THE APPLICATION OF SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR ON TEACHING THE NARRATIVE WRITING FOR EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Many studies concerning the application of a systemic functional grammar approach on English as Foreign Language teaching prove that teaching English for non-English speaking students has a goal to make the students able to use English not only grammatically correct but also contextually appropriate. This study aims to apply the systemic functional grammar on teaching writing, especially on teaching narrative writing for senior high school students in Semarang. The purpose of the study is to evaluate whether the application of the systemic functional grammar can help the students to produce English narrative texts which are contextually appropriate. Respondents of the research are three students of SMA N 9 Semarang, one of the public senior high schools in Semarang. Data of the research are narrative texts produced by the respondents before and after the application of the systemic functional grammar. The research also used the secondary data or supporting data, which are the opinion of the students about the application of the systemic functional grammar in developing their writing skill.

Keywords: *English as foreign language (EFL), systemic functional grammar, contextual approach, narrative genre*

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of many research projects proposing approaches to increase the English writing competence of of the Indonesian students may imply that the students are still facing the difficulty in the writing skill. Observing and reading the research reports, I assume that the Indonesian students have at least two kinds of difficulty. First, they have problems relating to the way they have to start and to develop writing. Second, they find the difficulty to use English correctly. Therefore, instead of the conventional one, the alternative approaches such as using a series of pictures, inquiry model, and discussion model have been proposed. The effectiveness of the approached is, so far, questionable.

On the other hand, many researchers, such as Donohue (2012), Gardner (2012) Arancón (2013), Syarifah and Gunawan (2015), and de Oliveira (2015), have been interesting in applying the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to develop and to improve the writing skill of both the native and the EFL students. Their studies showed that SFL as the genre theory can help the students to use language, especially English, based on the situational context. That is why, the application of the SFL will result the writing which is context based. Following their studies, I would like to explore to what extent the SFL can help the Indonesian students to improve their English writing.

The reason why the application of SFL is so effective in enhancing writing skill is that the SFL provides instruments to produce as well as to interpret text that is related to its context (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). Christie (2004:15), quoting Halliday, McIntosh & Strevens, (1964:226), said that instead of prescriptive and descriptive approaches, SFL offers productive approach of a language teaching, that accommodates students' experience as resource in using language. Using SFL approach, students use language to make meaning based on their experience structured in the situational context. In other words, SFL pays not only on the grammaticality of the text, but also on the way the text producer or the text receiver uses the language to make meaning. According to the SFL approach, a language has a potential to express three kinds of meaning, those are ideational, interpersonal, and textual meaning (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). Using the approach, students are taught to use appropriate lexicogrammars to produce a written or spoken text considering what experience represented (ideational meaning), what kinds of social relation constructed (interpersonal meaning), and how to organize the ideational and interpersonal meaning (textual meaning) (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). The such meaning, known as metafunction, is then related to the register or situational context of discourse consisting of field, tenor, and mode. In teaching writing, a teacher must encourage his/her students not only to produce a grammatical text, but also to be aware what is the purpose of the text. Based on the productive approach of the language teaching, the purpose of teaching writing is to make students to be able to use language (lexicogrammars) appropriately to produce a text with a certain purpose or certain genre using a certain register configuration (see Eggins 2005:56-57).

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study concerning the application of the SFL approach on writing skill of EFL students. I use three senior high school students from SMAN 9 Semarang as respondents. They are Ardhita Martha, Elizabeth Putri Kinanti, and Kaka Rago Zacky. Using quasi- experimental research, I conducted five day research after getting permission from the teacher of the students. Each day, I need two hours to do the research. On the first day, I came to class to explain the purpose of my research, the benefit of the experiment to the students, and what should they do during the five days. I also asked them to write the folklore text they understand as a kind of narrative text. They were permitted to use dictionary. At the end of the first session, I asked them to write what they know about a narrative text and what problems they face when writing a narrative text. On the second, third, and fourth days, I taught them how to develop and improve their writing using the SFL approach. I asked them to identify the purpose of writing a narrative text. I taught them how to build characterization through developing nominal group to construct participants and circumstance. I also taught them how to develop and organize the events in a narrative text through choosing appropriate verbs and connector. On the fifth day, I asked them to revise their first draft based on the SFL approach and to express their opinion about applying the SFL. Using the comparative method, I compare the first and the second draft of each writing. The elements I focused on is whether or not the students can develop the schematic structure of narrative using the appropriate lexicogrammars. In this study, I did not pay attention to the grammatical errors of the data. This is due to the limited time of the research.

ANALYSIS

As mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of the research is to examine the application of the SFL approach to improve the writing skill of the EFL students. Therefore, I devide the discusson of the data analysis into two parts: the first draft and the revised draft. Comparation of the first and second draft will show whether or not there is the effectiveness of the approach.

As mentioned before, the first draft was written in the first meeting, just after the researcher had explained the aim and the plan of the research. The respondents were permitted to use a dictionary. They used a notebook or a handphone as a tool to write. They have 90 minutes to produce their writing. Due to the research ethic, I don't use the name of respondents, but I use 'number' of the respondents. Respondent 1 (R1) wrote "Jaka Tarub", respondent 2 (R2) wrote "Timun Mas", and respondent 3 (R3) wrote "Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih". The result of the first draft analysis is resumed in the following table.

Table 1: The Result of the First Draft Analysis

Number of Respondent	No. of clauses	Narrative structure	Character development	Setting development	Evaluation	Events and existences arrangement
R1	37	O - C- R- C- R- C- R	Noun, Pron,. Relational , behavioral	Noun, noun group	No	Processes: Material, Mental Circumstances: Temp. , Spat., Manner
R2	24	O - C- R- C- R- C- R	Noun, Pron,. Relational ,	Noun, noun group,	No	Processes: Material,Mental Verbal, Relational Circumstances: Temp., Spat., Manner
R3	19	O – C - R	Noun, Pron,. Relational	Noun, noun group,	No	Processes: Material, Verbal, Relational Circumstances: Temp., Spat., Manner

The table shows that the respondents produced different number of clauses. The number of clauses has impact on the narrative structure they built. R1 and R2 who produced 37 and 24 clauses respectively built the narrative structure structure consisting of more than one complication – resolution configuration, while R3 who only produced 19 clauses constructed only one configuration. Almost all the clauses are in simple clauses. As we see in the table, there is no evaluative clause in the three texts. It means that the respondents only told the stories without expressing their explicit appraisal. From the table we can also see the way the respondents created the elements of narrative, those are the characterization, setting development, and plot development. In the first draft, the respondents only used noun or pronoun

to refer the characters of the story, and they used relational processes in very limited numbers to characterize the main characters. It means that the respondents have not maximally developed the characterization yet. The similar case happens to the development of setting. The respondents seems do not pay attention to the importance of developing setting. They portraited setting embedded to the events narration, using temporal and spatial circumstances. The dominant way the respondents represented the three stories (plot) is through exploiting the material and mental processes. Using the such model, they chose to tell only what the characters do physically and what they think, perceive, and feel mentally. The verbal activity is less developed. The respondents didn't also pay the attention to the importance of developing circumstance of manner that portraited the way the characters do the actions. It can also function to build the characterization implicitly.

To find the information about their difficulties and their preliminary knowledge in writing a narrative text, I then asked the respondents what problems they face when they write a narrative text. Generally, they find the difficulty in realizing the idea, starting to write, using correct grammar, and selecting vocabularies. They have understood the structure of a narrative text, but they find the difficulty in expressing the structure in discourse. The steps they did in writing is deciding topic and writing draft. The such method is the source of their problems in writing. Based on the result of the first draft and the direct interview, I, then, informed the respondents how to develop and improved their writing, using the SFL approach.

The first step that they have to understand is the features of the narrative genre, covering the social purpose, the generic structure, and the dominant lexicogrammars (Eggins, 2005). They have to know that the social functions of narrative text are to amuse, to entertain and to deal with actual or vicarious experience in differet ways, so they have to select structures and vocabularies that are potential to attrack readers. It can be done through selecting inversion structure, or placing unmarked theme. Regarding the generic structure of the text, I pay the attention on the way they have to develop characterization and setting. I asked them to list the characters they wanted to narrate. Then, I asked them to list the personalities of the characters and the physical appearance they want to construct. I also asked them to list the activities the characters do, what/who is/are the goal, when, where, how, and why the activities are conducted. The next step they have to do is to articulate all the information using the appropriate lexicogrammar. I taught them the concept of transitivity and mood system in a simple way to realize the meaning. After that, they have to organize the writing material into the second draft. They have to select which clause(s) used to construct orientation, complication, or resolution. In this part, I also taught them the concept of Theme and Rheme pattern.

Having the such knowledge how to write a narrative text, the respondents have to revise their first draft through applying the approach. The analysis of the revised draft can be seen in Table 2. Seen from the numbers of clauses, the table shows that the respondents are able to develop their first draft significantly. R1 can add 23 clauses, R2 can add 74 clauses, and R3 can add 40 clauses. According to the respondents, adding more clauses is done easily after they listed activities of the characters and listing elements of setting that they want to express. They can develop the information in the orientation through added more information about the character and the setting. They can describe the setting using clauses expressing relational processes. They can develop the complication through adding more activities or making the activities more detail of each activity.

The increasing number of clauses gives impact on the developing the structure of narrative. They can expand some improvements relating to the narrative structure. The table shows there is the increasing ability of respondents in describing the setting and the main character more in detail. Using the questions such as what is the physical appearance of the main character?; what is his habit?; what is his personality?; etc., the text producers listed a number of clauses placing the main character as the active participants. The next step is selecting the relevant information. The text producers only selected the clauses that represent the relevant characterization. The similar step was done to develop setting. Acomplishing the orientation, the text producers develop the other elements of the narrative structure. Based on the table 2, the three respondents added one element, that is evaluation. R1 expressed evaluation using two clauses: "Apparently, things done Jaka Tarub is a foolishness as well as misfortune for him." and "Why? Because with Jaka Tarub open the pot cook the rice then the magic of Nawang Wulan diseapper." The two clauses did not tell the event or the existence of the story, but her judgment about what Jaka Tarub did in the story. The such element did not occur in the first draft of R1's text. Other evaluations are conducted by R2 using the clauses : "So guys if you need something, but you never get it, don't do a mistake. Pray to God, and be patient, it's the keywords.", and by R3 using contradictory connector *although* such as in "Although her father just a ordinary merchant, they were harmony and very

peaceful family.", and using comment adjunct *unfortunately* such as in "Unfortunately, one day her mother died because of hard sickness.

Table 2: The Result of the Revised Draft Analysis

Respondent	Number of clauses	Narrative structure	Character development	Setting development	Narrator's evaluation	Events' arrangement
R1	60	O - C- R- C- R- E- C- R	Noun, noun group, Pron,. Relational , behavioral, manner	Noun, noun group, relational	Rhetorical clause	Processes: Material, Mental Verbal, behavioral Circumstances: Temp., Spat. , Manner
R2	98	O - C- R- C- R- C- R- E	Noun, noun group, Pron,. Relational , behavioral, manner	Noun, noun group, relational	Narrator's advice	Processes: Material, Mental Verbal, behavioral Circumstances: Temp., Spat. Manner
R3	59	O - C- R- C- R- C- R- E	Noun, noun group, Pron,. Relational , behavioral, manner	Noun, noun group, relational	Narrator's judgement	Processes: Material, Mental Verbal, behavioral Circumstances: Temp., Spat. Manner

From the table, we can also see the ability of the respondents in developing their discourse of representing the characters of the stories. While in the first drafts they generally used noun, in the revised draft they used noun groups such as *the super big giant* and *the handsome man*. They can also select other lexicogrammars such as manner circumstance, relational and behavioral processes to develop the characterization. That is easy to do after they understoodthe concept that writing process can start from the register of discourse or situational context through answering the uestion such as *what kinds of character do you want to represent?* and selecting the lexicogrammars through answering *what wording do you select to realize the meaning*? The similar writing process was done by the respondents to develop the setting. While they did not pay attention on setting development in the first draft, using the SFL approach, they are able in filling out almost all the elements of the narrative structure, including telling *what setting you want to describe.*

Compared to the first drafts, the revised drafts of the folklore texts contain more complex discourse of developing plot. To improve the narration of the plot, the respondents started from gathering information related to the events, such as *what did the character do? What happened to the characters? How did the character do the activities? Who is/are the goal of the activities? Where and when did the character do the activities?*and *What is/are the impact of the ativities?.* Selecting the appropriate lexicogrammars, the respondents are able to represent the meanings into material, mental, behavioral, and verbal processes. They completed their writing with the dialogue between characters. They also depicted the way the characters did the actions using manner circumstances. They completed their clauses with temporal and spatial circumstances to inform when and where the actions happened.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the problems of writing the narrative text faced by the students of a senior high school can be solved using the SFL approach. The reason is that through the approach, students can start their writing to decide the purpose and the general structure of the narrative text. After that, they can gather information what meanings they want to express regarding the purpose and the narrative structure. The steps can help students to select the appropriate lexicogrammars, so they feel that writing is not difficult anymore. Due to the limited time of the research, the study did not include analyzing the grammatical error of the texts.

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