

Genre Analysis Approach in Teaching Research Methodology Writing

Sri Widiastuti

State University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia

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Abstract

Applying genre analysis as a rich analytical tool in a study in a state university in Indonesia, the writer has revealed the students' ability and problems in research methodology writing. It is found that most students faced difficulties in presenting argument in terms of justifications of the choice of research methodology to answer the research problems. Furthermore, the students were not aware that there are standard models in research methodology writing, especially in terms of its elements and linguistic features, which are widely accepted in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Those results support the extensive research into academic writing that emphasizes the importance of explicit teaching of the structure of specific written genres to second-language students. As a result, this writing attempts to explore the genre analysis approach in teaching research methodology writing explicitly. Genre analysis approach provides the vocabulary and concepts to explicitly teach the text structures the students are expected to produce in their writing and help them improve their own writing skills to meet particular goals of methodology chapter. Consequently, the students can practice to write a research methodology chapter in English in ways that will allow their work to be accepted in English academic journals, in a world in which academic discourse is dominated.

Keywords: Genre analysis approach, teaching, research methodology writing

A. Case Study

Introduction

Academic writing is arguably the most important language skill to English tertiary students whose grades are largely determined by their performance in written assignments, academic reports, term examinations and graduation theses (Nga 2009). Nevertheless, several studies have revealed that even advanced learners at a high proficiency level of English have problems with written academic discourse at the level of text organization (see Braine 1995; Benson, Haidish 1995; Bloor 1996; Casanave 1995, among others in Jogthong 2001). Several other studies also show that students often experience problems in particular genres, especially in writing a research report as their thesis. Some studies examine the students' problem in writing the whole thesis (see Kareviati 2004; Emilia, Rodliyah, Gustine 2009), while some others focus on a particular section, e.g. abstract (see Abdul, Sadeq 2006), data presentation and discussion (see Bitchener, Basturkmen 2006), and conclusions (see Bunton 2002).

Although many previous studies as mentioned above have investigated the students' problems in thesis writing areas, little research has explored the students' problems in research methodology writing. There is a need to increase research-based knowledge of students' ability and problems in research methodology writing since the researcher has found that in the research site, many students find it is difficult to write it as the third chapter in the research proposal or report.

In respond to the situation, the writer has conducted a case study aiming to investigate the students' ability and problems in research methodology writing in an undergraduate English study program in a university in Indonesia. The study attempts not only to identify the students' ability and problems in writing the chapter, but also the possible causes of the problems and the possible solutions that can be proposed to solve the problems based on the students' work.

Literature Review

There were two broad main theories underpinning the case study, i.e. the theory of genre analysis (to follow Swales 1990, 1996, 2004; Swales, Feak 2004, 2009; Paltridge, Stairfield 2007; Emilia 2008, 2009, among others) and the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (developed by Halliday 1985, 1994; Martin, Rose 2007, 2008; Eggins 1994, 2004, among others).

Genre analysis theory, particularly with English in academic and research setting within the field of English for Specific Purposes is covering the research writing area. SFL theory, the Transitivity system in particular, covers three components, i.e. participants, processes, and circumstances. It offers an analytical tool for close study of the students' research methodology writing in terms of its linguistic features.

Each area of theories is considered relevant to the study as it provides a general guideline by the experts in research methodology writing, especially in terms of its elements and linguistic features to be compared to those written by the students to reveal their ability and problems in research methodology writing.

Methodology

Corresponding to the research questions and purposes of the study, this study employed a case study design for at least three reasons. First, it is concerned with “a small scale, a single case” and focused on one particular instance of educational experience or practice (Stake, 1995; Freebody, 2003 in Emilia, 2005). A single case of this study referred to the students’ ability and problems in research methodology writing at one university in Indonesia. Second, it used multiply data collection techniques and analytic procedures to increase the validity of the study, i.e. the documentation of students’ research methodology writing and interview (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Third, it used text analysis which is also another characteristic of case study design (Travers, 2001). Specifically, this study used text analysis to analyze the students’ research methodology writing.

Findings

- Students’ ability and problems
Despite their ability in the discourse semantic level, most students still have problems in achieving the communicative purpose of research methodology. In general, the students’ main problem was in presenting arguments in terms of justification. Most students have not been able to justify the choice of research methodology to answer the research problems.
- Main causes of the problems
There were two main causes of the problems faced by the students, i.e. the students’ unfamiliarity with the elements and its linguistic features in a research methodology, and the students’ lack of knowledge in applying those elements and linguistic features properly in their research methodology writing.
- The possible solutions
The possible solutions that can be proposed to solve the students’ problems are guidance, assistance, and explicit teaching in writing the elements and linguistic features of research methodology to solve their problems in research methodology writing.

On the basis of findings, several conclusions can be proposed. First, most students faced difficulties in presenting arguments in terms of justifications. It supports the previous studies by Bunton (2002) and Paltridge and Starfield (2007) finding that presenting arguments in terms of justifications is something many second-language students find difficult to do. Second, most students were not aware that there are standard models in writing research methodology, especially in terms of its elements and linguistic features, which are widely accepted in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Finally, the study supports the extensive research into academic writing that emphasizes the importance of explicit teaching of the structure of specific written genres, particularly research methodology, to second-language students (Paltridge and Starfield, 2007; Emilia, 2009; Bailey, 2003; Hyland, 2004, among others).

B. Implementation of Genre Analysis in Teaching Research Methodology Writing

Genre analysis approach can help students consciously structure their texts and develop effective control over different writing tasks for different purposes. It can therefore provide the vocabulary and concepts to explicitly teach the text structures the students are expected to produce in their writing. It places language at the centre of writing development by allowing shared understanding and explicit guidance. Actually, control over the conventions of a genre is a prerequisite for creativity, and students simply require more information on the features that constitute good texts in order to improve their own writing skills. It can thus provide a methodological environment that develops writing skills and encourages creativity. It can provide opportunities for students to reflect on and discuss how language works in a given context and how it can most effectively be employed to meet particular goals (Huang 2001).

In the implementation of genre analysis in teaching research methodology, the teacher can show the students explicitly the purpose, elements, and linguistics features of each chapter in a research proposal or report, particularly the chapter of research methodology. By analysing how writers conventionally sequence material to achieve particular purposes, the teacher can begin to describe each element of the chapter and show how they are realized linguistically. This information can then be used by students as models to develop research methodology writing skills.

The example of material below is designed in the light of genre-based approach. It focuses on the chapter of research methodology. Using the material, the teacher can train the students to write the chapter based on the elements and linguistics features so that it can convey the communicative purpose of the chapter.

Methodology Chapter

Purpose of Methodology

The communicative purpose of a methodology chapter is to describe how the research will be conducted, and how the data will be obtained and analyzed (Emerson 2007). It develops an explanation as to why the research method(s) under discussion have been chosen. This chapter will require a restatement of research aims/questions and involve explaining to the reader how the chosen research method(s) will help answer the research questions (Paltridge, Starfield 2007).

Elements of Methodology

Methodology chapter is not simply a descriptive account of the way in which data is to be collected (Oliver 2004). It should be far more than that. Table 1 will show the elements required in the methodology chapter.

Table 1 Elements of methodology and their purpose
(Modified from Swales, Feak 1990, 2004; Paltridge, Starfield 2007; Emilia 2008)

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Research design	To show the plan for conducting and organizing the study including the steps taken to ensure rigour. This is defined for the methodology used.
Research site and participants	To describe where the study will be conducted, who will participate and how they will be selected.
Data collection techniques	To show the details of what data will be collected and how.
Data analysis	To describe how data will be processed, analyzed, and managed.

Linguistic Features of Methodology

In a methodology chapter, the students need to discuss why a particular method was selected and not others. Thus, the language typically used in methodology chapter develops an explanation as to why the research method(s) under discussion have been chosen (Swales, Feak 2004; Paltridge, Starfield 2007; Emilia 2008). The features of the language can be described as follows.

- Language to build argument and justify the choice of research methodology. For example, the verbs may begin with simple *describe* but quickly move the higher order activities such as *present a more detailed consideration*, and *consider* through to *argue*, emphasizing that in this chapter the writer is building a justification for his/her selection of research design and approach.
- Language to justify the choice of research methods, e.g. the use of organizational pattern- first, second, finally.
- Language to describe the location of the study, background information, procedures and materials allowing for replication, i.e. impersonal language, with verbs in the passive voice, in order to focus on the processes involved (researcher is not mentioned explicitly).

C. Significance of Genre Analysis Approach Implementation

Practically, genre analysis approach provides a general guidance by the experts in research methodology writing, especially in term of its elements and linguistic features.

Professionally, genre analysis approach is beneficial for English study program students and lecturers, especially writing instructors and supervisors.

For students, genre analysis approach provides information to understand how to organize a research methodology chapter in research proposal or report and to better understand the expectations of discourse community to which they will be initiated.

For writing instructors, genre analysis approach can be used to pursue academic writing strategies for foreign language students who seek to write in English in ways that will allow their work to be accepted in English academic journals, in a world in which academic discourse is dominated.

For supervisors, genre analysis approach can be used to help them provide more meaningful feedback to their students and can provide students with better analytic tools for use in writing a research proposal or report.

D. Conclusion

Genre analysis in teaching research methodology writing explicitly can help students consciously structure their texts and develop effective control over their process in writing. It can therefore provide the vocabulary and concepts to explicitly teach the text structures the students are expected to produce in their writing. Consequently, the students can practice to write a research methodology chapter in English in ways that will allow their work to be accepted in English academic journals, in a world in which academic discourse is dominated.

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