Genre Based Approach for Teaching of English

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Abstract:

Language teaching approaches and methods have cast light on the aspects of language teaching in theory and practice. There are many well known methods and approaches in teaching English among which each of it had its own significance. But one among them is 'Genre Based Approach' which could not find its way and stand in many Indian studies. This paper introduces the term Genre, Genre Based approach, highlights its importance and limitations, along with its stages in teaching English language as a skill and subject in specific, in order to have a better understanding and application in the future practice of teaching English.

Key Words: *Teaching Methods and Approaches, Genre, Genre Based Approach*

1. Introduction:

In a Position Paper by National Focus Group on Teaching of Englishpublished by the NCERT, it has emphasized that the Approaches and methods need not be exclusive but may be mutually supportive within a broad cognitive philosophy (incorporating Vygotskian, Chomskyan, and Piagetian principles). (pp.v). The goals for a language curriculum (Sec. II) are twofold: attainment of a basic proficiency, such as is acquired in natural language learning, and the development of language into an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition through, for example, literacy. This argues for an across-the-curriculum approach that breaks down the barriers between English and other subjects, and other Indian languages. Taking these statements and observations as the initiative, it is to tell that besides few well known and popular, prominent methods and approaches in teaching of English like: The Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Bilingual Method, Dr. Michael West's The New Method, Suggestopedia, Reading Method, The Behaviourist – Structuralist Paradigm (The Structural Approach, The Audio Lingual Method, The Humanistic Approach (Community Language Learning and Total Physical Response), The Structural Approach, The Structural – Oral – Situational Approach, Communicative Language Teaching, The Constructivist Paradigm (The Discourse Perspective in Constructivism and Vygotsky's Theory in Social Constructivism), there is an another approach of teaching English known as 'Genre Based Approach', which took its origin in 1960's in Australia and America, later had became popular during 1970's and 80's, and reached its heights in 1990's to 2000.

2. Definitions of Genre:

Many experts try to introduce and present their concept about genre. According to Christie (2005:233) argues, "Genre is a technical tem for a particular instance of a text type." In addition, Hyland (2007:4) defines, "Genre is a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations." In line with these, Nunan (1999:308) also stated: "Genre is a purposeful, socially constructed oral or written communicative event, such as narrative, a casual conversation, a poem, a recipe, or a description. Different genres are characterized by a particular structure or stages, and grammatical forms that reflect the communicative purpose of the genre in question." Furthermore, Knapp and Watkins (2009:21) argue: "Genre is an organizing concept for our culture practices, any field of genres constitutes a network of contrasts according to a variety of parameters, genre is a place occasion, function, behavior, and interactional structure; it is very rarely useful to think of it is a kind of 'text', genre is culture competence involves knowing the appropriateness principle for any genre, knowing the kind of margin you have with it, being able to vary it, knowing how to shift from one to another and how many factors would be involve in any such shift." In relation to several

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definitions above, Derewianka (1990) gives a simple definition that genre can be defined as, "The schematic structure of a text which helps it to achieve its purpose." Dealing with several definitions above, the writer can infer that genre is a term for an organized concept and technique which has purposeful and meaningful constructed activities, and it also has grammatical forms, stages and aimed orientation to create a particular text types both in oral and written according to the situations.

3. Categories of Genre:

A Genre may fall under one of two categories: fiction and non-fiction. Any genre can be either a work of fiction (nonfactual descriptions and events invented by the author) or a work of nonfiction (a communication in which descriptions and events are understood to be factual)

4. School Types:

In the western countries, "genre" or "text-type", either spoken or written, is often identified or grouped according to its primary social purposes. According to Swale (1990), the genres which share the same purposes belong to the same text-types. Derewianka (1990) identified further six main school types according to their primary social purposes:
(1) Narratives: To tell a story, usually to entertain;
(2) Recount: To tell what happened;
(3)Information reports: To provide factual information;
(4) Instruction: To tell the listeners or readers what to do;
(5) Explanation: To explain why or how something happens;
(6) Expository texts: To present or argue a viewpoint.

These social purposes of the text-genres in turn decide the linguistic inputs of the text (i.e. their linguistic conventions, often in form of schematic structure and linguistic features).

But, through the observations made above it can be claimed that 'Genre' is easier to exemplify than to define. The word was traditionally and exclusively used to indicate different kinds of literary and artistic works. Etymologically, the word 'genre' is derived from the French language meaning 'form' or 'type'. Then, originally, the word 'genre' which is also used in Biology science means 'genus' referring

to the classification of flora and fauna (Stokes, 2006; Himawan, 2007). This means that the early concept of genre is to classify the species into a certain class due to its typical similar characteristics (Dirgeyasa, 2015). After that, the use of genre developed overtime, genre is applied in any various aspects of life such film, music, literature, etc. In music, for example, genre is used to refer any music categories such as pop, gospel classic, R n B, etc, whereas in movie, that there are also many types of genre like drama, western, science picture, and so forth. In literature it is often heard the words like novel, drama, poetry etc. In short, it can be simply said that genre means type or kind, or class of a particular thing or object. Then recently, genre is also used in linguistics study. In linguistic study, genre becomes a kind language object to study. As a matter of fact, the study of genre in linguistics literacy is based on Systemic Functional Linguistic-SFL (Halliday, 1978; Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2003). Then, Christie dan Martin (2000) adds that linguistic functional becomes a basic and fundamental reference in the framework of the usage of the language in term of genre. So what is genre in term of the language and linguistics? Martin (1999) states that genre is communication activity having and orienting goal. Then, Swales (1990) simply defines genre is a communication event in which the members have a set of communication goal. By referring two statements above, it can be said that genre is a process of communication which has a certain goal (goal oriented) for its members in a certain event of communication due to certain social context. Genre is a matter of communication event by social context. Consequently, the different social context then, tends to lead to different genre. In line with the concept of genre, then, Christie dan Martin (2000) adds states that genre is the particular usage of the language in a certain social circumstance such as interview genre, media genre, or advertment genre, and so forth. In addition (Halliday and Hasan, 1989) as quoted by (Hyland, 2003) stated that: This theory addresses the relationship between language and its social functions and sets out to show language a system from which users make choices to express meaning. Halliday argues that the language users have to use and develop the specific ways of using language to accomplish goals, which means that texts are related to social context and the other texts. Broadly, when a set of

texts share the same purpose, they will often share the same structure, and thus, they belong to the same genre.

5. Approaches to Genre:

There are currently three main approaches to genre analysis in the area of language teaching and learning; (1) the English as Specific Purpose School (ESP), (2) the Systematic Functional Linguistics School (SFL), and (3) the New Rhetoric School (NR). The most influential ESP genre analysis framework has been established by John Swales (1990: 24) who defines genre as "a class of communicative events with some shared set of communicative purposes." His definition of genre offers the basic idea that most genres use conventions or rules related to communicative purposes, as well as to certain discourse communities. Swales' main idea is that texts are conventionally divided into elements or stages that serve functions for the writer and the community. These stages or elements are called moves, which are defined as a "bounded communicative act that is designed to achieve one main communicative objective" (Swales & Feak 2000). Swales' idea of genre has been extremely influential in the ESP work on genre analysis. The SFL school considers genre as "a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers (writers) engage as members of culture" (Martin 1984: 19), and emphasizes the purposeful, interactive, and sequential character of different genres. Jim Martin, a leading researcher of the SFL School, suggests the systematic perspective on genre analysis. He argues that genres have organizational, staged structures that might include a typical beginning, middle, and end. Therefore, texts, spoken or written, can achieve their particular goal through these stages. Swales and Martin share an essential view point that genre is a category that describes the relation of the social purpose of text to language structure. They point out that the communicative purposes and structural features should be identified when genres are used in writing classes, because all genres "control a set of communicative purpose within certain social situations and each genre has its own structural quality according to those communicative purposes" (Kay & Dudley-Evans 1998: 310). Genre, according to NR researchers, is "a nexus between an individual's actions and a socially defined context" (Devitt 2004: 27).Consequently, NR researchers mainly focus on the social situations and the ideological, social and physical contexts in which genres perform their social purposes (Prior 1998: 114). They consider the relationship between text and context in terms of how the "context of culture" and "context of situation" impact textual structures and choices in grammar and vocabulary. The ESP researchers also highlight the importance of social and cultural context in their descriptions and explanations of genres, discussing how they influence on the language features of a text. These perspectives of genre analysis mentioned above have much in common, with considerable and important overlap among them, although they deal with very different groups of learners and have different theoretical concerns (Swales & Hyon 1994). They show similar interest in the systematic and staged structure of the text and contribute to the analysis of writing as a social and communicative action.

6. Characteristics of the Genre-Based Approach:

First, the genre-based approach emphasizes the importance of exploring the social and cultural context of language use in spoken or written communication, on a piece of writing. The context decides the purpose of a text, an overall structure of a text in terms of language features and text features often in the form of linguistic conventions (Hammond and Derewianka, 2001; Hyon, 1996).

Second, this approach highlights the magnitude of the readers and the linguistic conventions that a piece of writing needs to follow in order to be successfully accepted by its readership (Muncie, 2002). According to this approach, any student who wants to be successful in joining a particular English-language discourse community, he or she will need to be able to produce texts which fulfill the expectations of its readers in regards to grammar, organization, and content.

Third, it underscores that Communication either spoken or writtenis a social activity. This notion originated from the social-cultural theory initiated by Vygotsky (1978). According to this theory, knowledge is best constructed when learners collaborate together, support one another to encourage new ways to form, construct and reflect on new knowledge. In this case, social interactions and participation of group members play a key role in

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developing new knowledge. In the communication classes, students are encouraged to participate in the activities of meaning exchange and negotiation with their more capable people such as peers and teacher. Learning communication in this way, as it is believed, can remove the feeling of isolation which bothers many learners when communicate and at the same time, help student writers have positive reinforcements about the knowledge of linguistics, content and ideas in the composing of sppech and texts.

Fourth, a genre-based approach to writing instruction looks beyond subject content, composing processes and linguistic forms to see a text as attempts to communicate with readers. This approach is concerned with teaching learners how to use language patterns to accomplish coherent, purposeful poetry or prose writing. Its central belief is that "we do not just to write, we write something to communicate and to achieve some purpose" (Hyland, 2003, p. 18). In this approach, student writers are requested to consider the overall social purposes of a text into account when composing a text.

Fifth, this approach emphasizes the important role of writer-reader interaction on a piece of writing (Reid, 1995). Firstly, student writer in this approach is requested to specify or think about the intended and/or potential readers when writing in order to be able to select or anticipate appropriate content, language and levels of formality. He or she should always ask himself or herself some questions such as who will be my intended readers?, who might be interested in reading my text?, what are their beliefs about a good piece of writing?, what are their levels of English proficiency? and what are their educational and cultural backgrounds?, etc. Similarly, readers when approaching the text should also ask themselves some questions such as for what purposes does this writer write this piece of writing?, what is the writer's viewpoint when writing the text?, what kinds of language features and organization does he/she use in the text?, and etc. To recap, there always exist an interaction between writer and its readers in the form of written communication despite the absence of readers.

Sixth, teacher's role in this approach is viewed as authoritativeness rather than authoritarian (Rothery, 1996). As an expert in the classroom, the teacher provides students with systematic guidance and careful support through various activities so that students ultimately gain the control of communication genres. At the same time, he/she also recognizes the importance of students' contributions to the teaching-learning process.

Last but not least, the genre-based approach emphasizes the explicit teaching of the linguistic conventions of the genre for Second Language novice student writers in communication (Christie, 1990). It is argued that students cannot produce a particular text-type successfully if they are not taught explicitly about linguistic conventions of that text-type with respect to language features and schematic structure. Therefore, making known these conventions to student writers; especially at the first stage of the instructional modules of particular text-types is a very important task of genre-based teachers. In the classroom, teacher following genre orientation often employs the teaching-learning cycle which comprises the three phases, namely, modeling of a "sample expert" text, joint-negotiation of text with teacher, and independent construction of text by individual student (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993).

7. Stages of the teaching or learning cyclethrough Genre Based Approach:

There are five stages of teaching English using Genre Based Approach. They are:
a) Building the context
b) Modeling and Deconstructing the text,
c) Joint construction of the text,
d) Independent construction of the text and
e) Linking related texts and Comparison or Evaluation

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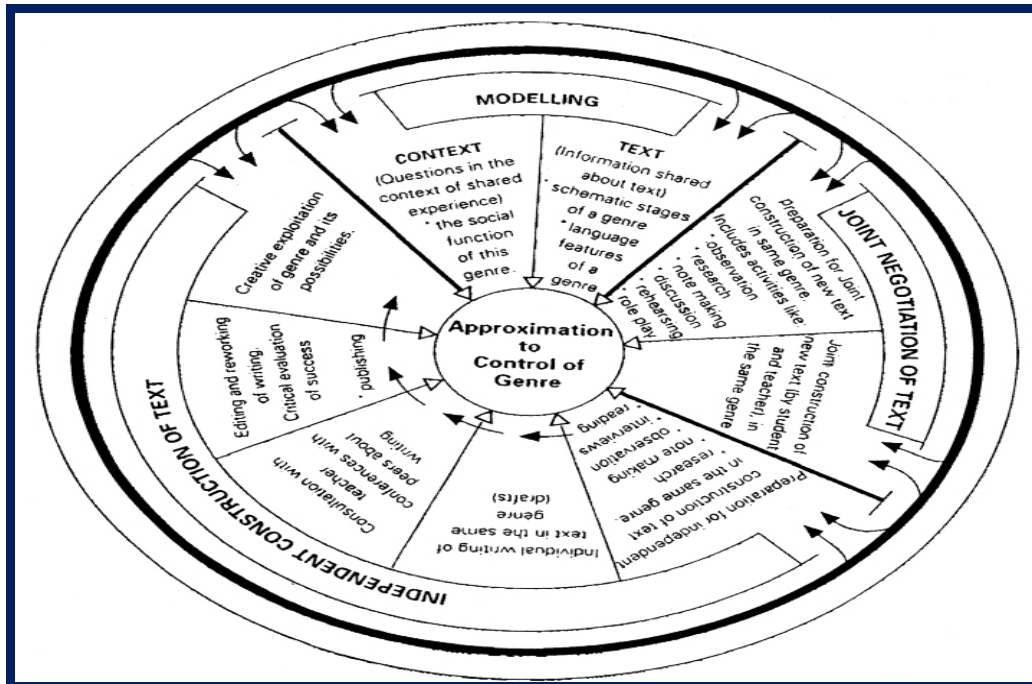### The Rothery's Model of genre teaching and learning cycle

Figure 1.The Wheel Model of Teaching and Learning Cycle (as cited in Ahn, 2012, P.13)

1. Building the Context

In this stage student:

1. Are introduced to the social context of an authentic model of the text - type being studied

2. Explore feature of the general cultural context in which the text type is used and the social purposes the text - type achieves

3. Explore the immediate context of situation by investigating the register of a model text which has been selected on the basic of the course objective and learner need.

2. Modeling and Deconstructing the Text

In this stage student:

1. Investigate the structural pattern and language feature of the model

2. Compare the model with other examples of the text – type

3. Joint Construction of the Text

In this stage:

1. Students begin to contribute to the construction of whole examples of the text-type.

2. The teacher gradually reduces the contribution to text construction, as the students move closer to being able to control the text-type independently.

4. Independent construction of the text

In this stage:

1. Students work independently with the text

2. Learner performances are used for achievement assessment

5. Linking to related texts

In this stage students investigate what they have learnt in this teaching/learning cycle can be related to:

1. Other texts in the same or similar contexts

2. Future or past cycles of teaching and learning

8. Benefits and Limitations of Genre-based approach:

8.1. **Benefits of Genre-based approach:** An important benefit of genre-based approach in L2 communicationeither spoken or written is that it provides a systematic framework to follow for L2 students who have only limited exposure to authentic English writing. In genre- based approach, communicationeither spoken or written is considered the students' reproduction of text based on the genre offered by the teacher. As a result, genre is expected to offer a process of production of a text, according to genre, so the guided process may be favored over the product. It is also believed that it is through imitation and

exploration of different kinds of models that the learners can improve their writing skills. Accordingly, learners should be exposed to as many examples of the same genre as possible to develop their ability to write a particular genre. Through repetitive exposure to similar texts, the learners can detect "the specialized configurations of that genre," and they also can activate their memories of prior reading and writing experiences whenever they facethe task of creating a new piece in a familiar genre (Badger & White 2000: 156). Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998) have argued that the genre as a model for writing helps free students from their severe worries over communication either in written or spoken. Especially for L2 learners at beginning or intermediate levels of proficiency, they mentioned it is more suitable than for those at advanced levels in that it releases students from deep anxiety about their writing tasks. When people learn something new, they are necessarily inclined to look for some cases that they can refer to or consider as samples. There is no doubt that writing tasks can be more demanding and challenging than other language skills, so students at low level of proficiency absolutely need something they can depend on.In the genre- based approach, which follows "a wheel model of a teaching-learning cycle" Hammond (1987: 167, 2001: 35) proposed, that the teacher gives a practical and effective guideline to students, offering the models and examples showing specifically what they have to do linguistically. As Swales (1990) pointed out, rhetorical instruction is essential in writing improvement as a prior knowledge, which makes it easier for students to produce acceptable structures in their writing tasks. The teacher'smeaningful assistance can facilitate students' recognition of how and why linguistic conventions are employed for particular rhetorical effects. In a nutshell, genre has been proved to serve as an influential and useful tool for both learning and teaching.

8.2. Limitations of Genre-based approach: John Swales (2000) summarizes some concerns that have been expressed in relation to genre-based teaching. The first of these is that a genre-based approach may see learners as a largely passive and limit student expression through its use of model texts and its excessive focus on audience expectations. This concern results from the fact that a genre can be a useful guideline or frame to the writers but also be an unwelcome tool of repression of creative thinking and expression. Therefore genre-based teaching must be carefully approached by both teachers and students. The difficulty to choose both authentic and suitable samples for learners within a specific genre is another problem. There is a wide variety of sample texts within a particular genre. Especially for non-native teachers, it is not easy to obtain authentic language samples, because their knowledge of authentic language use might be limited and students also have difficulty in finding a real-life audience for their writing works. Genre-mixing also makes teaching based on genre analysis complex. One genre may be embedded in another. For example, a letter, a story, or a newspaper article may be used for another conventionally distinct genre, such as an advertisement to sell a product or a job advertisement (Bhatia 1997). Equally, genre mixing may occur in a book review, which describes and evaluates a book and also promotes it. In order to overcome those obstacles to genre-based teaching, the role of teachers is significantly emphasized. The success of genre-based approach can be said to depend on teachers' understanding and application of genres.

9. Conclusion:

Genre Based Approach is also an efficient approach in teahing english for all its skills LSRW, needed for one's communication in English on par with all the other methods and approaches available at hand in the teaching of English.

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