

GENRE-BASED CREATIVE WRITING FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, WHY NOT?

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Abstract: Acceleration programs are tailored for gifted and talented students who are required to complete their study within two years. In Indonesia, this program is implemented at both senior and junior high schools. It is a big challenge for both teachers and students to cover all the required materials within this time frame. Thus, both teachers and students should have a vested interest in optimizing their teaching and learning programs. Particularly in English instruction, within 2 years, students should be well equipped. To meet this need, creative writing is one of the strategies needed for both English teachers and for acceleration students to take a challenge and get experiences in writing activity based on genre-based learning. Genre-based creative writing helps students dig up creativity, build motivation to work in team, and create a book by themselves. This learning model follows two major steps: writing-with-the class stage and cooperative-writing stage. Additional merit of this writing activity is that the students engage in entrepreneurship, and this allows for raising funds for charity to children with cancer and school music project. The genre-based creative writing project shows that all the students performed their creative writing very well. This also contributes to the development of the students' creativity, motivation and teamwork.

Keywords: *creative writing; genre-based learning; gifted students; creativity; motivation; teamwork*

Introduction

Gifted and talented children have different style in language learning. They need challenge in getting high achievement. They need something more different with normal children. These kind of learners need something to fulfill their needs. That is why the gifted learners need sophisticated curriculum and inclusive framework. This phenomenon describes about gifted children in their learning, experts, parents noted these notions in many years. They have been tried to clarify the curriculum and to enhance the gifted learner's curriculum.

My experience in 8 years in teaching gifted and talented learners, they have different style in learning English. They have excellent in doing some practices. They have good background knowledge of English and they have good task commitment. So, it is not difficult to teach them. They, most of them, have excellent capability in English. On the other hand, they are lack of patience, lack of creativity, lack of motivation and teamwork. The weaknesses comes from most of students are as a single child in their family, their parents give much more attention, and some of them do not have any chance to have friends in the previous years.

Despite having those weaknesses, gifted learners have the chance to have better capability both in English and their capability in building their creativity, motivation and their teamwork. These integrated learning need an inclusive syllabus to achieve all requirements above. Step by step they do the activities in doing creative writing. They have fun with their friends though they have tough tasks to do. They have better communication with their friends by having discussion, exchange ideas, and do the tasks in team.

The activity of the gifted and talented learners resulted in a big project. After finishing their creative writing, then it continued to compile their writings. They felt so satisfied to do their writings. They create a story book. It was printed in 500 copies. The students sold it for their school music project. It resulted in entrepreneur activities. At the end, the creative writing the gifted students did, are not only about English learning, but also gave values for their personality, creativity, motivation, teamwork, and entrepreneurship. The creative things that develop between gifted learners and me has counterpart in language learning classroom-genre based creative writing.

On the basis of the reasons above, in the next session, I will outline a brief genre-based writing cycle and the activity based on the genre-based writing along with modifications that I have made in my own writing classes to the genre-based approach to the teaching writing. The modification include (1)building knowledge of the genre; (2) exploring genre cooperatively along with student-student and teacher-student conference; (3)applying cooperative writing task together with student-student and teacher-student conferences; (4)relating genre-based writing with values related to entrepreneurship.

Genre-Based Writing

Generally, writing is the most difficult skill to do in English language learning. Students have no ideas to write, composing sentences, create comprehensive paragraph are not easy for them. In this part, teacher take

part as a facilitator and motivator how students can have better in doing writing. There are two approaches that well-known among experts and teachers, those are process based and genre based approach. In this time, I would like to dig up how to teach creative writing using genre- based approach.

There are two fundamental in rationale the genre-based writing, cognitive and social aspect. The focus of cognitive aspects means that teacher turns the classroom into communities of learners where the focus of writing pedagogy shifts from written products to writing as a process. At the same time, ways of making knowledge are viewed from collaborative or social perspective in which students are perceived as participating in social interaction in the classroom (Widodo, 2006).

The term 'genre' based on Swales (1990) as 'a class of communicative events, the members of which share some sets of communicative purpose'. In genre based approach, teacher required to get learners to write or produce a text or a composition on the basis of purpose, organization and audience (Paltridge, 2001). In the language learning, students write a composition by having basic knowledge in terms of language use, grammar, and glossaries related to the composition they write about. This activity guided by teacher or their competent peers.

There are number of reasons why I used genre based approach in my writing class. This is related to the process and the product. Firstly, the students will be more comprehend the characteristics of the composition that they will write about. So the students really understand how to write a composition guided by the teacher. Secondly, students learn from the teacher as the competent person in the class. After having some information and knowledge, then the students have a discussion to do joint text construction and develop it into composition which based on the purpose, audience and organization. By having these two reasons, it is acknowledged that the students get not only the experience but also the process how to compose a writing based on genre based approach.

Genre based writing driven the teaching learning process into successful writing creation. According to Hyland (2007) genre based approach offers 'real benefits' to language learners because it gives importance of language, content and context. Meanwhile, there are two main cycles in this writing process, writing with the class and writing independently (Derewianka,1991; Feez, 1998; Hyland, 2003; Widodo, 2006). In the two cycle each has the associated activities, writing with the class: (1) building knowledge of the field, (2) exploring the genre, (3) joint text construction, then writing independently: (1) building knowledge of the field, (2) drafting, revising, and conferencing, and (3) editing and publishing (Widodo, 2006).

How to Begin Genre Based Writing in English Language Class

The following steps help you to institute genre based creative writing in the classroom:

Writing-with the class stage

(1) building knowledge of the field

Activate and engages the students schema about writing to brainstorming the essential activity in writing. This is to develop the students in encouraging them to write. The teacher create such kind of discussion about the students experience in writing composition.

(2) exploring the genre

Choose what kind of text types that you want your students do for the genre based writing tasks. This based on the syllabus of the class. There are 6 text-types in exploring the genre. They are : narrative (to tell stories to entertain readers); recounts (to reconstruct past experience by retelling events); procedures (to how processes or events are achieved and something is done); explanation (to tell how or why something work; information reports (to present factual information about a class of things and their characteristics); and arguments/exposition (to provide reasons for a state of affairs). In this phase, the teacher explains about the characteristics, purpose, text-form, text organization and grammatical items. All the activities give understanding of the text features.

(3) joint text construction

Give example how to write a composition and in the same time, students do writing. In this part, teacher helps students to write a composition and students learn how to write a composition. In this phase, students need intervention and guidance from the teacher. These are related to the text types and grammatical features of the composition written by the students.

Cooperative Writing Stage

(4) Forming the group

Based on my experience, three students in a group work is the most effective. There are two different styles in forming the group: teacher-chosen and student-chosen. At first, teacher asks the students what they want to choose in forming the group. In forming effective group, teacher will choose leaders for each group. The requirements depend on the language proficiency. Then, the leaders can choose their partner or have further discussion with all students.

(5) Brainstorming and outlining ideas

To begin with, students read some books compositions related to the topic. They have freedom to choose what they read. This is for brainstorming and finding ideas in writing composition.

Then, students have a discussion about the theme they choose, the problem, and the target audience. During the discussion, teacher monitors and gives some guidance to develop students outline.

Engaging Students Creativity in Genre Based Writing with Entrepreneurship

The acceleration-class students have two years in having learning process. It needs some modification in giving them essential material. It should give them meaningful process in their learning time. It is not only the material but also the values inside the learning process.

Their age is around 13-15 years old when they are in the third grade of senior high school. Meanwhile, the normal students are about 15-16 years old. So, it needs some special treatments for them to have meaningful process for their future.

Our school conducted this acceleration class since 1998. This class is for gifted and talented students. The requirements are based on student' report, recommendation from friends and parents, the psychological tests done by student candidate before joining the class. It is not only fulfilling the tests, but also having discussion with the candidate and also with their parents. These kinds of requirements needed in deciding the right candidate in acceleration class. These kind of tests also used to differentiate between the students with 'gifted' and 'talented'. The 'gifted' something granted rather than gained. The 'talented' term, something for which there seems to be no clear origin or cause. It needs support from parents, enjoyed stimulating environment and competent teachers (Lambert, 2010).

Though there are a lot of controversial about the term of 'gifted and talented' students and it needs a special treatment in conducting the special treatment for them, our school believes that we facilitate the learners with their gift. Based on the research held by Shaine (2010) gifted children frequently learn that the schools and the society behind the schools have no intention of meeting their needs. They feel neglected, at best, and active antipathy in many cases. They feel alienated from society, from their classmates, and often even from themselves. That is why, we conduct some program to eliminate the disadvantages being a gifted and talented students. We create a program to help the students to be creative, have motivation, to be involved in their community by having good teamwork and they feel comfortable to live with society. We engage the genre based writing with entrepreneurship.

There are six main activities doing this program for gifted and talented students:

Outline conferencing: there are five groups have outlined their ideas for narrative composition. They have specific audience for their stories, that is for children. Each of the group has to present their outlines to the class. This activity has two benefits: the presentation and the feedback. Also this will lead the students to be creative and have a better view in writing narrative. After this process is completed, the teacher gives feedback for each group.

Drafting: The students develop their ideas. They create an imaginary narrative. They divide the story into three parts introductory paragraph(s), body paragraph(s), and closing paragraph(s). Each student in a group has a task to write a part of narrative. This lead students to be creative. Then, after that they compile and try to check the vocabulary used and grammatical error.

Revising: A further stage in writing cooperatively is revising. Students try to make their composition become in perfect. There are two revisions, first from their peer group and second from the teacher. This activity has purpose to eliminate errors in grammar, vocabulary, composition, and also the content of the story.

Illustrating and publishing: in the last stage, the students prepare some illustration to support their own story. After having some discussion, they also create an illustration for their book cover. The compile stories are ready to publish. We have a decision to print in 500 copies.

Evaluating and reflecting: assessment and evaluation need to be carried out. In this case, the teacher assesses students' compositions on the basis of the process and the product. The process in this case related to the attitudes of each student in doing the task in group: teamwork, motivation, and creativity. Then, the product is the story: content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary.

A post-writing stage: this stage gives space and chance for students to be creative in selling the book and do teamwork to do a project. They promote their book through direct selling and through social media (facebook and twitter). They also create poster to advertise the book. They sell their book @50.000 IDR. It is a wonderful journey for them that they can sell all 500 copies. The profits for this project are for raising funds for charity to children with cancer and school music project.

Conclusion

That is the first wonder creation of acceleration class students. There are 15 students who created the works. Their ages are around 13-15 years old.

The book came from the idea of writing narration. Those are two of the writing abilities that the students should have. There are some steps of creating the story book. First, they learn the theory and how to write a good narration. Second, they read some stories as the basic examples how to have imagination. Third, they make some team work and have a discussion between them. Fourth, they start to have rough plots based on their imagination. Fifth, they turn into the solid story. Sixth, they had to share the stories each other orally.

The stories were then compiled into an analogy. Then we had the idea to add with some illustrations to the stories. The design and the cover had designed by the students. The book was then printed into 500 copies and the students made some posters to advertise their book. The book was sold and some of the profits they made were for charity for children with cancer and their school music and art project. There are three main objectives of this creation. First, students understand and able to write and also retell a narration. Second, they understand and are able to create a poster and advertise the book. Third, they make teamwork and motivation to do all the things together.

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