

MATCHING APPROACHES TO TEACHING WRITING FOR SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Ismaili¹

E-mail: ismak.alfarisi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The present paper reviews some recent approaches which meet to the needs and the characteristics of second and foreign language learners in learning writing. Unlike teaching writing in first language context, teaching writing in second and foreign language context is more challenging and sometime faces more complicated problems. Therefore, teacher needs to use appropriate approach to overcome problem in his/her teaching. There are two different approaches presented in this paper: genre-based approach and lexical approach. Genre-based approach is considered effective due to its linguistic structure which provides learners with a clear idea of what language features should be expressed and how the content should be organized. On the other hand, language classroom which is organized by using lexical principles give the learners awareness to 'chunk' to form appropriate expression fluently and effortlessly. In conclusion, teaching writing to second and foreign language learners can't only apply a single approach, method, or technique.

Keywords: approaches, teaching writing, second and foreign language learners

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mereview beberapa pendekatan terbaru yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan dan karakteristik *second and foreign language learners* dalam belajar menulis. Tidak seperti pengajaran pada penutur asli, pengajaran menulis untuk *second and foreign language learners* cenderung lebih sulit dan seringkali menghadapi beberapa masalah. Maka dari itu, pendidik harus menggunakan pendekatan yang berterima agar dapat mengatasi masalah dalam pengajaran menulis. Artikel ini memuat dua pendekatan yakni *genre-based approach* dan *lexical approach*. *Genre-based approach* dipercaya efektif karena dilengkapi dengan panduan yang jelas tentang penggunaan struktur dan ciri kebahasaan dan bagaimana mengkoordinasi isi tulisan. Disisi lain, pengajaran bahasa menggunakan *lexical approach* dapat memberikan ruang kepada murid agar mampu menggunakan 'chunk' dalam mengekspresikan bahasa dengan lancar dan mudah. Sehingga dapat ditarik kesimpulan bahwa pengajaran menulis untuk *second and foreign language learners* tidak hanya dapat diaplikasikan dengan menggunakan satu pendekatan, metode, dan satu teknik saja.

Keyword: pendekatan, pengajaran menulis, second and foreign language learners

¹ Dosen Prodi Pend. Bhs Inggris Univ. Islam Jember

Introduction

English language teaching has developed for many centuries, especially throughout the twentieth century. It has been practiced in language classroom all over the world with several adaptations to the different needs, characters, and cultures of the students on whether as second or foreign language learners. The use of approaches and methods become major consideration to teach English effectively and to achieve better outcomes. Based on the history, various the language teaching approaches have been implemented around the world since about 1600 or 19th century to the present (Shrum and Glisan, 2010: 481-484). It means that language teaching develops dynamically in every single year. In addition, the recent approaches of English language teaching are based on the idea of using language as opportunities for self-expression and creativity; use of language in a variety of contexts; exposure to authentic texts; interaction with others; integration of culture and language. And the most recent one, it is developed on the idea of giving opportunities to use the language as a vehicle for learning content; integration of skills and culture; interaction with others by means of technology; exploration of cultural products and practices and their relationships to cultural perspectives. It can be concluded that innovations and English language teaching researches need to be developed to be able to solve problems and to answer challenges in English Language Teaching, especially for second and foreign language learners.

Teaching writing in first language context is a challenging. However it is more complex and challenging in teaching language in foreign language context. Foreign language learners face and experience serious problem in producing a good writing. The problems are not solely on the language proficiency — ability to use grammatical correctness and to use accurate vocabulary—, the awareness of the content of the writing it's self, discourse knowledge, and social and cultural context of the language crucially hamper foreign language writers. As pointed out by Weigle (2002:35) that because of constrains of limited second-language knowledge, writing in a second language may be hampered because of the need to focus on language rather than content. However, foreign and second language learner also expected to produce English standard writing as produced by first language writing. Raimes (1938;6) points out a diagram showing what writers have to deal with as they produced a piece of writing.



Based on the explanation above, therefore, teachers who focus in teaching of writing need to consider very carefully which approaches, methods, or strategies most appropriate to their foreign of second language learners.

This paper tries to highlight and reflect critically of both genre-based approach and lexical approach recent innovations of English Language Teaching approaches, especially in writing teaching classroom. In addition, it also provides some practical steps and guidance how to use those approaches in the context of teaching writing for second and foreign language learner. Therefore, teacher can make careful consideration of which approaches work best to her/his students.

Genre-Based Approach

The idea of this approach relies on the need of students to write effectively in different ways for different purposes. In the curriculum in Indonesia, this approach has been adopted and established to the teaching of English for Junior High School up to Senior High School. Writing research has shown that students need to be exposed to and have practice with various genres in addition to narrative (e.g., Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Langer, 1986; Martin, 1989; Perera, 1984 in Reppen). The fundamental reason seems to be simple, the students are expected to get used to learning lexico-grammatical features, situations, and social functions of the text which is integrated to different types of writing. Reppen (2002; 321) argues that this important for English L1 students and Crucial for English L2 learners and it is simply that allowing students to write a lot will not necessarily provide sufficient practice in the types of writing valued for academic learning. Other researchers (Christie, 1992; Martin 1989 in Reppen, 2002) have also argued for the important of language form and structure as an integral part meaningful language use, a view that is being seen as increasingly more important for academic L2 context.

But, we need to understand first, what is genre? "Genre" refers not only to types of literary texts but also to the predictable and recurring patterns of everyday, academic and literary texts occurring within a particular culture (Hammond and Derewianka, 2001). Swales (1990: 58) identified a genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes". From his definition, it can be inferred that there are certain rules integrated to the writer's purpose. For example, someone who writes in narrative type presents orientation at the beginning of the story that functions to set the scene and to introduce the participant or the subject in the story. It is then followed by series of complications and solved by the resolutions to give effect of entertaining senses or mood to the reader due to its purpose to entertain the reader. Derewianka (1990 in Luu, 2011:122) identified further six main genres according to their primary social purposes: (1) narratives: tell a story, usually to entertain; (2) recount: to tell what happened; (3) information reports: provide factual information; (4) instruction: tell the listeners or readers what to do; (5) explanation: explain why or how something happens; (6) expository texts: present or argue a viewpoint. A genre of the text rules the

linguistic input of the text which is generally broken down into three main parts; linguistic rules, structure or schematic form, and language features. Structure shows the organization of the text which relies on three skeletons covering introductory paragraph, body of paragraph, and concluding paragraph. Language features focuses on the linguistics element such as grammar, vocabulary, transition words that the writer applies to easier process of composing a text.

Strength and the weaknesses of teaching writing using Genre-Based Approach

As other approaches in English language teaching, especially writing, genre-based approach give some advantages and disadvantages in some circumstances. It has been discussed above that learning under genre-based is designed with clear model of grammatical features, situations, and social context and its purposes. It gives student specific guidance how to a text should be develop and meet the purpose of the text. The effectiveness of genre-based approach due to its linguistic structure which provides learners with a clear idea of what language features should be expressed and how the content should be organized. Students who are given a task to write procedure or narrative text are easily able to match the model of the organization and linguistic features presented by the teacher to produce a new original text relevant to their social context. As described by Burns (2001:203-207) that one series of tasks and classroom procedures, which were highly genre-oriented, aimed at the formation of a job application letter, a task very relevant to the learners. So this circumstance naturally provide meaningful experience in producing writing forms with different types of genre and forms students' background knowledge that can be activated in the next learning situation. In addition, genre-based approach also benefits to the teachers because they can regularly deliver the same linguistic features and the organization of each types of text in some situations or classes. Rothery (1996 in Luu) asserts that the teacher's role in this approach is viewed as authoritative rather than authoritarian. Further, Luu (2011) argue that teacher as an expert in the classroom provides students with systematic guidance and careful support through various activities so that students ultimately gain the control of written genres. At the same time, he/she also recognizes the importance of students' contributions to the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, the genre-based approach facilitates students to participate in the world around them and to build writing comprehension as a tool that they can utilize, and to recognize how writers manage content to promote logical pattern of organization. It is emphasized that writing is a social activity where writer can build social interaction among others. This view originated from the social-cultural theory initiated by Vygotsky (1978 in Luu, 2011). Based on this theory, collaborating together effectively construct new knowledge. Besides that, social interaction of every group member plays important rule to share ideas, to inspire one another, and develop new knowledge. In the context of class activities, learning with this circumstance can minimize student's anxiety

and remove feeling isolation that sometime faced by students. Besides that, collaborating together enhance positive emotion, create conducive environment and increase participation of the group members.

In spite of genre's advantages to help learners with effective writing process and experience, there are two basic consideration of genre-based approach. The first is that it seems more emphasize on the language convention and features rather than the content of the text. It is strengthened by Byram's opinion (2004; 236) that the two concerns are required skill to produce content and neglect of learner's self-sufficiency. Its emphasizing on language convention, tend to make writer especially foreign or second language writer to focus to the use accurate vocabulary and discourse context. There is a doubt that this approach eliminates substantive aspect of written product such as diction, coherence, cohesion, and collocation. Thereby, genre-based approach is much seen as factor limiting learner's creative thinking about the content. In conclusion, this approach seems fit to beginner or intermediate learners who actually need more language convention to organize their writing.

Lexical Approach

Native speakers almost naturally face no problem in constructing a sentence with appropriate collocations. As estimated by Pawley and Syder in Richards and Rodgers (2002:134) that native speakers have hundreds of thousands of prepackaged phrases in their lexical inventory, but the implications for second language learning are uncertain. The teaching writing to English native speakers intensively focus on developing various styles of writing. In this particular context, writing is considered as process. Students are exposed to daily writing training to gain fluency through choosing topic, drafting, developing, revising, conferencing and editing. On the contrary, second or even foreign language learners face more complicated problems than native speaker. Even though, they are also exposed to get used to learning with various genres, they intensively need to be taught grammar and any other language conventions. In addition, paragraph organization, way to develop and arrange ideas should be taught previously with clear explanation and model. Nunan (1999) states that the most difficult task to do in language learning is to produce a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing, which is even more challenging for second language learners. That's way teaching writing to second or foreign language learners need extra effort to succeeding in writing. Some researchers have proposed that choosing the right approach can minimize problems in English Language Teaching and help to gain better achievement in ELT.

The Lexical Approach presents as any opponents to the preceding language teaching approaches which emphasize more on the teaching of grammar, language conventions, structure, and rules. However, in this approach, language teaching in centralized on the teaching of lexis and chunks. The ideas are in line with Wilkins' assumption (1972) in Qader (2016) that "without grammar little can be conveyed but without lexis nothing can be conveyed".

Based on this view, it can explicitly be inferred that in the trend of modern language teaching, it is emphasized more on the teaching of lexis rather than grammatical rules and language conventions. Lewis (2002:vii) asserts, "A central element of language teaching is raising students' awareness of, and developing their ability to "chunk" language successfully.

Educators can use Lexical Approach effectively only if they understand clearly what lexis is. Lexis is used as linguistics terminology instead of vocabulary of a language. The expert of lexical approach argues that language consists of chunks which, when combined, produce continuous coherent text (Lewis, 2008:7). Further, he divides chunks or lexical items into four basic types covering words, collocation, fixed expression, and semi fixed expression. In practice, Lexical approach allows learners to be able to use lexical item to produce language whether in spoken or written form appropriate context and situation. Indeed, Lexis helps us handle highly probable events fluently and effortlessly by providing us with prefabricated ways of dealing with them (Lewis, 2008:41).

Implementing Lexical Approach in classroom activities

It is a big question of how to apply this approach in teaching and learning activities, especially in teaching writing to foreign and second language learners. Of course there should be careful considerations to effectively help students becoming more fluent and effortless to achieve good writing. The expert of this approach, Lewis, has proposed that the implementation of lexical approach should be in integral part with syllabus design, learner's and teacher's perception, learning activities, and materials. The syllabus design needs to provide clear materials with exemplification of lexical item uses, students' self access to evaluation, and assessment. In addition learning media such as computer to assist text analysis of corpus to reveal commonest structural pattern in which words are used (Willis 1990 in Lewis, 2002: 135). A research which was conducted by Qader proved that the results clearly indicate that raising students' awareness of lexical chunks was more effective than the commonly used method. This means that the lexical chunks play a positive role in improving the college students' English essay writing. He suggested applying four main stages in essay writing classes. The first stage is to help their students identify, organize and use lexical chunks appropriately. The students must also be presented with activities that raise their consciousness that any language in the world consists basically of ready-made chunks. The second stage can start with text analysis. The students are presented with essay samples to read. Then they are asked to identify the different types of lexical chunks. In the third stage, the students are asked to write an essay using similar chunks. In the fourth stage, the students' performance is marked and evaluated.

Since lexical approach is believed to have fundamental and certain characteristic of language teaching content, I need to elaborate specifically what material and teaching resources used in teaching writing. Richards and Rodgers (2002: 136) suggest at least four types of materials and teaching resources to

support lexical approach in language teaching. Type 1 consists of complete course packages including texts, tapes, teacher's manuals, and so on. Type 2 is represented by collections of vocabulary teaching activities such as those that appear in Lewis's *Implementing the Lexical Approach* (Lewis 1997). Type 3 consists of "printout" versions of computer corpora collections packaged in text format. Tribble and Jones (1990) include such materials with accompanying students exercise based on the corpora printouts. Type 4 materials are computer concordancing programs and attached data sets to allow students to set up and carry out their own analysis. Students can also use online concordancing program like <http://www.lextutor.ca/conc/eng/> for self learning.

Complete course packages should be integrally provided by teacher before implementing writing course into the organized-lexis classroom. It includes providing syllabus and lesson plan, exercise, assessment method and procedure, and evaluation based on the principles of using lexical approach. Lewis (2008: 67-75) mentions some lexical principles to be considered in preparing and organizing classroom activities as follow.

1. Topic

Topic for teaching English has been developed since the curriculum amended to use thematic student's book to cover English lesson in junior and senior high school. It is not something new for English teacher in Indonesia. In addition, lexical approach is also organized using topics. Materials which is organized within a topic framework allow student to be constantly aware of lexical item used certain topic. Topic 'Food' presents some referential words such as *taste, favorite, delicious, organic, raw, well-done*, etc. In other word, in lexical approach, topic is very useful to recall related vocabularies which usually go together and use them in appropriate way.

2. Situation

Every conversation is always happened in certain situation. It is considered as effective medium to encourage student to predict to the lexical areas where some vocabularies go within. If teacher asks students to think about *kitchen*, they are constantly going to think about *sugar, plate, pan, cooking*, etc. therefore, to present situation in particular topics is able to create context and automatically rich student's vocabulary.

3. Collocation

Collocation plays central characteristic and pedagogical activity of lexical approach. It is very important because word acquisition can be effectively accepted within a group fit in a given situation. So teacher should provide systematic exercises on collocation as basic requirement to learn language and use it in communication.

4. Notion

The term 'notion', tends to be the psychological aspect of functional language. In practice, it cannot be separated and cannot be avoided in the use of language. Some particular words, phrases, or expressions can be used as notion such as

comparing, apologizing, or reassuring. To use it means that language indicates not only the speaker's utterance or writing itself, but it can impact psychologically.

5. Narration

Lewis explains that in producing speech the human mind follows a simple pattern: nominalise – narrate – explain. Including it as one of consideration is based on the believe that naturally mind like stories and real-world constrains make some sequences. For example, the word 'product' has some words or phrases partnership to be likely sequence with 'manufacture' – 'launch' – 'distribute' – 'withdraw' – 'develop'. He, further, states that narrative principle provides powerful organizational tool. In teaching writing, this principle is very useful to teach students about developing ideas by using chronological order technique.

6. Metaphor

Lewis argues that metaphor is one of the most fruitful of the novel ways of identifying patterns in lexis. It is very important to presents metaphor or idiom in second or foreign language classroom considering they have different patterns of lexis in their idioms. The pattern of idiom 'Time is money' is cannot be merely transfer into Arabic equivalent because they have different pattern to express this idiom (Time is sword).

7. Person

In lexical approach classroom, teachers need to drill their students consciously with many exercises using examples beginning with different grammatical person. It is done not only to avoid monotonous but further it is to make sense that one expression is more appropriate and culturally accepted in certain situation. Some time the instead of expression *I'm sorry – it wasn't my fault*, it is clear that *Don't worry, it wasn't your fault* is more useful than *you're sorry, it wasn't your fault*.

8. Phonological chunking

As second or foreign language learners, it not merely easy to produce utterance with appropriate pronunciation and phonological chunking – like stressing, grouping, and pausing - but they need extra effort to make it. However, teacher needs to make them very familiar with the appropriate phonological chunking and clear model should be pervaded in classroom teaching. Teacher also needs to become model for the students. Lewis provides following the example how utterance is group in lexis.

By the way / I have / to get up at six / tomorrow / I have / to be at work / half past seven / at the latest.

9. Keywords

Teacher can use keywords as the central word to help learners develop their phrasal lexicons. Lewis argues that these words are closer to generative grammar than fixed vocabulary and accordingly enter into a wide range of expression and

patterns. In practice, teacher can use keyword *cake* to produce expression *I really like this cake* or phrasal lexicons *delicious cake, home-made cake, wedding cake, birthday cake, etc.*

10. Grammar

Lewis suggests that lexis is not enough; the content and role of grammar teaching is modified in the lexical approach but it remains an important element of a balanced course. L1, who most acquire language lexically, are easy to uttered appropriately and well-formed grammatically, but for second or foreign language learners, it is need to be clearly pervaded in teaching. So teacher need to modify the teaching of grammar in lexical approach.

Conclusion

Teaching writing to second or foreign language learners can't only apply a single approach, method, or technique. Teacher needs to be aware selecting appropriate approaches that meet the students' need. Based on the discussion above, genre-based approach is likely best to be implemented to beginner or intermediate learners who actually need more language convention to organize their writing. This approach is also very useful for second and foreign language learners because it can teach them with various types of text for different purposes. In addition, implementing genre based approach allows students to learn syntax, grammar, and vocabulary through the language features of various types of text. On the other hand, using lexical approach benefits for second or foreign language learners and also elementary or intermediate students because they have and use fewer lexical chunks rather than L1 learners or native speaker. Teaching lexical chunks also plays important role to improve second or foreign language learners' essay writing. Therefore, it should be implemented comprehensively by integrating all elements covering syllabus design, lesson plan, learning sources, materials, exercises, learning activities, and assessment. However, the implementation of both approaches to second and foreign language learners needs to be prepared comprehensively in order to gain better learning achievement.

References

- Burns, A. 2001. *Genre-Based Approaches to Writing and Beginning Adult ESL Learners*. In C. Candlin & N. Mercer (Eds.) *English language teaching in its social context: A reader*. London: Routledge.
- Byram, M. 2004. *Genre and genre-based teaching*. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. London: Routledge.
- Hammond, J., and Derewianka, B. 2001. *Genre*. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds). *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis. M. 2008. *Implementing the Lexical Approach: Putting Theory into Practice*. United Kingdom. Heinle, Cengage Learning.

- Lewis. M. 2002. *The Lexical Approach: The State of ELT and a Way Forward*. USA: Heinle.
- Luu. T.T. 2011. "Teaching writing through genre-based approach." *BELT Journal*. (2): 121-136.
- Nunan, D. 1999. *Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Boston, Mass: Heinle & Heinle
- Qader. Abdul. B. H. 2016. *The Effect of Lexical Chunks on Kurdish EFL Learners' Writing Skill*. *Education* 6(4): 101-106.
- Raimes. Ann. 1938. *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Richard & Rodgers. 2001. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Reppen. R. 2002. *A Genre-Based Approach to Content Writing Instruction*. In Richards & Renandya (Eds). *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Shrum & Glisan. 2010. *Teacher's Handbook: Contextualized Language Instruction*. Boston: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Weigle, C.S. 2002. *Assessing Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.