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The Effectiveness of Reflection Strategy in Improving Writing Genre

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the result of Reflection Teaching Strategy Application in improving writing genre at university level in Indonesia. The study employed Reflective Teaching Strategy as a model of practicing writing with the students of Universitas Asahan North Sumatra, Indonesia. The Class Action Research was conducted with the Reflection Strategy for the students' achievement of Universitas Asahan in writing for one semester. The research procedures in Reflection Teaching Strategy of Genre Writing Class involved a process of self-observation, and self-evaluation of students in learning process. The population included 120 students- divided into 2 groups (A & B) - as sample. After applying the strategy for one semester, it was noted that there was positive effect on students' achievement in wiring genre; improvement from 65 to 75 in group A. The obtained data showed that the Reflection Teaching Strategy helped in improving English language abilities, in having positive attitudes towards the quality and effectiveness of the teaching processes, and in the implementation of teaching English with Genre Based Approach. It is therefore recommended that English language teachers apply the Reflection Teaching Strategy to improve their students' skills in writing genre argumentatively.

Keywords: *Reflection Strategy, Genre, Writing Skill, Action Research, Self-Evaluation*

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1. Introduction

National Curriculum of English as a first foreign language in Indonesia recommends the teachers to teach various types of genres and texts. Therefore, this study focused on the way of teaching descriptive genre through guiding model (Dirgeyasa, 2016). Genre is an abstract concept of using language in texts. "It is based on the idea that members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand, and perhaps write them relatively easily" (Hyland in Rezat & Rezat, 2016). As a working definition, genres have been characterised in this research tradition as staged, goal oriented social processes: social since texts are always interactive events; goal oriented in that a text unfolds towards its interactants' purposes; staged, because it usually takes more than one step to reach the goal. In functional linguistics terms, this means that genres are defined as a recurrent configuration of meanings that enact the social practices of a culture. Such a social semiotic interpretation necessitates

going beyond individual genres, to consider how they relate to one another. To begin with, genres can be related and distinguished by recurrent global patterns. Matondang (2014) argued the sociocultural aspect of English genre. For example, story genres can be distinguished on the presence or absence of sequence in time (news reports vs other stories), and the presence or absence of a complicating event (recount vs narrative); factual genres on whether they explain processes or describe things (explanation vs report); argument genres between those that argue for a point of view, or discuss two or more points of view (exposition vs discussion) (Rose, 2010).

The implementation of the language education approach in Indonesia has instructed the teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to apply the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) in English class and the teaching strategies of the English teachers which affect the effectiveness of teaching genres and text structures. Genre-based approach to teaching and learning writing seems to be relevant for the students with low competencies and low motivation. Motivation is one of several important



factors that may influence students' English achievement (Ningrum & Matondang, 2017). 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 (Dirgeyasa, 2016). A teacher may apply the Reflection teaching which involves a process of self-observation and self-evaluation of students in learning process. The teachers who apply the Reflection strategies in this GBA need a comprehensive research. That Genre-Based Approach recommends teachers to developing students' abilities to use various types of English genres and texts appropriately, however the way of using Reflection teaching in classrooms have not been revealed yet.

There several advantages of GBA. The advantages of using GBA in teaching writing is as follows (Ochoa & Perez, 2017):

- Students generally appreciate the models or examples showing specifically what they have to do linguistically.
- Provides them with an understanding of why a communication style is the way it is through a reflection of its social context and its purpose.
- Encourages students to participate in the worldaround them, to comprehend writing as a tool that they can utilize, and to realize how writers manage content to promote logical organization.
- Allows students to become more flexible in their thinking and eventually to realize how authors organize their writings. Etc

Accordingly, using GBA application in the classroom should be based on the relevant principles of the course curriculum, teaching and learning cycles, and learners' context. Depending upon the target genre, instructors should consider the appropriate framework to guide learners as to how language is used in a particular genre (e.g., using SFL genre for academic essays, ESP Swales' genre for academic research articles and report, and Bhatia ESP for business letters). If the contribution of the writing course emphasizes developing learners' performance by means of genre knowledge, communicative purposes, and writer and reader roles, GBA is a meaningful approach in pedagogies. That is to say, it helps

learners to raise their awareness in written tasks in terms of vocabulary, grammatical structure, and textual organization. However, GBA is probably evaluated as less useful for learners because the simplified materials provided by instructors can limit learners' ideas (Badge & White in Phichiensathien, 2016).

Following National Curriculum of Indonesia, teaching writing skill in university level has been practiced in a great variety, and a genre argumentative is principally taught in this level. In Indonesia textbooks, there are some English genres provided, such as narrative, recount, procedure, spoof, anecdote, and hortatory, and the structures of texts are: descriptive, narrative, exposition, and argumentative. Teaching materials, strategies and evaluation in Indonesia are based on the learning processes of types of English genres and texts. The contents, purposes and structures of texts are correlated with the aims of teaching English which regulated by the National Curriculum.

In relation to writing problems and the teaching strategies for improving writing skill, this research uses the application of Reflective Teaching Strategy as a model of practicing writing in university level. According to Xiong Chuanwu (in Li & Ye, 2016), reflective teaching is defined as teachers' solving the troubles generated from inner self, teaching methods and teaching goals by means of action research, and by combining 'learning how to teach' with 'learning how to learn'. Therefore, teachers can play the role of teaching practical rationality and finally become well-experienced. By using the application of Reflection Strategy for writing skill to resolve the problems writing a genre descriptive that found the second year students of Universitas Asahan is considered very crucial in this research. It could be assumed that the application of Reflection Teaching Strategy lead the students in writing a genre argumentative. Reflective teaching involves "critical enquiry, analysis, and self-directed evaluation", often distinct from "behavioural skills and craft apprenticeship which, in contrast, emphasize the acquisition of pre-determined classroom practices" (Calderhead in Babaei & Abednia, 2016).

Even if the teachers of English in Indonesia have been expected to use English genres to help students to communicate in English by using frame of genre structures, but the students achievement is not

improved yet. Although teaching English genres and types of texts has been practiced in university level, however the students' competence in writing English texts is still not good enough. Identifying problems of writing texts was the main target of this study. The problems in writing genre descriptively, faced by the second year students of Universitas Asahan have been identified as follows:

1. Students do not know the usage of English genres ;
2. Students do not know the types of English texts.
3. Students do not recognize the way of using a genre argumentative in writing.

Based on the data above, the scope of this study was limited to encompass the Reflection effect on the students' achievement of Universitas Asahan in writing a genre descriptive. It deals with the students' knowledge of organization structure of genre descriptive, purposes and content.

2. Theoretical Reviews

Theoretically Motta-Roth and Heberle (2015:23) see genre as language use constitutive of and constituted by social activities, as a relatively stable communicative event, associated with specific purposes in specific sociocultural contexts. Genres initially were viewed as reoccurring patterns. Nowadays, however, the investigation has extended to include the critical perspective that does not only include the texts, but also the institutional practices, the disciplinary conventions of the institution including the patterns of intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Al-Afnan, 2017). It is widely known that the English genres deal with formal and informal situations of communication transactions where the speakers or writers engage a single or combination of genres to propose their goals in social interactions. According to Berkenkotter and Huckin, "Genre is the concept that enables us to envision the interpenetration of the process and system in disciplinary communication (2016:ix)". So genre descriptive makes students at higher education level know the way of describing objects.

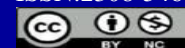
This view of genre profoundly affects the ways of speakers or writers determining structures of texts that appropriate to a context of situation. Teachers are based on what they know, or what they believe, or what they believe they know, giving rise to the lack of precision in a studied genre. It

results in the less effective teaching condition. In that case, students are likely to have difficulty identifying which surface-level patterns are suitable to which genres commonly used by native speakers. Whenever the situation of learning is not based on some deeper understanding of English genres, teachers should not achieve the class situations which help students in the use of English as a tool for communication. It should be realized by the English teachers that the teaching general principles and genre-related factors link to the internal features of a text. And it is likely to be more effective than teaching specific features associated with linguistics items. When English teachers focus on various types of English genres, it provides students foundation to learn how to implement genre structures in different social environments.

In learning writing skill of English as a second language, Troia et. all. state that many students do not meet expected standards of writing performance, despite the need for writing competence in and out of school. As policy instruments, writing content standards have an impact on what is taught and how students perform (2016:99).

Considering the complexities and hindrances the students encounter, learning writing is the most avoided subject among other skill subjects in English. In fact, learning writing has been proven to give advantages to the students in the terms of enhancing their language learning strategies which has currently become a great concern of many experts in the movement of combining reading-writing instructions. The experts propose that by interconnecting reading and writing, students will develop a great deal in their literacy skills. Practice in writing helps students build their reading skills, in the sense that practice in the process of writing their own texts helps them analyze the pieces that they read. As a result, they can apply their knowledge about the ways to use particular language (word choice, combining words into logical and grammatical sentence structures, appropriate registers, etc.) to better understand a professional author's construction of texts (Sa'diyah, 2017:165).

Writing is one of the ways to transmit thoughts or ideas to the other people. Writing is also the important skill in studying English, which need great investment from the students. Many students in high school do not know the important of writing, so they only spend a few times for it. It is not true because good at writing can



help them study other skills in English more effectively. Besides that, practicing writing skill will help students get acquainted with new types of writing as well as consolidate their writing skill (Huy, 2015:56).

In writing class, students describing things effectively is an important way to directly involve their classmates as readers – the more convincing students descriptions, the more likely students are to draw their readers into their writing. It's important that students make their descriptions as clear as possible and students can do this by focusing on specific details of the person or place that they are describing.

2.1 Teaching Strategies for English Texts and Genres

Many of recent approaches to teaching second and foreign language skills have indicated the importance of helping students to be aware of English genres. The work of Swales (1990 in Caudery, 1998), which concentrates particularly on the genre of the academic paper, focuses on the influential factor in the field of English for Academic Purposes reveals the a communicative act, generic considerations will be important in creating speaking and writing. Naturally, the texts which derived by genres in English determine the usage of the language code such as syntax and word formation. Genres also determine the success of the text, and indeed the extent to which awareness of speakers and writers can be translated into an effective social interaction. The English teachers should create teaching strategies to practice English genres in classrooms, as what Caudery argues. He elaborates that: “Broadly speaking, genre research aims to group texts according to type, and to identify and describe features which texts of a particular genre have in common. The definition of the term genre varies somewhat between different writers, but most follow Swales (1990) in relating the concept of genre to communicative events or acts” (Caudery, 1998).

The work of Caudery shows that the genres are not linguistics items but the socio-cultural or external factors which shape the features of texts in communication acts. The functions of English genres in communication needs to be understood, and on the other hand they have to find the teaching strategies to build the foundation of using linguistic items for realizing the forms of genres in four language skills. They could develop a model for change named the Genre-Based Approach that has evolved

systematic functional linguistics perfectives. The change entails growth in the following: (1) awareness, (2) informational, (3) personal, (4) management, (5) consequence, (6) collaboration, and (7) refocusing. These relate to both the attitudes of teachers and the context where the innovation of English teachers is taking place. These factors include reform, teachers' skills and knowledge, and the initial mismatch between the teacher's knowledge and new innovation as well the principles underlying the approach innovation. It not only avoids the gap between theory and practice but also the gray areas. The human factors with different educational values in education also create different attitudes of English teachers. The study reveals that the majority of principals and teachers have insufficient understandings to the standard competency contents of the curriculum policy. In fact, teachers should be able to draw their prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences to interpret new instructional approaches, even reconstructing them in ways that can both reinforce the pre-existing practices and lead to the incremental change.

Basalama (2010) finds that the English teachers' attitudes in Indonesia play an important role in their performance in teaching practice (2010: 21-23). She explains that:

“if a teacher believes that his/her students have low English learning capacity, it might cause a pessimistic attitude toward the students. For the teacher, he/she may think that there is not much to be done because of the students' condition. Conversely, the teacher may approach the students in an optimistic way because he/she has a different perspective - realizing that his/her role as a teacher is as a facilitator and a motivator for the students (23)”.

A teacher with a positive attitude toward a new curriculum tends to create some new strategies to adopt the instruction processes according to the government policy. A teacher is likely to make an effort to facilitate the students' learning or even to create change. Richardson (1996 in Basalama 2010:23) believes that “the teachers' attitudes toward students' language is an important factor in understanding teachers' thought processes, classroom practices and changes, and learning to teach”. The study conducted by the Deakin University (2006) in Papua New Guinea shows that “Teachers' attitudes and perceptions are associated with the length of time that teachers have been using the syllabus documents. Teachers who have

been using the syllabus documents longer tend to have more positive attitudes and perceptions (2006)". According to Pajares (1992 in Basalama 2010:23), the teachers' cognition which includes beliefs and attitudes affect the change of strategies of teaching. Basalama (2010) concludes that the beliefs and attitudes interchangeably in teaching strategies.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research was conducted with a Class Action Research Design (CAR). According to Burns, action research democratizes the process of knowledge production by building on the actions, beliefs and understandings of those working within a particular social context. It places emphasis on 'insider' experiences, rather than the more generalised observations of teaching and learning that may be advanced by external researchers. Collaboration with others in the same or similar social situation (managers, colleagues, learners, parents) means that collective knowledge can be more widely shared, expanding beyond the individual teacher's classroom and potentially influencing other teachers' practices more broadly (Dikilitas, 2015:10).

3.2 Participants & Data Collection Procedures

The population of this study included 120 fresher students of English Education Department of Universitas Asahan of North Sumatra Indonesia. Through purposive sampling method, two groups were formed (A & B). The students were given a genre based technique in Reflecting Teaching Strategy for one semester. The treatment in one semester for improving writing genre skill used Reflection Teaching Strategy in which students had many opportunities to make the reflection on the learning process which they underwent.

4. Discussion

4.1 The Implementation of Reflection Teaching Strategy

The implementation of Reflective Teaching Strategy for English genres requires the positive attitudes of English teachers because they need to adopt that model in classrooms (Hallman & Adam, 2013). Reflection and reflective teaching is one of the methods to review the current approach to language teaching and to make up for any inadequacy by adopting different approach, pedagogy and methods with ICT inputs. As many studies have been conducted in other parts of the world, let us have a look at the current literature to find

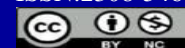
out what exactly the reflective teaching is (Al-Ahdal & Al-Awaid, 2014). A reflection in teaching requires practical assessment as well as diagnostic and critical assessment. The idea is to explore student-teachers' reflections on their initial practice including actions, thoughts and emotions associated with teaching English to young learners. Student-teachers are introduced to ways of reflecting upon their experience involving self-observation and self-evaluation (Stec, 2015).

Richards & Lockhart (in Brown, 2007) offer the following insightful view into the role of a "reflective approach" to teaching:

A recent trend in second language teaching is a movement away from "methods" and other "external" or "top down" views of teaching toward an approach that seeks to understand teaching in its own terms. Such an approach often starts with the instructors themselves and the actual teaching processes, and seeks to gain a better understanding of these processes by exploring with teachers what they do and why they do it. The result is the construction of an "internal" or "bottom up" view of teaching. The approach is often teacher initiated and directed because it involves instructors observing themselves, collecting data about their own classrooms and their roles within them, and using that data as a basis for self-evaluation, for change, and hence for professional growth.

Reflection has long been studied by many people. Bartlett (in Ma & Ren, 2011) defined reflection, or critical reflection as referring to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision—making, and as a source for planning and action. From previous research, researches on reflective teaching in China have started and flourished. Professor Xiong Chuanwu (in Ma & Ren, 2011) refines reflective teaching as "the process that the teacher as an active agent with the help of action research, keeps on inquiring and solving their own problems of the teaching goals and of teaching instruments, connects „learning to teach“ with „learning to learn“ and tries to improve rationality of teaching, and makes themselves a teacher of some scholar kind".

A reflective approach to teaching involves changes in the way we usually perceive teaching and our role in the process



of teaching. As the examples above illustrate, teachers who explore their own teaching through critical reflection develop changes in attitudes and awareness which they believe can benefit their professional growth as teachers, as well as improve the kind of support they provide their students. Like other forms of self-inquiry, reflective teaching is not without its risks, since journal writing, self-reporting or making recordings of lessons can be time-consuming. However teachers engaged in reflective analysis of their own teaching report that it is a valuable tool for self-evaluation and professional growth. Reflective teaching suggests that experience alone is insufficient for professional growth, but that experience coupled with reflection can be a powerful impetus for teacher development (Christodoulou, 2010).

The real situation of teaching process with Reflection Teaching Strategy in English class in Indonesia gives the pictures of curriculum and teaching strategies implementation. The research on the implementation GBA in referring to National Curriculum elaborates that the teachers' leadership and teaching practice in classrooms may or may not support curriculum implementation. The test revealed-

Table 1: Students' Scores in Pre-test & Post-test

Group	Pre-Test	Process-1	Process-2	Post-Test
Group A	65	67	69	75
Group B	60	62	65	70

The table above shows that the positive attitudes affecting the quality and effectiveness of the implementation of Reflection strategies which are associated with their English language abilities as is noticed from change from 65 to 75 in Group A. The Reflection Teaching Strategy had positive effects on English language abilities, positive attitudes towards the quality and effectiveness of the teaching processes. It shows that students' understanding of an argumentative text in the implementation of GBA teaching approach increased. Thus, the English teachers' concern for using a reflection teaching strategy helped in assuring the students' motivation. Many elements of writing practice have shown that there is considerable influence of the implementation GBA on the Reflections Strategy which increased the achievement in writing a genre.

5. Conclusions

To sum up, it can be said that Reflection Teaching Strategy has positive effects on achieving the expected outcomes in the form of students' achievement. In University Asahan of North Sumatra case, in this study, revealed the positive attitudes in terms of the quality and effectiveness of the implementation of Reflection Teaching Strategies in improving English language abilities of the students. Thus, it is recommended for the teachers to achieve the desired outcomes in the students' writing abilities in ESL/EFL contexts.

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