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## TEACHER'S STRATEGIES IN BUILDING THE STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIELD (BKOF) IN TEACHING WRITING NARRATIVE TEXT

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### Abstract

This study is aimed at investigating the teacher's strategies at the stage of building knowledge of the field (BKOF) especially when teaching writing narrative text. The BKOF stage is intended to build the students' prior knowledge before they can write effectively. This study used the scaffolding theory as it shares some similarities with the BKOF stage. Qualitative research was applied in this study. Four instruments were used to collect the data; questionnaire, classroom observation, interview and document analysis. The findings showed that the teacher applied three main strategies in the BKOF stage, those are 1) asked students to translate in most of the class discussion; 2) built students vocabulary; and 3) the point system.

Keywords: building knowledge of the field (BKOF); genre-based approach (GBA); teacher strategies; writing skill; narrative text; scaffolding

### INTRODUCTION

English curriculum in Indonesia has changed for several times with the aim to achieve better students' results in learning English (Emilia, 2011; Sahiruddin, 2013). Some schools in Indonesia still use the School-Based Curriculum or the 2006 Curriculum for Junior High School. The 2006 Curriculum emphasizes that the English subject focuses on the functional level in which the language is used for daily communication, both spoken and written (BSNP, 2006). Based on the curriculum, the English teaching for Junior High School has to do with genres and it is underpinned by systemic functional linguistic (SFL) and involves some approach; one of them is the genre-based approach (Depdiknas, 2006; Emilia, Hermawan & Tati, 2008, Emilia, 2010; Nurviyani, 2013).

The Genre-Based Approach is becoming an important approach in the field of English language teaching (Derewianka, 2003). It requires teachers to be able to teach students many types of text. There are at least five text

types taught in Junior High School level in Indonesia: descriptive, procedure narrative, recount, and report (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2013). Narrative texts are usually taught in forms of folktales and fairytales. Narrative aims to entertain the readers; show the readers how individuals deal with problematic events which have to resolve for better or worse; and it often found across all aspects of cultural life (Emilia, 2011; Dymock, 2007).

There is a framework of teaching genre, called as Teaching Learning Cycle or Curriculum Cycle which consists of three major stages: Modeling, Joint Negotiation of Text and Independent Construction of Text (Emilia, 2011). Some writers, as cited in Emilia (2011), add one or two other stages to the cycle, such as Preparation stage proposed by Derewianka (1990) and Negotiating Field and Deconstruction stages proposed by Rothery (1996) or Building Knowledge of the Field stage proposed by Feez (2002). The model used in Indonesia is Rothery's model

which covers *Building Knowledge of the Field (Negotiating Field)*; *Modeling (Deconstruction)*; *Joint Construction*; and *Independent Construction* (Emilia, 2011).

Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF) aims to build students' background knowledge to be able to write about the topic being discussed (Emilia, 2011; Svinicki, 1993; Beck & Jeffery; 2009). This stage is the most fundamental stage in the cycle that should be conducted to assist students' to gain an understanding of the context and it affects how students perceives new information (Emilia, 2010; Emilia, 2011; Svinicki, 1993). Equipping students with the appropriate and sufficient background knowledge is similar to Lev Vygotsky's scaffolding theory. Students cannot comprehend the content they are learning if they cannot understand what they are learning (Cameron, 2000 as cited in Thomson, 2012) and they need teacher's assistance to help them understand the topic being learned (Gibbons, 2015; Maybin, Mercer & Stieter, 1992; Wilson & Devereux, 2014).

There are varieties of teaching strategies that can be used by teacher when preparing students to write and teachers have different reasoning in implementing particular teaching strategy because when choosing a teaching strategy, the teacher also take the students' ability into consideration.. For example, teaching strategies that can be used in activating students' background knowledge is brainstorming. Brainstorming is a technique which allows students to hear and share knowledge and ideas. This paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the strategies used by the English teacher of eight graders in preparing the students on the stage of building knowledge of the field in teaching writing a narrative text?
2. Why did the teacher choose the strategies to teach writing a narrative text?

### **Basic Principle of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA)**

The Genre-Based Approach is an approach which is relevant to the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia (Emilia, 2011). This approach has been used in the Indonesian curriculum in teaching English. For example, the 2006 Curriculum

emphasizes on the English subject on the functional level in which the language is used for daily communication (BSNP, 2006). Based on the curriculum, the English teaching for Junior High School has to do with genres and it is underpinned by systemic functional linguistic (SFL).

Teaching Learning Cycle or Curriculum Cycle is a framework that used in teaching genre. The model used in Indonesia is Rothery's model which covers five stages: *Building Knowledge of the Field (Negotiating Field)*; *Modeling (Deconstruction)*; *Joint Construction*; and *Independent Construction* (Emilia, 2011). This study, however, focused on one aspect of the Curriculum Cycle which is Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF).

### **Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF)**

On the stage of BKOF or Negotiating Field based on Rothery's model, teachers need to identify several aspects before deconstructing a text. Those are

- what the field is
- what part of it we will be exploring
- what the students already know about it
- what experiences, activities will be part of the exploration
- how the teachers will organize and record information from the activities (Rothery, 1996, p. 102 cited in Emilia, 2010, p. 58)

The stage of BKOF aims to build the students' knowledge related to the topic that students will learn, to make sure the students had enough background knowledge about particular topic being learned and to be able to write about the topic being discussed (Emilia, 2011; Svinicki, 1993). This stage is the most fundamental stage in the cycle that should be conducted to assist students' to gain an understanding of the context and this stage affects how students perceive new information, affects how they organize new information, and make connections with new information easily (Svinicki, 1993).

According to Hammond (1992), classroom tasks and activities on the stage of BKOF enable students to explore cultural similarities and differences related to the topic or text type, practice grammatical patterns relevant to the topic or text type, and build up

and extend vocabulary relevant to the topic or text type (Hammond, 1992 as cited in Mulatsih, 2011, p. 105). Furthermore, Hammond (1992) mentions variety of activities that might be included by teachers in the teaching and learning process. They can

- 1) Use visuals – photographs, filmstrips, videos – to build context
- 2) Use 'hands-on' activities
- 3) Reconstruct and discuss 'hands-on' activities when back in the classroom
- 4) Design a range of communicative activities to enable students to share, discuss, and argue about aspects of the topic
- 5) Focus on vocabulary or grammatical patterns
- 6) Introduce learners to a broad range of written texts related to the topic
- 7) Develop reading strategies appropriate to the texts, including predicting, skimming, or scanning (Hammond, 1992, p. 19)

In addition to Hammond's framework, there are several steps suggested by Emilia (2011, p. 33-45) that can be used to assist teachers in establishing the stage of BKOF:

- 1) Students were given several texts related to the topic or text. If the texts are available in two languages (Bahasa Indonesia and English), the students can read the Bahasa Indonesia version first before reading the English version to help those who are still struggling with English;
- 2) Students were asked to read the text(s) and they were given questions related to the text they have read to assess their understanding;
- 3) Students were asked to identify unfamiliar words or expressions and try to predict the meaning of the words or expressions, they also learned the grammar used in the text. It is important to remind students to write the expressions relevant to the topic or text types from the text they have read in their notebook;

- 4) Students were asked to listen to an audio or teacher read aloud a text related to the topic or text type and they were given a worksheet to evaluate their comprehension;
- 5) If the school has the access to native speakers, teachers can invite a native speaker to explain the topic or text type being taught. This can be a valuable experience for the students because they can learn a lot about vocabulary, expression and try to understand a native speaker's speech.
- 6) When students learned speaking skill, teachers can ask the students to retell what they have read;
- 7) To help the students to develop their critical thinking, teachers can ask them implicit questions, for example: In your opinion, what is the purpose of this text?

### **Scaffolding**

Equipping students with the appropriate and sufficient background knowledge is, in many ways as, similar to Lev Vygotsky's scaffolding theory. Scaffolding in the context of learning refers to "a process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning" (Mulatsih, 2011, p. 102). There are six types of scaffolding commonly used to teach English to English learners. These include modeling, bridging, contextualizing, schema building, text presentation and developing metacognition (Walqui, 2006; Moro, n.d.; Nirmala Dewi, 2013).

1. Modeling: students need to be given explicit examples of what they are going to learn.
2. Bridging: aims to make clear and explicit connections between students' previous knowledge and understanding to the new concept.
3. Contextualizing: a way to connect students' everyday language and academic language by providing relevant illustration or metaphor.
4. Schema building: a way to connect students' prior knowledge and new information or concept through organizing knowledge and understanding.

5. Text representation: transform linguistic constructions found modeled in one genre into forms used in another genre (e.g. short stories into dramas)
6. Developing metacognition: ensuring that students choose strategies consciously for each activity and evaluating their choices and future choices based on results.

### Narrative Genre

Joyce and Feez (2004) stated "A Narrative is a text type which tells a story in which people encounter a problem or crisis that they need to overcome..." (as cited in Emilia, 2010, p. 167). Furthermore, narrative texts are used to teach moral lessons, to amuse, and to explore social values (Joyce & Feez, 2004; Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Gibbons, 2009 cited in Emilia, 2010). In this study, narrative genre refers to the narrative texts which are commonly used in Indonesian English class such as folktales and fairytales.

Labov and Waletzky (1967, reprinted in Bamberg 1997) proposed a generalized structure potential for narrative of personal experience, unfolding through stages of orientation, complication, resolution and coda. The orientation is the beginning of the story, usually begins by telling the readers who the characters are, where the story is set and when it takes place. The characters in narrative texts usually people, animals, or creatures that the people in the area would be familiar with. For example, in Indonesian classroom, the stories usually used in the classroom are Malin Kundang and Sangkuriang because they are originated from Indonesia. It also gives a hint about the problem that the characters will encounter. The complication is the core of narrative text; it tells the reason why the story is told. It usually tells the readers where the characters encounter the problems and something unexpected events happened to the characters. Resolution tells us how the problems resolve, either in a happy ending or in a tragic ending. Coda is a closing remark to the story and it is optional. Coda consists of a moral lesson, advice or teaching from the writer. Common language features in narrative genres are:

- Use past tense

- Chronological and signaled by a range of time connective: *once upon a time, first, then*
- Use action verbs which express material processes that describe what happens: *blew, wrapped, exhausted*
- Contains dialogues and uses a number of "saying verbs", such as: *said, asked, replied*
- Use thinking verbs that give us information about what participants are thinking or feeling, such as *wondered, remembered, thought, felt, disliked*
- Use descriptive language to describe people and things: *gentle breeze, thin, thick* and describe how actions occur: *warmly, harder, easily* (Emilia, 2010, p. 170).

### METHOD

In accordance with the goals of the study, a descriptive qualitative method was applied to describe the teacher's strategy in building students' knowledge of the field in teaching writing a narrative text. This design was applied because this study needs more exploration and understanding as the strategies that the teachers used may vary depending on the students' needs and the classroom situation. According to Burns and Grove (2003), descriptive research is "designed to provide a picture of a situation as it naturally happens" (p. 201). Furthermore, Elliot (1999) stated that descriptive qualitative design emphasizes on "understanding phenomena in their own right rather than from some outside perspective" (as cited in Elliot & Timulak, 2005, p. 147).

This study was conducted at one public Junior High School in Bandung. The participants of this study were an English teacher who teaches in the eighth grade and one class of eight graders in academic year of 2016/2017. The selection of site and participants was due to the following reasons. First, it was possible to carry out the investigation, in which narrative text was taught in eighth grade. Second, the teacher and the students' willingness to participate in the study.

The data collection techniques involved four types of instruments including

questionnaire, classroom observation, interview, and document analysis. The questionnaire developed based on the framework of BKOF proposed by Hammond (1992) and the steps on the stage of BKOF suggested by Emilia (2011). The questionnaire consisted of 19 close-ended items. The close-ended type of questionnaire was chosen mainly because of two reasons: 1) it is easier and quicker for the respondents to answer and 2) the respondents are more likely to answer sensitive questions because the questions were limited to the set of alternatives being offered (Reja, et al., 2013). The statements in the questionnaire were written in Bahasa Indonesia in order to give the participants a better understanding of what being explored in the study.

The questionnaire consists of 19 statements covering the teacher's prior knowledge of the Genre-Based Approach, the teacher's opinions on the implementation of the Genre-Based Approach focusing on the stage of the BKOF, and the teacher's strategies according to Hammond's framework and Emilia's steps on the stage of BKOF in genre-based teaching. The questionnaire used 4-point Likert scales which measure how teacher developed a teaching strategy when teaching writing narrative text. For example, in response to the statement "When choosing strategies to teach writing, I always considered the students' age, ability and their learning habit", the respondent choose one of the following options *1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree.*

Observation is the best-suited data collection technique to find out the actual strategies that the teacher used in the classroom. The advantages of using observation is "the opportunity to record information as it occurs in the setting, to study actual behavior, and to study individuals who have difficulty verbalizing their ideas" (Creswell, 2012, p. 214). The teacher's performances were video-recorded to gather detailed information. According to Peter Loizos (2008, p. 149), "video recording is necessary whenever any set of human actions is complex and difficult to be comprehensively described by one observer as it unfolds" (as cited in Garcez, Duarte, & Eisenberg, 2011, p. 250). During the observation, note taking and observation

sheet were also used as guidelines to keep in track with the details. Note taking is an essential tool in many information-transmission situations where it helps writer to record information and/or aid reflection (Boch & Piolat, 2005).

To support the data gained from the observation, interview was conducted for both the teacher and the students. In this study, the interview used in the study were both open-ended questions and semi-structured interview. The advantages of using open-ended questions include "the possibility of discovering the responses that individuals give spontaneously, and thus avoiding the bias that may result from suggesting responses to individuals" (Reja et al., 2003, p. 161). Further, semi-structured interview was conducted. A semi-structured interview is used because it is allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview, provides a clear set of instructions for interviewers and can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

In this study, the lesson plan was analyzed to confirm the teacher's strategies in building the students' knowledge. The lesson plan stated what the teacher plan to do in conducting the lesson. The document analysis is chosen to investigate whether the teacher's strategies at the actual teaching and learning process is compatible or not with the lesson plan. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which focuses on analyzing and interpreting recorded material to learn about human behavior (Purnawarman, n.d). The material may be public records, textbooks, letters, films, tapes, diaries, themes, reports, or other documents.

### **Research Procedure**

First, the teacher was asked to fill in the questionnaire related to the teacher's strategies in building the students' knowledge. After that, the teacher was observed during teaching and learning process by using video, allowing information in the activities can be recorded minute to minute and further enabling the researcher to track down what is said and done in the activities recorded (Hancock, 2000; Maxwell, 1996). The table below shows the schedule of the classroom observations conducted.

Table 1. Classroom Observation

Meetings	Days	Hour	Duration
1 <sup>st</sup>	Thursday, 30 March 2017	08.50 – 10.40	90 minutes
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Thursday, 06 April 2017	08.50 – 10.40	90 minutes

After that, interviews were conducted for both the teacher and the students to clarify the teaching strategy used by the teacher in teaching writing narrative text. Due to the limited time, the interviews for the students and the teacher were only conducted once after class. The teacher and the students' participation were voluntary. The interview was audio-recorded to help writer to gain detailed information. The questions for interview were developed within the framework which was proposed by Hammond (1992) and Emilia's steps (2011) on the BKOF stage in genre-based teaching.

The teacher was interviewed to bring out her opinions about and consciousness of her teaching practices and the benefits and challenges she faced when conducting the BKOF stage in teaching writing narrative text. Seven students were interviewed as the sample to find out how they feel about the whole teaching and learning process focusing on writing skill. A semi structured interview was conducted "to obtain the information required, while permitting the participant's freedom in the nature of responses and descriptions illustrating concepts" (Kvale, 1996 as cited in Emilia & Tahzeen, 2013, p. 125). The lesson plan was also analyzed to confirm the teacher's strategies at the lesson plan were compatible with the actual performance.

Finally, the findings of the study were reported in a form of narrative discussion. Narrative discussion is the most common form of reporting research findings in qualitative study in which the writer summarizes the findings from the data analysis in detail (Creswell, 2012).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study found that the teacher applied three main strategies in the BKOF stage, those are 1) asked students to translate in most of the class discussion; 2) built students vocabulary; and 3) the point system. The

teacher asked the students to translate the text because the teacher believed that if the students cannot understand the language, they cannot understand the topic being discussed. First, the teacher asked the students to translate the narrative text which took most of the class discussion. The purpose of translating the text was to help the students built their vocabulary. In this way, at the end of the lesson, the students were able to construct their own writing. After the students translated the text, the teacher asked them to share their answers related to the words they have translated. The students who shared their answer with the class were given one point. This was done to encourage the students and to motivate them in learning English.

It seemed that when teaching writing narrative text, the teacher emphasized on building the students' vocabulary. The teacher believed that if the students did not have sufficient vocabulary they could not understand what the text was about. Students 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 have the same opinion related to the translation strategy. They said that teacher's strategy, which was translating, was helpful for them. They were having a hard time in understanding the text they are reading, if the teacher did not translate the text, from English to Bahasa Indonesia. They also needed the teacher's assistance in translating the text because sometimes one word could have different meaning depending on the context. Students need to know the meaning of unfamiliar words in the text to help them understanding the text and eventually they can use the words in appropriate context. This is regrettable because the students tend to forget what they have learned in the classroom especially when they do not review the new words later. If they failed to understand the meaning, it may hinder them in understanding new material. It is important for the teacher to encourage the students to understand not only the meaning written in dictionary but also the concepts it conveys within the text.

In the second meeting, the teacher was more focused on building the students' vocabulary by translating the difficult words from the short story. The teacher asked the students to write the words they found difficult on the whiteboard. An interesting fact that the writer found when observing the

teacher's performance was that the teacher forgot to change the verb from the infinitive form into past tense. This may be caused by the teacher's awareness of the writer's presence and the teacher told the writer in the interview that it was the first time she was being the subject of observation. Another reason was that, for most Indonesian, the concept of past tense is not introduced in learning Bahasa Indonesia. So, such notion is subconsciously emerged into the teacher's performance. This is quite common in the case of non-native speakers of English.

The second strategy was giving rewards to the students with points which would added to their final English score. The teacher used the point system to motivate the students, to make them more actively participating in the teaching and learning process. All of the students agreed that the point system motivate them to actively participating in the teaching and learning process. However, the point system strategy did not build the students' background knowledge of narrative text. This strategy was only limited to make the students enjoyed the learning process and became more active in term of answering questions in the class because they wanted to earn extra points from the teacher.

When the teaching and learning was taking place, some students did not pay attention to the lesson. As for the punishment, the teacher did not apply specific punishment. In this situation, the teacher approached their seat and gave them verbal warning. This strategy was quite effective but only for a short time. The students' active participation is necessary when they are learning language because they need to be an independent learner.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

It can be said that the teacher has failed to build the students' prior knowledge related to the topic they are learning. The teacher's strategies mentioned above did not help the students in building their prior knowledge. It is crucial for the teacher to understand the importance of the process of building knowledge activation. When translating unfamiliar words in a text, the teacher should encourage the students to know how to use

them in a proper context. As for the text chosen as the source in the teaching and learning process, the teacher should consider the cultural background of the students and the complexity of the text. It is suggested for the teacher to use different sources, not only using the students' handbook as a variety in her teaching. The complexity of the text should increase little by little to challenge the students in understanding different levels of text.

There are some recommendations for the English teachers and further researches. In relation with learning process, the English teachers should try varieties of teaching strategies, in addition to the three strategies mentioned above, since they can help students understanding the topic being discussed and building their prior knowledge. The teachers can used video, picture book, cued listening, constructing concept maps etc. to stimulate the students prior knowledge before they learn how to write narrative text. It would be better if the teacher has some kind of peer discussion to help them designing the teaching and learning activities. Not all the teachers are able to implement the stage of the building knowledge correctly. For future teachers, a peer discussion might be able to help the future pre-service and in-service teachers who are struggling with designing the teaching and learning activities.

For further researches, the result of this study is hopefully useful as a reference to enrich the knowledge of teacher strategies in building students' knowledge of the field. Considering the research limitation of time, this study only focused on the writing skill and the classroom observation was conducted twice. For future researchers, it would be better to have more time to observe the teachers and the students and have an in-depth interview with them. In addition, since the research has not completely developed a proper instruments, it is recommended for further research to see their theoretical framework so that, they can carefully develop instruments suitable for their research.

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