AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING NARRATIVE TEXTS

(A Case study at One Public Junior High Schools in Bandung)

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Abstract: This paper reports on the results of a study focusing on the analysis of students' ability in writing narrative texts in terms of schematic structure and linguistic features. A qualitative case was used in this study. The data of this study were nine junior high school students' narrative texts that came from low, middle, and high levels of achievement. The analysis of the data indicate that the students from low and middle achievers have insufficient knowledge of writing narrative. It can be seen from the schematic structure and linguistic features of the texts. Moreover, the students from these levels of achievement still need a lot of writing guidance from the teacher. Furthermore, for high achiever student, the teacher only needs to remind the student to read again the text for several times to avoid minor mistakes. Hence, appropriate teaching techniques and approaches should be implemented.

Keywords: Narrative text, schematic structure, linguistic features

Introduction

Indonesia adopted a genre-based curriculum in 2004 for the teachhing of English in Indonesian schools (Emilia, Hermawan, and Tati, 2008). It covers four English basic skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing which are taught based on the genre. Indeed, the concept of genre to be discussed in this study will be based on one of the views of genre used in applied linguistics, particularlyin SFL theory. In thiscase,genre is considered as text types (Emilia, 2005, 2010).

In English, there are some types of genres, such as narrative, descriptive, and exposition (Biber, 1988 cited in Hyland, 2004). Anderson and Anderson (2003) state that there are two main categories of texts; namely literary and factual. Literary text includes narrative, drama, and poetry;while factual text includes recount, response, explanation, etc. Each text has distinctive generic structures

and major grammatical pattern through which the social functions of the genre are realized in each text type (Lee, 2001).

This study focuses on the analysis of students' ability in writing narrative texts in terms of schematic structure and linguistic features. Thus, the theory that underpins the study and will be discussed below is mainly about Narrative text.

Literature review

Narratives are stories about person or a group of people overcoming problems (Joyce & Feez, 2000, p. 24). They also explain that narratives show how people react to experiences, explore social and cultural values and entertain the audience.Itaims to entertain, to get and retain the attention of the reader or listener of the story (Derewianka, 1990; Joyce &Feez, 2000; Anderson & Anderson, 2003; Gerot & Wignell, 1994).

According Anderson and Anderson (2004) and Joyce and Feez (2000) propose that the structures of narrativesincludes orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda.

Furthermore, like any other texts that have their own linguistic features; Joyce &Feez (2000) also suggest that narratives have some linguistic features as listed below:

a. Specific often individual participants with defined identities. Major participants are human, or sometimes animal with human characteristic.

b. Mainly use action verb (material processes), that describe what happens.

c. Many narratives also use thinking verbs (mental processes) that gives us information about what participants are thinking or feeling, such as wondered, remembered, thought, felt, disliked.

d. Normally use past tense

e. Dialogue often includes and uses a number of saying verb (verbal process) such as said, asked, and replied. The tense may change to the present or future in the dialogue. Sometimes these saying verbs also indicate how something is said.

f. Descriptive language is use to enhance and develop the story by creating image in the reader's mind.

g. Can be written in the first person (I, We) or third person (he, she, they).

As mentioned previously, narratives have several processes that exist in the story to draw the character's experience. These processes can be classified into experimental sub function, a sub function of ideational metafunction, one of the metafunctions of language that SFL argues that all natural languages have (Emilia, 2005). These experiential meanings are realized through the transitivity patterns of the grammar.

Transitivity is a general way how phenomena of the real world are represented as linguistic structures (Gerot and Wignell, 1997, p. 52). These are: process themselves, participants, and circumstances. For example:

- Material process with an Actor and a Goal (active):

she	always	prepare	for breakfast
Actor	**Circ: Frequency**	**Process: material**	**Goal**

Methodology

A qualitative case study was used in this study to discover meaning, investigate the processes, and to gain in-depth understanding of an individual, group, or situation (Lodico, Spaulding, Voegtle, 2006). The subject of this study was a class of eight grade students of one public junior high school in Bandung. Moreover, only nine texts from three students of different levels of achievement were chosen, because in qualitative design the quality of the samples is more important than the number of samples (DePaulo, 2000).

Data Presentation and Discussion

- **Schematic structure and Linguistic features of students'narrative texts**

On the basis of schematic structure, students' narratives are realized as follows:

a. **Low Achiever**

Text 1: orientation^ complication^ resolution

Text 2: orientation^ complication^ resolution

Text 3: orientation^ complication^ resolution^ (coda)

b. Middle achiever

Text 1: orientation^ complication^ resolution

Text 2: orientation^ complication^ sequence of events^ resolution

Text 3: orientation^ complication^ sequence of events^ resolution

c. High achiever

Text 1: orientation^ complication^ resolution^ (coda)

Text 2: orientation^ complication^ sequence of events^ resolution^ (coda)

Text 3: orientation^ complication^ sequence of events^ resolution^ (coda)

In general, all students' categorizations from low, middle, and high achievers have a good control of the obligatory constituent structure of narratives proposed by Joyce & Feez (2000) that includes orientation (*introducing the story*), complication (*problem arise*), and resolution (*the resolution of the problem*). Moreover, in middle achiever student, one of the narrative structures which is sequence of events as proposed by Anderson and Anderson (2003) is found. It is about how the character reacted to the complication in a chronological order. Furthermore, coda as the optional structure of narratives is found in the last text of low achiever and two texts of high achiever. It consists of comment about the future lives of the character such as; *they lived happily ever after*.

Moreover, in terms of the linguistic features, students from low achiever still need more practice in writing a narrative text especially in the language features. In the first text of low achiever, only two linguistic features of narrative exist; they are: the use of specific participants and the use of linking verb to do with time. Moreover, in the second text past tense as one new characteristic of narratives appear. However, this student doesn't show any further progress in his third text. Indeed, this student still face a lot of difficulties in writing narratives and it suggests that "direct telling" (Callahan&Rothery, 1989 cited in Emilia, 2010, p. 95) of linguistic features of narratives more than once for this student since a lot of grammatical errors are still found.

On the contrary, the middle achiever shows better capacity in writing narratives compared with the low achiever. In the first text of middle achiever, six language features of narratives can be found. These are: (1) the use of specific participants, (2) linking verb to do with time, (3) the use of conjunction, (4) the dialogue existence, (5) the use of first person and third person, and (6) the use of processes. Moreover, in the second text, one language feature of narratives which is descriptive language is found. Similar to the low achiever, the middle achiever student did not manage to make her writing better in her third text.

Moreover, in the high achiever student's texts, almost all language features of narratives exist. This student has a proper knowledge of writing narratives. Moreover, the high achiever student also managed to improve the writing ability in the second writing and maintain it in the third writing.

Furthermore, in terms of processes, Table 1 below shows the processes that exist in the students' texts.

Table 1 Processes in students' narratives

Levels of achievement	Texts	Material	Verbal	Mental	Existential	Relational	Behavioural
Low achiever	Text 1	9	1	2	1	1	-
	Text 2	15	3	2	1	-	-
	Text 3	15	1	3	-	-	1
Middle achiever	Text 1	14	3	3	1	2	-
	Text 2	13	7	1	-	1	-
	Text 3	19	-	1	-	-	-
High achiever	Text 1	19	2	2	2	2	-
	Text 2	16	8	2	1	1	-
	Text 3	18	1	1	-	1	-

Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that all students from all levels of achievement have been aware of the obligatory constituent structure of a narrative text that includes orientation, complication, and resolution. Furthermore, in terms of the narrative's language features, different student's from different levels of achievement have different ability in applying the features in the story. For

instance, the low achiever student lacks knowledge of language features of narratives. The middle achiever has a better understanding and high achiever has a good understanding of language features of narratives.

Based on the research findings, discussion, and conclusion, it is suggested that the teachers should apply specific approaches and techniques in teaching writing to improve students' ability particularly in narratives. Moreover, the teachers need to put more effort in teaching low achiever since they need more guidance in writing narratives.

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