

# Genre-Based Approach: What and How to Teach and to Learn Writing

I Wy. Dirgeyasa<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> English and Literature Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Correspondence: I Wy. Dirgeyasa, Senior Lecturer English and Literature Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Medan, Jl. Willem Iskandar Pasar V – Kotak Pos No. 1589 – Medan 20221, Indonesia. Tel: 62-816-3104-710. E-mail: wayandirgayasa@yahoo.com

Received: June 14, 2016 Accepted: July 16, 2016 Online Published: July 17, 2016

doi: 10.5539/elt.v9n9p45 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n9p45>

## Abstract

In Indonesian education context, recently the word ‘genre’ seems to gain its most popular and hot issue to teaching and learning English, particularly writing skill. However, many of them the students, teachers, or university students, or even lecturers in universities apparently are not good at understanding and are not truly well informed about the genre itself. It could be said that the word ‘genre’ is still a kind of mystery to uncover. This paper is an attempt to present the nature of genre, genre writing, genre as a product of writing, and genre as an approach to teaching and learning writing.

**Keywords:** genre writing, a product of writing, teaching and learning writing

## 1. The Nature of Genre

Etymologically, the word ‘genre’ is derived from the French language meaning ‘form’ or ‘type’. Then, originally, the word ‘genre’ which is also used in Biology science means ‘genus’ referring to the classification of flora and fauna (Stokes, 2006; Himawan, 2007). This means that the early concept of genre is to classify the species into a certain class due to its typical similar characteristics (Dirgeyasa, 2015).

After that, the use of genre developed overtime, genre is applied in any various aspects of life such film, music, literature, etc. In music, for example, genre is used to refer any music categories such as pop, gospel classic, R n B, etc, whereas in movie, that there are also many types of genre like drama, western, science picture, and so forth. In literature it is often heard the words like novel, drama, poetry etc. In short, it can be simply said that genre means type or kind, or class of a particular thing or object.

Then recently, genre is also used in linguistics study. In linguistic study, genre becomes a kind language object to study. As a matter of fact, the study of genre in linguistics literacy is based on Systemic Functional Linguistic-SFL (Halliday, 1978; Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2003). Then, Christie dan Martin (2000) adds that linguistic functional becomes a basic and fundamental reference in the framework of the usage of the language in term of genre.

So what is genre in term of the language and linguistics? Martin (1999) states that genre is communication activity having and orienting goal. Then, Swales (1990) simply defines genre is a communication event in which the members have a set of communication goal. By referring two statements above, it can be said that genre is a process of communication which has a certain goal (goal oriented) for its members in a certain event of communication due to certain social context. Genre is a matter of communication event by social context. Consequently, the different social context then, tends to lead to different genre.

In line with the concept of genre, then, Christie dan Martin (2000) adds states that genre is the particular usage of the language in a certain social circumstance such as interview genre, media genre, or advertisement genre, and so forth. In addition (Halliday and Hasan, 1989) as quoted by (Hyland, 2003) stated that:

*This theory addresses the relationship between language and its social functions and sets out to show language a system from which users make choices to express meaning. Halliday argues that the language users have to use and develop the specific ways of using language to accomplish goals, which means that texts are related to social context and the other texts. Broadly, when a set of texts share the same purpose, they will often share the same structure, and thus, they belong to the same genre.*

Referring to the previous statement, it can be simply defined that genre is a kind of text either oral or written in which there is relationship between language and its social function. Due to distinctive social functions, the usage of language tend to apply different genre depending on existing social function. Hereafter, genre is then defined the use of the language by means of typical and specific way in order to achieve specific goal. By this context, it seems that the most important thing to keep in mind is that a kind of text either oral or written which has the same goal and same lexico-grammatical features will be the same genre. In addition, Swales (1990) further argues that:

*A class of communication events, the members of which share some ethnographical communication, but typically need further validation set of communicative purposes. The purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constraints choice of the content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operate to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarities in terms of structure, style, content and intended audiences...The genre name inherited and produced by discourse communities and imported by others constitute valuable.*

What Swales has stated is seemingly clear that genre has a number of characteristic and features such as a) genre has a particular communication event, b) genre has a specific goal (goal oriented), c) genre is different and various in accordance to its typical features, d) each genre has a matter of limitation and rules including content, physical form, and shape, and e) every genre belongs to a certain discourse community.

In line with discourse community, (Widdoson, 2007) adds that genre is shaped or existing due to the existing discourse community. It is a fact that different discourse community has different genre. Talking about discourse community and genre in connection to discourse community. Swales (1990) as cited by (Ohoiwutun, 1996) clarifies that characteristics of discourse community in terms of the usage of language in social context is a) a certain discourse community has certain communication goals approved, b) the discourse community communicate within its members, c) a certain discourse community use a certain pattern of communication for its members, d) the discourse community tends to have more than one types of genre to communicate, and e) the discourse community, at last gains a number specific register.

## 2. Genre Writing

It seems that genre and genre approach in writing are relatively new in teaching and learning English. Genre in writing is a part of genre in language use. Thoreau (2006) simply states that genre in writing or genre writing is a kind or type of writing in which it has a typical style, particular target of readers, and a specific purpose. Referring to Thoreau's statement, it could be said that genre covers three main aspects namely writing style, readers, and goal (goal oriented). In line with style, Thoreau, then claims that writing style means how something is written; the words that are used and the way the information is organized. Then, Scott and Avery (2001) support Thoreau's idea by stating that style in writing is words or expressions used to write the writing and how language patterns are expressed.

Referring above statement, genre writing tries to see writing from different perspective. It is a different angle how writing is viewed and how it is written and how it is analyzed It is extremely different form 'conventional' perspective about writing (Dirgeyasa, 2015). It can be simply concluded that genre writing is a new perspective to teaching writing due to different perspectives. It also important to note that one of the central insights of genre analysis is that writing is embedded in social situation, so that a piece of writing is meant to achieve a particular purpose which comes out of a particular situation. In terms of genre writing, Hyland (2003) as cited in (Dirgeyasa, 2015) proclaims that:

*Genre implies that students to write not just to write but to write something to achieve some purposes such as it is a way of getting something done, to get things done, to tell story, to request an overdraft, to describe a technical process, to report past event, and so on, we follow certain social convention for organizing messages because we want our readers to recognize our purpose.*

Hyland implies that the purpose of genre writing is not only to enable the writer to write, but also the writer writes to pursue a certain goal. For example, how to retell, how to report, how to describe, how something is done or how something is carried out, etc. In this case, the writers need to use a certain social convention, linguistic features, and rhetoric structure of the text.

By doing so, it can be stated that genre approach to writing covers two distinctive dimensions in teaching and learning writing. First, genre is a kind of text or writing work itself. It views that the language (writing form)

must be related to social function of the text. Social function of the text, then implies to certain social environment and place where and when the text is used. This of course, will vary because of different context and situation. Second, genre as a process means how the writing work is developed, taught, and learned. In this case, there is a certain process of production and reproduction of the writing work. Genre as an approach, of course, provides some stages or steps to follow in. These will guide the writer systematically in order to be able to produce the writing work itself. In short, then, it can be associated that genre is a kind of a coin with two facets in which each face has its own characteristics and functions.

Ann (2003), then states that in one side, genre is viewed as a type of text or writing text. It is typical model of writing product having different features and characteristics. On the other side, it is judged as one model or approach or strategy to teaching and learning writing. This clearly shows that genre based approach to teaching and learning writing is absolutely distinctive among other existing approaches.

### 3. Genre as a Product in Writing

Simply, the genre as a product means that genre writing is a kind of text or writing work itself. It views that the language (writing form) must be related to social function of the text. Social function of the text, then implies to certain social environment and place where and when the text is used. This of course, will vary because of different context and situation. Genre writing as a product or type of writing shows its distinctive features as shown by its organization, rhetoric structure, and or linguistics features.

Genre-based writing as a product or type of writing shows its distinctive features as shown by its organization, rhetoric structure, and or linguistics features, purpose, etc. (Hyland, 2003; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Pardiyono 2007; Dirgeyasa, 2015) then add that genre-based writing has its own distinctive features and characteristics such, purposes, textual element or rhetoric structure, grammatical pattern, and vocabulary usages (Dirgeyasa, 2015). In addition, they also state that the characteristics of genre-based writing consists of a) certain communicative purpose, b) certain rethorical structure or generic structure and c) certain linguistic features.

In line with genre as a product of writing, Johns (2002; Hyland 2003; Pardiyono (2007; Dirgeyasa, 2014b) proposes that every genre has its own distinctive generic structure or schematic structure. By its physical structure, for example, each of the genre-based writing has different elements of text either by names or numbers. One particular genre may be simple and the other one may be complex in term structure. For example, recount genre physically is designed as follows a) orientation, b) record of events or sequence of events, and c) re-orientation (Dirgeyasa, 2014b; 2015). Visually, it can be shown in Figure 1 below.

Orientation
Record of events or sequence of events
Re-orientation

Figure 1. Physical structure or generic structure of recount genre

Then, the procedure text or genre's physical structure is different from recount genre or other types of genre. The procedure genre consists of (topic+ statement of purpose) ^ (Sequences of steps to accomplish job or activities stated in the topic) ^ (Closing- if necessary) (Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Pardiyono, 2007; Dirgeyasa, 2014b;). Visually it can be drawn as it is shown by figure 2 below.

topic+ statement of purpose
Sequences of steps to accomplish job or activities stated in the topic
Closing- if necessary

Figure 2. Physical structure or generic structure of procedure

In short, each genre writing type is not only different among other by physical structure or generic structure or rhetoric structure but also their lexico-grammar or linguistic features as well. For example, the main typical lexico-grammars of recount genre writing provides a background information answering the questions (*why?*, *when?*, *where?*, and *why?*), past tense, sequence of time, etc. Then, the procedure genre follows the following lexico-grammar as shown by the use imperative sentence, the frequent use of passive sentences. Then, in

procedure genre writing, the command or doing something verb such as *put, take, mix, switch, slow down, reduce*, expressing sequence (*first...; then...; next...; finally*), etc are also common (Knapp and Watkins, 2005; Pardiyono 2007; Dirgeyasa, 2014b).

#### **4. The process of Teaching and Learning through Genre Approach**

As a matter of fact, many experts state that genre as an approach to teaching and learning writing shows its typical process, procedures, and steps. Martin (1999) states that genre writing as a process of teaching and learning can be developed and conducted through a number of phases to follow in. He proposes three main phases of genre writing process consisting of a) modeling, b) deconstruction, and c) language understanding. In accordance to the implementation of genre based writing to teaching and learning writing as a kind of a model of wheel literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). Cope and Kalantzis further states:

*“This wheel has three phases-modelling the target genre, where learners are expected to examples of the genre they have to produce; the construction of the text by learners and teachers, and finally the independent construction of texts by learners.”*

The above statement shows that Cope and Kalantzis (1993) suggests that in modeling stage, a certain genre is given to the students by the teacher. The teacher and students then, analyze it in order to know the nature of its features in terms of linguistics features, structures of the text and the communicative purpose. It is important to know because each type of genre has its own linguistic features, structural patterns and communicative purpose as well. In second phase, the students do the exercise by manipulating and modifying the text given in terms of relevant language usages. Finally, the students try to produce a certain genre type by using their previous understanding and knowledge.

Regarding to the genre as a model of teaching and learning, Firkins, Forey, and Sengupta (2007) elaborates in detail and more comprehensive way how it is done. They use the term ‘cyclic strategic’ to define and stages of teaching and learning writing through genre based approach. They also propose three stages which must be followed and implemented during the teaching and learning process. The three stages are a) modeling a text, b) joint construction of a text, and c) independent construction of a *text*. They then, explain each stage having some practical steps to follow systematically.

##### **1) Modeling a text**

In modeling a text, there are four practical steps which must be implemented during the teaching and learning process. The four practical steps are:

- a) The teacher chooses a certain type of genre writing in order to develop the classroom activities. In this case, type of genre must match with the students needs and market needs where they will work later on.
- b) The teacher and the students discuss the text genre by modeling and deconstruction or even manipulating the text.
- c) The students are directed and situated in order to know and understand the function of the text, the communicative purpose of the text. Take for example the genre procedure writing-the function of procedure and the purpose of writing procedure.
- d) The students then, study the vocabulary usages of a certain genre procedure, grammatical or structural patterns of procedure, and then the students practice the procedure if necessary.

##### **2) Joint construction**

In joint construction stage, the students start to do something more practical and operational dealing with writing. However, their work of genre writing is not writing at all because they modify and manipulate the text given. The students are still guided and helped by the teacher before they become really independent writer of a certain genre taught and learned. As a matter of fact, there are three practical steps how joint construction stage is developed and implemented.

- a) The students reconstruct the certain genre writing given. In this case, the student may revise and paraphrase the vocabulary usage, the grammatical patterns, and textual devices if necessary by their own words.
- b) The teacher continuously guides the students to discuss and order the students to remember so that they really understand well about the genre type given.
- c) Before going forward to stage three, the independent construction of a *text*., stage modeling text and joint construction are important to review.

**3) Independent construction of a text**

By having prior understanding and experiences of stage one and stage two, the students are ordered to write a certain type of genre as what they have learned before. The student write a given genre type independently. In this case, the teacher must be sure that the students really understand the features of a certain genre such as the communicative purpose, structure element of the text, grammatical patterns usage, relevant vocabulary usage, and textual devices as well. In order to have a vivid pictorial flow chart of cyclic teaching and learning of writing through genre based approach, Hyland (2003) as quoted in Dirgeyasa (2014a) draws as it is shown by figure 3 below.

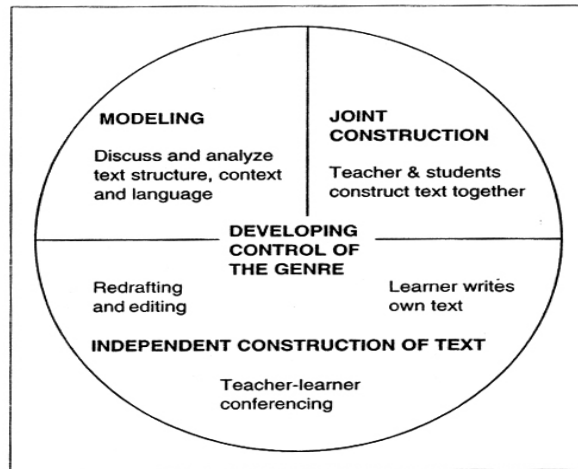


Figure 3. The Hyland’s Model of genre teaching and learning cycle

In line with the above model of genre teaching and learning cycle, (Rothery, 1996) in Firkin, Forey, and Sengupta, (2007) also proposes the model of genre of teaching and learning cycle. He draws the teaching and learning cycle model is similar to Hyland but his model is more comprehensive and operational to do. It looks more complex than Hyland’s model to do as shown by Figure 4. Figure 4 shows how Rothery’s model of genre teaching and learning cycle is designed and developed.

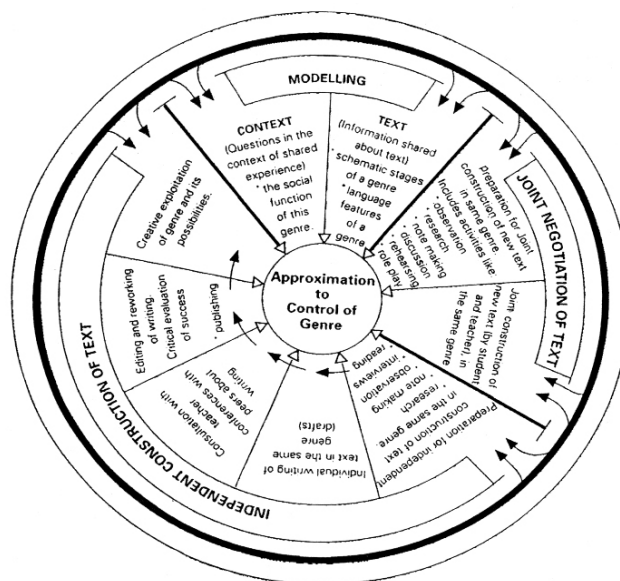


Figure 4. The Rothery’s Model of genre teaching and learning cycle

By this model, the student can learn to write truly gradually and systematically. This can help them to write by comparing and contrasting their previous work to the final work of writing. By doing so, the students know the strengths and the weaknesses of their writing. In line with the student process of learning, genre based approach to teaching and learning writing, Weber (2001) states that this model of teaching and learning writing helps to raise the students' awareness of particular areas of difficulties while at the same time it promotes learner autonomy.

## 5. Conclusion

Genre as an approach to teaching and learning writing is a matter of mixed approach between process and product approach. It is a kind of one coin with two facets- which implies two sides that is genre as an approach or method or strategy to teaching and learning writing and as a product of the writing itself. As an approach, genre refers to process of writing showing its systematical orders or steps to follow either by teacher or students. Whereas, genre as a product shows its distinctive features of writing either in terms of organization, physical design or layout and also communicative purpose and linguistics features used.

Genre-based approach to teaching and learning writing seems to be relevant for the students with low competencies and low motivation. It really guides the students to write from the very simple or dependent steps to independent steps. It also promotes and facilitates the student finally to learn in autonomous learning way. Genre-based approach then is suitable not only for academic setting but also professional setting. The key point is that genre then views the writing from different perspective and different point of view.

Then, personally, by this article will provide the readers or whoever are interested in genre and genre approach especially students, teachers, or universities students, and lecturers a kind of reinforcement, new understanding, horizon, and insight toward genre and genre approach. Genre-based approach will be one of the newest and practical, and effective one to teaching and learning writing.

## References

- Ann, J. M. (2003). *Genre in the Classroom: Multiple Perspective*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Cope & Kalantzis. (1993). Background to Genre Teaching dalam In B. Cope, & M. Kalantzis (Eds). *The Power of Literacy: A Genre Approach to Teaching*
- Christie Frances dan J. R. Martin. (2000). *Genre and Institutions: Social Process in the Workplace and School*. New York: Continuum.
- Dirgeyasa, Wy. I (2014a). The Development of English Writing Learning Materials through Genre-Based Approach for English Department at University. *Proceeding Seminar on English Language and Teaching 2014*. English Department, Faculty of Language and Art State University of Padang.
- Dirgeyasa, Wy. I. (2014b). *College Academic Writing: a genre-based perspective*. Medan: Unimed Press.
- Dirgeyasa, Wy. I. (2015). What and How to Assess a Genre-Based Writing. *Proceeding of 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Language Education*. 2015. State University of Makasar South Sulawesi Indonesia.
- Fikrins, Arthur Sengupta, Sima, dan Forey, Gail (2007). Teaching Writing to Low Proficiency EFL Students dalam *ELT Journal*. Vol. 61/4. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.p. 343-344
- Hyland, K. (2002). *Teaching and Researching Writing*. London: Pearson Publication.
- Hyland, K. (2003). *Second Language Writing*. London: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667251>
- Knapp, P., & Watkins. (2005). *Genre, Text Grammar: Technologies for Teaching and Assessing Writing*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.
- M.A.K. Halliday. (1978). *Exploring in the Functions of Language*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Martin, J. R. (1999). *Factual Writing: Exploring and Challenging Social Reality*. Melbourne: Deakin University Press.
- Ohoiwutun, P. (1996). *Sosiolinguistik: Memahami Bahasa Dalam Konteks Masyarakat dan Budaya*. Jakarta: Kesaint Blanc.
- Pardiyono. (2007). *Pasti Bisa: Teaching Genre Based Writing*. Yogyakarta: Penrbit Andi.
- Pratista, H. (2007). *Memahami Film*. Yogyakarta: Homerian Pustaka.

- Scott Rebecca dan Avery Simon (eds). (2001). *Writing With Style*. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Stoke, J. (2006). *How to do Media and Cultural Studies* diterjemahkan oleh Santri Indah Astuti (Panduan untuk Melaksanakan Penelitian dalam Kajian Media dan Budaya, Yogyakarta: PT. Benteng Pustaka.
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre Analysis English in Academic and Research Settings*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thoreau, M. (2006). *Write on Track*. New Zealand: Pearson Education New Zealand.
- Widdoson, H. G. (2007). *Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, J. J. A. (2001). Concordance-and Genre-Informed Approach to ESP Essay Writing. *ELT Journal*, 55(1), 15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/55.1.14>

### **Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).