there lived a savage lion in a dark cave on the edge of the forest. He would eat everything which walks in front of him.	Suddenly there was a deer run and hit the lion. The lion was angry and said "How dare you wake me up, a little deer. Do you want to end your life today?" A mouse which heard all the noise came and said, "Hey, the king of the forest. You should protect the animals. Let him go!!	The mouse nibbling the robes and saved the lion. The lion was thankful to the mouse and realized that he can't underestimate the small animals like the mouse. They became a best friend and help the others when they are in a problem
Sample 3: An ordinary and the Prince	In the morning, there was a prince hunt in the forest.	While he was hunting suddenly he fell and his leg injured. Then there was a girl who helped the prince	She did not think that she had helped a prince. The prince said that she is the girl he's been looking for. The girl accepted the proposal of the prince. Eventually they married and lived happily in the palace.

Sample 4: Little Friend	Once upon a time, there lived a very rich 8 years old little girl called Vanesha. She always played in her family's castle alone because she was an only child and had no one to play with. Vanesha loved winter very much and when the winter comes, she always made a snowman to keep her company.	The following day, Vanesha found that all of Momo's edible stuff was gone. It happened every day until one day. Vanesha was curious why her food was always gone.	Vanesha asked her parents to helped Joy and her mother. Her parents were amazed with Vanesha's kindness and agree to help them. Joy's mother now worked at the castle and Joy was growing together with Vanesha. Then, Vanesha and Joy become best friends forever.
Sample 5: The Lost Crown of Merry	Merry the mermaid was lived in the castle, underwater.	One day, she lost her crown. She was afraid that her mom will be angry.	Merry was so happy, and also Ms Starfish, Mr Octopus and Mr. Shark. She took her beautiful crown on her head.

It can be seen that students were able to write narrative texts that conform to the generic structure. Not only did the students follow the generic structure, but they also used the linguistic features that are used in a narrative text. Despite the grammatical errors that the student still made, they were already able to apply the linguistic features of Narrative texts. Table 4 summarizes the linguistic features of the students' texts:

Table 4. Linguistic Features of the Students' Texts

No.	Features	Examples
1.	Focus on specific participants	Once upon a time, there was a bunny named **Jojo**. (Sample 1) Once upon a time, there lived a very rich 8 years old little girl called **Vanesha**. (Sample 4)
2.	The use of past tense	Once upon a time there **lived** a savage lion in a dark cave on the edge of the forest. (Sample 2) One day, she **lost** her crown. (Sample 5)
3.	The use of temporal conjunctions and temporal circumstances	**While** he was hunting suddenly he fell and his leg injured. (Sample 3) **The next day**, there was a hunter entered the forest. (Sample 2)
4.	The use of material (or action) processes	That day, she **brought** many food such as cupcake, cookies, and candies to decorated Momo (Sample 4) Then there was a girl who **helped** the prince (Sample 3)

5.	The use of mental processes	The lion was thankful to the mouse and **realized** that he can't underestimate small animals like the mouse. (Sample 4) She did not **think** that she had helped a prince. (Sample 3)
6.	The use of relational processes	Merry **was** so happy (Sample 5) They **became** a best friend (Sample 4)

In terms of children stories personal value, the narrative texts written by the students are considered

suitable for children. The students were also able to write stories that contain moral values for children, for example persistence (Jojo's Story), respect (The Lion and The Mouse), and virtue (An ordinary and the Prince, The Lost Crown of Merry). They also wrote the stories in creative looking pop-up books, some of which can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The Narrative Texts Presented in Pop-up Books/Booklets

4.   CONCLUSION
This research proposes a way to increase literacy awareness of Indonesian university students and children, especially those learning English as a foreign language by developing a model of stories for children through Narrative genre. Despite the grammatical errors that were still found, the texts produced by the students have already followed the generic structure and linguistic features of a Narrative text. The students were also able to write stories that contain moral values for children and present them creatively in the form of booklets, pop-up books, and accordion books.

5.   REFERENCES

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