Genre-Based Approach to Teaching Writing
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Abstract
This paper was written as a result of concerns about how to improve the writing skills of Korean students. The main goal of the paper was to investigate the effectiveness of the genre-based approach to teaching writing in Korean educational context. To assess the genre approach, I examined, (a) the definition of the genre approach to teaching; (b) the differences between the process approach and the genre approach to identify which approach would be the most suitable for Korean educational context; (c) practical applications of the genre approach; (d) the benefits and problems of the genre approach to teaching writing; and (e) how to best apply the genre approach. Having explored these five questions, I support the application of the combined approach called the process-genre approach for the teaching of writing because it allows students to use language creatively based on the framework of a given genre.

Introduction
Research on teaching writing in a second language was initiated in the late 1960s, and most early efforts were centered on techniques for teaching writing. These efforts led to the process approach, which helps students to work through several stages of the writing process. Later, more attention was paid to the nature of writing in various situations. This then brought popularity to the genre approach, which focuses on models and key features of texts written for a particular purpose. In the process approach, a teacher typically has students follow the steps of prewriting, writing, revising, and editing before achieving the final product, and this sequence teaches students how to write. In the genre approach, samples of a specific genre are introduced, and some distinctive characteristics of the given genre are pointed out so that students notice specific configurations of that genre. Next, students attempt to produce the first draft through imitating the given genre, and I felt that this reproducing procedure might work for Korean students.

This idea could be supported by Kim and Kim(2005). They pointed out that one of the main causes of Korean university students' low performance in English writing was, among other things, the lack of genre-specific writing across the curriculum (p. 3). For example, the high scorers on English tests performed poorly even on small writing tasks, and most of them consistently exhibited difficulties in expressing themselves in writing. Difficulties include choosing appropriate vocabulary, organizing the structure properly depending on the topic or the purpose of writing, following correct grammar rules, and integrating ideas.

To solve these problems learners face in writing tasks, genre-specific writing instruction may be useful since it presents some examples to students who have only limited exposure to authentic English writing. Thus, the objective of this literature review is to report on theoretical and pedagogical issues and to evaluate the benefits and problems of the genre approach to teaching writing in English as a second or foreign language. The paper aims to answer the following questions:
1. What is a genre?
2. How different is the genre approach from the process approach?
3. How has the genre approach been applied?
4. What are the merits and problems of the genre approach to teaching writing?
5. How can the genre approach best be applied?

Definition of the Genre Approach to Teaching Writing
Since the mid-1980s, considerable attention has been paid to the genre approach to teaching writing. In terms of writing in a second language, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning* has defined the genre approach as "a framework for language instruction" (Byram, 2004, p. 234) based on examples of a particular genre. The genre framework supports students'

writing with generalized, systematic guiding principles about how to produce meaningful passages.

But first, what is a genre? Swales (1990) identified a genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (p. 58). His definition offers the basic idea that there are certain conventions or rules which are generally associated with a writer's purpose. For example, personal letters tell us about [their writers'] private stories, film reviews analyze movies for potential viewers, and police reports describe what happened. Most genres use conventions related to communicative purposes; a personal letter starts with a cordial question in a friendly mood because its purpose is to maintain good relationships with friends, and an argument essay emphasizes its thesis since it aims at making an argument.

Looking at spoken genres, Byram (2004), citing Martin (1984), defined a genre as a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of their culture (p. 235). Martin (1984, as cited in Kay & Dudley-Evans, 1998) presented these circumstances as examples of genres: buying fruits, telling a story, writing a diary, applying for a job interview, writing an invitation letter, and so on (p. 309). Each spoken genre has a specific goal that people should achieve through several steps. Thus, the specific social goals become main focuses when genre was discussed. It also implies that before writing, the context of a situation should be considered and analyzed in order to anticipate what linguistic features are required.

Swales (1990) and Martin (1984), as cited in Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998), shared an essential viewpoint that all genres control a set of communicative purposes within certain social situations and that each genre has its own structural quality according to those communicative purposes (p. 309). Therefore, the communicative purposes and the structural features should be identified when genres are used in writing classes.

The structural features that genres are made up of include both standards of organization structure and linguistic features. Standards of organizational structure refer to how the text is sequenced. For instance, Hammond (1992, as cited in Paltridge, 1996) described the common organizational structure in a formal letter whose purpose is to file a complaint and suggest a proper action to solve the problem as follows: "sender's address, receiver's address, greeting, identification of complaint, justification of complaint, demand action, sign-off, and sender's name" (p. 240).

Common sets of linguistic features can constitute a text type. Text type was defined by Biber (1988, as cited in Paltridge, 1996) as a class of texts having similarities in linguistic forms regardless of the genre (p. 237). For example, Hammond (1992, as cited in Paltridge, 1996) examined the characteristics of several genres and categorized them according to similarities in text types: recipes are known to have the text type of procedure; personal letters are used to tell private anecdotes; advertisements deal with description; news articles have the text type of recounting; scientific papers prefer passive voice over active voice in presenting reports; and academic papers are likely to have embedded clauses (pp. 237-239). This means that different text types involve distinctive knowledge and different sets of skills, so teachers should introduce a variety of genres to have students understand and practice different sets of skills.

Differences between the Process Approach and the Genre Approach

In the process approach, the steps or stages are illustrated and practiced from the generation of ideas and compilation of information through a series of activities for planning, gathering information, drafting, revising, and editing (Campbell, 1998, p. 11). This sequence of activities typically occurs in four stages: "prewriting, composing/drafting, revising, and editing" (Badger & White, 2000, p. 154).

Prewriting is the phase of idea-gathering. Drafting is the process of writing a rough outline of what will be addressed. Once students produce a rough draft, they read it again and share it with peers or a

teacher to receive comments. Then they make modifications to their writings based on the feedback from their peers or a teacher; revising, or elaborating on the first draft, takes place at this point. Editing, correcting mechanical errors like spelling or punctuation, is the last stage.

Proponents of the process approach argue that the procedures of process writing help learners to develop more effective ways of conveying meaning and to better comprehend the content that they want to express. They strongly believe that students can discover what they want to say and write more successfully through the process model than the genre approach, as the process approach is viewed as writer-centered (Walsh, 2004, p. 15).

However, none of the process writing procedures of the past sufficiently dealt with linguistic knowledge, such as grammar and the organization of content [maybe just 'grammar and organization'], as much as necessary. Even though the final stage of editing addressed some mechanical features of language, they were mainly concerned with the skills of processing ideas like planning and drafting. Furthermore, the process approach has a very restricted view of writing, in that the approach presumes that writing proficiency takes place only with the support of the repeated exercise of the same writing procedures. Although it is obvious that the amounts of pre-writing necessary for writing a personal letter and for creating an academic research paper are different, in the process model, the practice of writing is identical regardless of what the topic is and who the writer or the reader is (Badger & White, 2000, pp. 154-155).

In the genre approach, on the other hand, the knowledge of language is intimately attached to a social purpose, and more focus is on the viewpoint of the reader than on that of the writer. Writing is mostly viewed as the students' reproduction of text based on the genre offered by the teacher. It is also believed that learning takes place through imitation and exploration of different kinds of models. Accordingly, learners should be exposed to many examples of the same genre to develop their ability to write a particular genre. Through exposure to similar texts, students can detect the specialized configurations of that genre, and they also can activate their memories of prior reading or writing experiences whenever they encounter the task of creating a new piece in a familiar genre (Badger & White, 2000, pp. 155-156).

When it comes to explaining writing development in the genre approach, Hammond (1992, as cited in Burns, 2001) proposed "a wheel model of a teaching-learning cycle having three phases: modeling, joint negotiation of text by learners and teacher, and the independent construction of texts by learners" (p. 202). Modeling, Hammond noted, is the time when the target genre that students should construct is introduced to them [the students]. At this stage, discussion focuses on the educational and social function of the genre, and analysis focuses on the text structure and language. Joint negotiation of text refers to the stage when learners carry out exercises which manipulate relevant language forms. It fosters a negotiating process between the teacher and the students. It involves reading, research, and disseminating information, and the text of the genre is dependent on those activities. The independent construction of texts is the final phase, in which learners produce actual texts through activities such as choosing a topic, researching, and writing (p. 202).

Proponents such as Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998) have argued that the genre approach is more effective for learners to advance their writing skills in a second language than the process approach since the model helps free students from their severe worries over writing (p. 310). For instance, at the University of Brunei Darussalsam, Henry and Roseberry (1998) did an experimental study in academic classes using short tourist information texts in English. Participants in this research were divided into two groups: a group which used the genre-based instructions and a group which did not employ the genre approach in the same writing task. After three weeks, participants took a test. The genre group did better than the non-genre group, and the data showed that

knowledge of the typical structure of the content made it easier for learners to arrange their ideas in terms of both achieving their communicative goals and producing more well-organized writing. It proved that the learners' understanding of both the rhetorical structure and the linguistic features was increased by the genre-based instructions (Henry & Roseberry, 1998, pp. 154-155).

Applications of the Genre Approach

There are various practical applications of the genre approach to the teaching of writing. Hyon (1996, as cited in Byram, 2004) formulated three distinctive adaptations of the genre approach to writing: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Australian genre-based educational linguistics, and North American New Rhetoric studies (p. 234).

Most ESP researchers, including Bhatia, Flowerdew, and Swales (as cited in Hyon, 1996), primarily outlined the genre approach with spotlights on the formal distinctiveness of genres in order to help students gain understanding of the communicative purposes and linguistic features of texts that they are required to write in their professional discourses, while these experts paid less attention to the specific roles of content and their social environments (p. 695). They regarded genres as devices for examining and teaching the written texts that students needed to master in specific settings like English for academic purposes and English for professional communication classrooms.

In Australia, under the influence of Halliday's systemic functional grammar, researchers [often?] defined a genre as "systemic functional linguistics that is concerned with the relationship between language and its functions in social settings" (Hyon, 1996, p. 696). It means that the given text can be analyzed with a focus on the specific features of the language. A particular genre reveals a certain type of text; for example, recipes are known to have the feature of command. Gustafsson (1975, as cited in Bhatia, 1993) analyzed some syntactic aspects seen in the legislative genre and provided the following statistical figures with respect to the use of various clauses: *that* clauses accounted for 10% of all clauses, adverbial clauses 31%, comparative clauses 11%, and relative clauses 47% (p. 25). These results revealed that legislative documents tend to have more subordinating devices, e.g., relative or adverbial clauses, than any other genre. Further, Hyon (1996), citing Halliday (1978), pointed out that the linguistic features of a certain genre were key features reflecting the broader social situations (p. 697).

The Australian genre theory was also developed for the curricula of nonprofessional settings such as primary and secondary schools rather than of universities and professional fields. The K-6 English syllabus in New South Wales was designed as a result of research carried out at the University of Sydney. It is a schematic model of the genre approach which emphasizes how the resources of the language system can be used to make appropriate meaning choices in diverse contexts. This syllabus seeks to develop students' writing proficiency through demonstrating that their writing skills can be improved if instructional focus is placed on the ways content is structured and the language is chosen. Thus, a variety of genres are placed at the heart of the primary school curriculum; they are classified in the syllabus as either literary genres, which explore or interpret human experience, or as factual genres, which suggest ideas in order to persuade. For each genre described in the syllabus, a number of support documents are provided. The support guide clearly sketches out the organization and content of special genres, ideas for applicable learning tasks, and the common grammatical patterns suitable for each phase (Hyland, 2002, pp. 96-103).

A more pragmatic application in Australia was shown in one adult migrant English education and workplace training program called the New South Wales Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP), the largest government-funded language teaching program in the world. Burns (2001) described one series of tasks and classroom procedures, which were highly genre- oriented, aimed at the formation of a job ap-

plication letter, a task very relevant to the learners (pp. 203-207). She demonstrated how learners were able to successfully produce a job application letter. These results supported the effectiveness of the genre approach: the focus on a genre and the linguistic structure provides learners with a clear idea of what language features should be expressed and how the content should be organized.

In another project, scholars in Australia pooled their money to establish the Literacy and Education Research Network (LERN), which contributed to creating an instructional approach that would help students master various school genres such as reports, procedures, expositions, and explanation. They amended the teaching-learning cycle previously described as having three phases—modeling, joint negotiation of text, and independent construction of text—by adding one more stage called "building knowledge of the field" (Hyon, 1996, p. 705). This stage aims at building up the students' knowledge of key features of the social circumstances and connecting it with the content of the genre.

The New Rhetoric (Byram, 2004, p. 234) style of genre research put extraordinary attention on the social contexts in which genres are produced, as well as on ethnographic description, whereas ESP and Australian genre studies largely stressed linguistic methods for analyzing genres (Hyon, 1996, p. 696). Medway (1994, as cited in Byram, 2004) explained that genre should be viewed within "the complex social, cultural, institutional disciplinary factors at play in the production of specific pieces of writing" (p. 235) This means that the genre approach should focus not only on the *form* of communication but also on the *social action* it is used to accomplish (Miller, 1984, p. 153). Likewise, the New Rhetoric approach emphasizes a consideration of what kinds of social contexts produce a particular genre in order to increase the efficacy of the genre approach.

The Benefits and Problems of the Genre Approach to Teaching Writing

Several advantages and disadvantages of the three applications of the genre approach have been discussed. First, on the positive side, students generally appreciate the models or examples showing specifically what they have to do linguistically. Studying a given genre also provides them with an understanding of why a communication style is the way it is through a reflection of its social context and its purpose. Swales (1990) pointed out how rhetorical instruction plays as pivotal a role in writing improvement as prior knowledge (p. 83). In this context, the genre approach is very beneficial because it brings together formal and functional properties of a language in writing instruction, and it acknowledges that there are strong associations between them.

As Bhatia (1993, as cited in Kim & Kim, 2005) recommended, it is meaningful for writing instructors to tie the formal and functional properties of a language together in order to facilitate students' recognition of how and why linguistic conventions are employed for particular rhetorical effects (p. 6). If the rhetorical structure of content is analyzed by students in the genre approach, some common patterns can be identified in each genre. Naturally, these patterns will form a kind of background knowledge students can activate in the next learning situation. Eventually, the prior knowledge will make it easier for students to produce acceptable structures in their writing tasks. Therefore, an assigned genre seems to serve as an influential tool for both the learning and teaching of writing [for both students and teachers].

Furthermore, the genre approach encourages students to participate in the world around them, to comprehend writing as a tool that they can utilize, and to realize how writers manage content to promote logical organization. It also allows students to become more flexible in their thinking and eventually to realize how authors organize their writings. However, some proponents have indicated that the genre approach is more suitable for learners at beginning or

intermediate levels of proficiency in a second language rather than those at advanced levels, in that it releases students from deep anxieties about their writing tasks. When people learn something new, they commonly want to find some cases that they can refer to or consider as samples. There is no doubt that writing tasks can be more demanding than other language skills, so students at low level of proficiency absolutely need something that they can rely on since they have little exposure to English writing (Kay & Dudley-Evans, 1998, p. 310).

Despite genres' beneficial roles in helping learners to produce written work with confidence, there are two concerns about the genre approach. One is that it underestimates the skills required to produce content, and the other concern is that it neglects learners' self-sufficiency (Byram, 2004, p. 236). The genre approach not only places too much emphasis on conventions and genre features but also is less helpful for students in discovering the texts' true messages due to the targeted aspects of the specified genre. Likewise, if teachers spend class time explaining how language is used for a range of purposes and with a variety of readers, learners are likely to be largely passive. Thus, the genre approach is blamed for limiting learners' creative thoughts about content and is criticized in that it overlooks natural processes of learning and learners' creativity (Badge & White, 2000, p. 157). Finally, Bawarshi (2000) pointed out that, at its best, it helps learners to identify and interpret literary texts, while at its worst, it interferes with the learners' creativity (p. 343). This concern means that students may end up writing genres as meaningless reproductions. .

However, according to Bakhtin (1986), genres always evolve through incorporating a rich variety of voices, styles, discourse features, and points of view. The genre approach allows students to be exposed to the plurality of a genre, which implies that students still have chances to develop their creativity in the genre approach. Thus, if the genre approach is to remain true to the fundamental nature of genres, then teaching in the genre approach should include a final step in which students are encouraged to break the style of the existing genre and let it evolve (H. Nguyen, personal communication, October 17, 2006).

How to Apply the Genre Approach Most Effectively

Due to the weaknesses of the genre approach noted above, Badger and White (2000) experimented with using the genre and process approaches together as an alternative in a model called the process-genre approach. Through this research, they affirmed that this dual approach works well if the writing cycle begins with models, description of the key linguistic features, discussion of the social situation in which it happens, and analysis of the recommended rhetorical patterns of each genre. Student writing is then subjected to the sequence of drafts in the process approach (p. 157).

For instance, when a university student creates an advertisement describing his or her used laptop in order to sell it, the following should be considered: this writing is intended to sell the laptop; it should be attractive to some people who are interested in buying it; it must consist of certain information; and it should follow traditions in which laptop descriptions are offered. Then, the person should follow several procedures such as drafting, revising and editing as well as using rhetorical language skills best suited to this genre (Badger & White, 2000, p. 158).

This demonstration shows how the process-genre approach embraces teaching the appropriate language along with using a set of revision processes by which a final draft can be produced. As illustrated in the laptop example above, this combined approach ensures that the writing task is reviewed from both the viewpoint of the writer and of readers at the same time.

Conclusion

In essence, this literature review suggests that the genre approach works best when it is joined with the process approach. In the combined process called the process-genre approach, the final artifact is created through a sequence of several activities undertaken after learners understand the struc-

tural and linguistic features of a particular situation as reflected in a text. Learners' steady progress is expected to come out of teachers' facilitation with regards to the appropriate input of knowledge and skills at different stages. Therefore, if the process and genre approach are balanced in the curriculum, students will better improve their writing skills through experiencing a whole writing process as well as realizing the social functions of genres and the contexts in which these genres are used.

The genre approach seems to fit well in Korea, the EFL context mentioned at the beginning of this paper. This is because currently Korean students lack input of English genres, and yet, once introduced to a model, they are usually good at following the given sample because they are traditionally familiar with learning by rote. The genre approach can be effective in helping Korean students to learn the organizational structure as well as linguistic features of a certain genre. Together with the process approach, the genre approach can contribute to amplifying students' writing potentials.

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