

Creativity via a Genre Pedagogy to Promote EFL Indigenous Students' Writing

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a conceptual framework that has been developed to promote creativity among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Malaysian indigenous students, specifically in the teaching of writing. The objectives are to introduce the factors that contribute to indigenous students' low English proficiency, highlight writing challenges of indigenous students, propose a genre pedagogical framework as a means to address their writing challenges and simultaneously, motivate their learning via creative practices, and discuss past studies on the efficacy of a genre-based writing pedagogy that promotes creativity. This paper employed an integrative review approach in sourcing and critically analysing relevant literature. The framework was developed to address the educational challenges of primarily providing learning opportunities to the marginalised indigenous minority in Malaysia, the Orang Asli, which concurrently bridges the English language gap between urban and rural schools in the country. By conceptualising a genre as a model for teaching EFL writing through the integrated theoretical lenses of socio-cultural learning as well as extensive secondary research, a framework for evaluating the potential of teaching genre-based EFL writing is derived, focussing on the creative aspect. Thus, this paper enhances understanding of the practicality of genre writing in addressing the writing challenges of low proficiency indigenous students. The proposed framework has the potential to serve as a reference point to other EFL teachers involved in teaching indigenous students globally.

Keywords: education; education quality; empowerment; equal opportunities; genre-based approach

INTRODUCTION

The *Orang Asli*, or literally translated as 'Original People', is a Malay term for the indigenous community in Peninsular Malaysia. They are separated into three main tribal groups, which are the *Semang (Negrito)*, *Senoi* and Proto-Malay (Aboriginal Malay) people. They form the Malaysian minority based on records from the Department of *Orang Asli* Development (JAKOA), which indicated that about 178197 *Orang Asli* live in 869 villages, representing less than 1% of the total population of Malaysia (Department of Orang Asli Development, 2018). Despite urbanisation and implementation of land development policies such as FELDA, the majority of *Orang Asli* still live in rural areas (85.7%), contrasting those who live in small urban towns (3%) and urban areas (11.3%) (Malaysian Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, 2005). Consequently, some 86% of the rural *Orang Asli* population had no schooling or only primary

schooling at the 2000 census. It was also reported that in 2018, the total number of *Orang Asli* children who dropped out from the education system since 2008 was 3150 (Kaur, 2018).

According to Jamal and Ganapathy (2021), the *Orang Asli* are often “stereotypically represent[ed] ... as the most marginalised ethnic group in Malaysia with the highest poverty rates, experiencing poor health conditions, confronted horrendously with limited amenities, and facing limited access to political power,” (p. 249). Although JAKOA members and journalists refute the portrayal of discriminatory projection, the reality is that the *Orang Asli* themselves acknowledge the various issues addressed in the media (Ismail, Baharun, Abdullah, & Majid, 2020; Jamal & Naghmeh-Abbaspour, 2020). Similar to health, economy, and general well-being, the educational progress among the *Orang Asli*, at all levels, still lags far behind other races in Malaysia. In the year 2017, it was reported that more than 60% of the *Orang Asli* children did not achieve the minimum competency level in the English Language (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2018). Studies by Abidin and Mohamad (2019) and Thanabalan, Siraj and Alias (2015) have also provided evidence regarding these students’ low English proficiency.

Education is a crucial factor in ensuring the improvement in the quality of life for the indigenous community in Malaysia. However, its students are confronted with various challenges in their learning, especially in terms of writing skills (Khan, 2017; Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2018). Being able to effectively communicate in English through writing is a valuable skill that translates into advantages in the Malaysian workplace. However, the *Orang Asli* is unable to participate in professional contexts as most possess poor writing skills upon graduating secondary school. As a result, they continue to struggle to improve their socio-economic status and standard of living.

As such, this paper aims to highlight the writing challenges of *Orang Asli* students in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy and, in turn, proposes a framework that can attempt to address the educational challenges of primarily providing learning opportunities to the marginalised indigenous minority, focussing on the creative aspect. The objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To introduce the situational factors that contribute to *Orang Asli* students’ low English proficiency.
2. To highlight the writing challenges faced by EFL *Orang Asli* students.
3. To propose a genre pedagogical framework to address the writing challenges of low proficiency EFL *Orang Asli* students.
4. To discuss past studies on the efficacy of genre-based writing pedagogy that promotes creativity.

METHODOLOGY

In order to construct a conceptual framework for a genre-based pedagogy, this paper employed an integrative review method “to assess, critique, and synthesise the literature on a research topic in a way that enables new theoretical frameworks and perspectives to emerge” (Torraco, 2005 as cited in Snyder, 2019, p. 335). Based on the approach for writing a model paper (Jaakkola, 2020), the review was conducted by overviewing the knowledge base of the situational factors that contribute to the *Orang Asli* students’ low English proficiency (Research Objective 1) and their writing challenges (Research Objective 2), expanding the theoretical foundation of EFL pedagogy

by reconceptualising genre as a means to teaching EFL writing to *Orang Asli* students in the Malaysian context (Research Objective 3), and critically reviewing genre-based studies in terms of its efficacy to promote creativity (Research Objective 4).

The authors conducted the literature search by inputting keywords relevant to the study (genre, genre-based, EFL writing, low English proficiency) in reliable and updated databases (Scopus, Google Scholar, Web of Science, ResearchGate). For the section of past research, the inclusion criteria were EFL and ESL (English as a Second Language) genre-based studies for teaching and learning writing in the past decade. In contrast, the exclusion criteria were genre-based studies for other English language skills (i.e., reading, listening, speaking) and other targeted languages. Upon identifying and analysing articles pertaining to the paper, the findings were then synthesised and reported according to the specified research objectives. Subsequently, the findings were integrated into the discussion section to inform the readers on the practicality of genre writing in addressing the writing challenges of low proficiency indigenous students in the Malaysian context. The research process is shown in Figure 1.

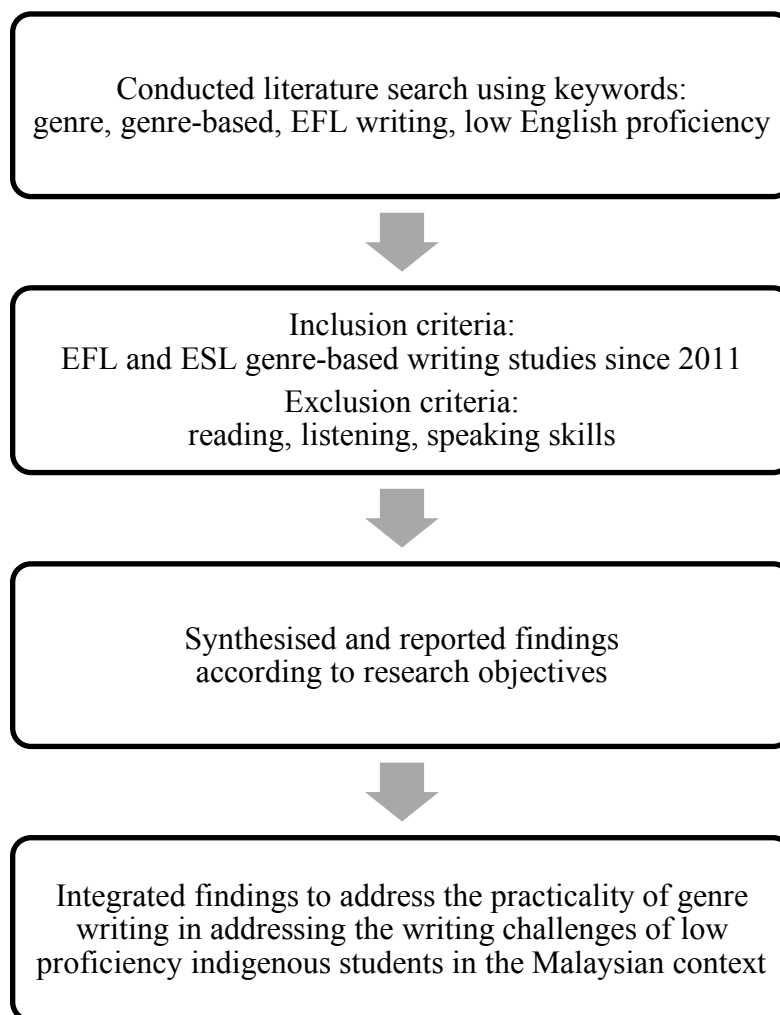


FIGURE 1. The research processes

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

SITUATIONAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO *ORANG ASLI*'S LOW ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Literature written about *Orang Asli* and education mostly assumes a deficit perspective where the lack of educational achievement among the *Orang Asli* children is often attributed to their lack of interest, culture, and community. This section discusses the situational factors that contribute to *Orang Asli*'s low English proficiency.

Orang Asli students speak and write English as their third or fourth language, classifying them as EFL learners. The term 'EFL' refers to the teaching and learning of English in a setting in which English is neither widely used for communication among the nation nor used as the medium of instruction. This is in contrast to the Malaysian Ministry of Education view that English is a second language, and teaching ESL is compulsory in all Malaysian schools. According to Iber (2014), Malaysian students generally occupy all three bands of Kachru's Concentric Circles, with a significant majority belonging to the Expanding Circle. This lower band encompasses low performers in urban areas and most rural students, especially the *Orang Asli* community. Furthermore, the indigenous people do not view English as an essential language since they speak the Aslian language as their mother tongue, followed by the Malay language, which is preferred for national communication and dealing with government agencies. Therefore, the same framework for teaching ESL in Malaysia cannot be applied to them equally, including the method and materials used in the classroom.

Despite learning English in schools, indigenous students do not have an adequate environment for learning the language beyond the classroom. *Orang Asli*'s general exposure to English is limited to formal instruction in schools, and they have little to no opportunity to practise and use English in their daily lives. The lack of an adequate learning environment is typical of other EFL challenges, such as the difference in culture, attitude, and the arbitrary nature of English presented by various scholars (Bingol, Celik, Yildiz, & Mart, 2014; Mohammed, 2018). However, it is essential to note that despite these obstacles, the situation is hopeful as some still showed interest (Yamat, Fisher, & Rich, 2014; Yunus & Mat, 2014) and that more can be done to improve EFL pedagogy for the indigenous community.

Considering language education across *Orang Asli* is restricted to the classroom setting, the fact that the EFL classroom is not conducive enough for learning has been detrimental to the indigenous community's English proficiency (Lee, 2020). It is fuelled by socio-political factors such as poor school infrastructure, under-equipped facilities, and a lack of technological resources needed for an optimum language-learning environment (Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, 2019; Wreikat, Kabilan, & Abdullah, 2014). Furthermore, based on studies on the recent implementation of the CEFR-aligned English syllabus guided by the English Language Roadmap 2015-2025, indigenous students could not relate to the new textbooks as they found the imported study material to be too foreign and lexically difficult (Aziz, Rashid, & Zainudin, 2018; Sabbir, 2019). In addition, the present education available for the indigenous community is not able to support and encourage successful educational outcomes for the *Orang Asli* children (Renganathan, 2016; Mihat, 2015).

At a macro level, poor language policy-related decisions are also in play, such as the revocation of past bilingual policies (e.g., PPSMI) and the subsequent implementation of making SPM English a compulsory pass that did not come into fruition. According to the Malaysian Ministry of Education (2004), the education policy of one-size-fits-all meets the necessity to accommodate and assimilate the *Orang Asli* children into the mainstream for successful

educational outcomes, which disregards the fundamental understanding that any educational strategies for disadvantaged groups must acknowledge and respect the differences of those said groups. Abdullah, Mamat, Zal and Ibrahim's (2013) study provides evidence that the current teaching pedagogy for *Orang Asli* students is generally stereotyped and that the pedagogy is unable to stimulate their interest.

Socio-cultural factors such as poverty, early marriage, lack of parental support, and high dropout rate (Abdullah et al., 2013; Hanafi, Ahmad, & Ali, 2014) also impact the indigenous community's perception of the value of education. The perception of being marginalised further demotivates them, and they are not fully aware that education is one way of breaking the poverty line. In the words of Montecel (2013), "education has been and is a way out of poverty, especially for minority students". Furthermore, Renganathan (2013) reiterates that teaching English to rural students has always posed many challenges, but learning English language across rural areas might better not put the students at a disadvantage positions is believed to be important; children in rural areas might better not be placed at disadvantaged positions, including the *Orang Asli* villages in Peninsular Malaysia.

WRITING CHALLENGES OF EFL *ORANG ASLI* STUDENTS

Focussing on the aspect of writing which makes up one of the four main skills of language, there is a need to address the challenges faced by low proficiency *Orang Asli* students when writing in English. This section highlights the main obstacles commonly faced by low proficiency *Orang Asli* students when writing in English.

Firstly, EFL students in Malaysia constantly make linguistic errors, especially in grammar, which affects their English writing capability (Ghabool, Mariadass, & Kashef, 2012; Jalaluddin, Awal, & Bakar, 2008). Any English text that is riddled with grammatical errors disrupts comprehensibility and fluency, and these students are often penalised based on their grammar mastery despite the ability to communicate the main idea through their essay. According to Hijjo (2013) and Maros, Tan and Salehuddin (2007), low proficiency students struggle with using the plural mark 's' and '3rd singular' in present tense correctly, and have poor grasp and understanding of articles, subject-verb agreement, and the copula 'be'.

Some students failed to use correct "singular/plural form, verb tense, word choice, preposition, subject-verb agreement, and word order" (Darus & Subramaniam, 2009, p. 483), and their essays constantly have wrong punctuation (Ghabool et al., 2012). Likewise, teachers find it difficult to grade students' work due to the incorrect linguistic forms which impede readability, and they would focus on grading and correcting students' linguistic errors rather than evaluating the essay as a whole. Although the updated CEFR-based rubric has shifted the scoring paradigms to focus on semantic as opposed to syntactical evaluation, it undermines the EFL students' true writing capability upon leaving school if they cannot write English cohesively and coherently in the workplace.

Secondly, there is evidence of language-learning interference between EFL and the learners' first language (L1). According to Ghabool et al. (2012), writing correct English is a challenge for many Malaysian students due to the influence of their mother tongues. The learning of the national language also becomes an obstacle for learning proper English due to the different grammatical structures between Malay and the target language, in which students constantly make linguistic errors in terms of morphology and syntax such as adverbs, plurality, and adjectives in the superlative forms (Jalaluddin et al., 2008). Consequently, students may tend to incorrectly transfer language structures by directly translating from Malay to English, since the assumption is that both

languages primarily serve to communicate and share the exact meaning of words and sentence structure, albeit in a different textual form.

Although EFL students can take advantage of their pre-existing L1 knowledge in order to transfer language learning (such as establishing innate rules by comparing and contrasting the grammar and vocabulary of both languages), How (2016) noted that students tend to prioritise the learning of their native languages or national language over English. As students are expected to perform well in all aspects of school (whether academic standing or co-curricular activities), they may find it hard to cope with the ever-increasing school workload. Furthermore, the linguistic circumstances of prioritising Malay or their mother tongue coupled with the lack of practice of English outside the classroom could facilitate L1 interference and eventually slow down or even impede English learning (Abun, 2008). After all, students with diverse language backgrounds must put in extra effort in order to holistically develop their language skills, especially English, to not disadvantage themselves as they enter the working environment.

Lastly, *Orang Asli* students may be demotivated by their current low English language proficiency and poor writing skills. According to Hiew (2012), students who achieved poor grades in English writing succumb to their low language proficiency, showing little desire to challenge themselves to write better essays. They lose confidence and interest and feel demotivated to write. Some students skip English lessons or even play truant altogether for fear of being judged by the teacher and peers and may exhibit symptoms of avoidance, language anxiety or defensiveness in class. Low proficiency EFL students plagued by the feeling of helplessness are discouraged from practising and writing more, which eventually disrupts their acquisition of good writing skills.

Although many students are aware of the importance and practicality of English in the Malaysian and global workplace, most show little effort in improving their language proficiency (Mat & Yunus, 2014; Yunus & Abdullah, 2011). Noori, Shamary and Keong (2015) suggested that students' English proficiency deteriorated over the years due to the poor implementation of language policies. This was supported by How (2016), who claimed that the phenomenon of students refusing to improve their English proficiency is caused by the learner's language experience affected by language policies. Ergo, a strong bilingual or multilingual policy needs to be implemented in schools nationwide which can potentially drive students to improve their academic achievement while learning better English such as reintroducing English as a medium of instruction for STEM subjects.

Besides the macro-level factor, How (2016) also mentioned other factors in play, including the students' social environment, socio-economic background, and "consequently to what extent they treat English as an important language" (p. ii). The *Orang Asli* do not use English on a regular basis as they use their native language to communicate with members of their ethnic community and the national language for general communication in Malaysia. Parents who do not highly value the English language naturally influence their children to do the same. Although English is offered as a compulsory subject in national schools, those who are poverty-stricken are already disadvantaged from gaining any form of proper education and thus do not share the same opportunities to learn English.

In order to address these students' writing challenges, there is a need to look into the effectiveness of genre-based writing pedagogy for teaching writing to low proficiency EFL students. The framework is grounded by the conceptualisation of genre, the model for teaching and learning cycle, and the socio-cultural theory of learning, which are discussed in the following section.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF GENRE AS A MEANS OF TEACHING EFL WRITING

Teaching low proficiency EFL students to write whole texts comes with a plethora of challenges (Cumming, 1989). Although the student is expected to apply proper rhetoric rules and use appropriate linguistic features, the reality is that teachers tend to focus on the sentence level, which causes learners to have little to no awareness of the level of the full text. In order to provide students with the ability to recognise textual and linguistic features that are used to construct and shape whole texts, there has been a move towards explicit teaching of genres in many contexts.

Genre writing is used to define a set of conventions, characteristics, and social settings that guide the manner in which a text is written and used (Hyland, 2003). Therefore, a genre-based approach is based on a systemic functional theory of language developed by Halliday (1994, 1978) and elaborated by Martin (1992), Macken-Horarik (2001) and others. This model of teaching writing has been successful with students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Macken-Horarik, 2001; Rothery, 1996). Encompassing writing strategies in the form of modelling texts and joint negotiation, the approach has its roots in the teaching and learning cycle which forms the basis of “learning through guidance and interaction” (Painter, 1986 as cited in Macken-Horarik, 2001, p. 26). Rothery’s Model of the Genre Teaching and Learning cycle (Figure 2) involves three stages: (1) Modelling, (2) Joint Negotiation of Text, and (3) Independent Construction of Text. The descriptions for each stage are methodologically listed according to Dirgeyasa (2016), as illustrated in Table 1.

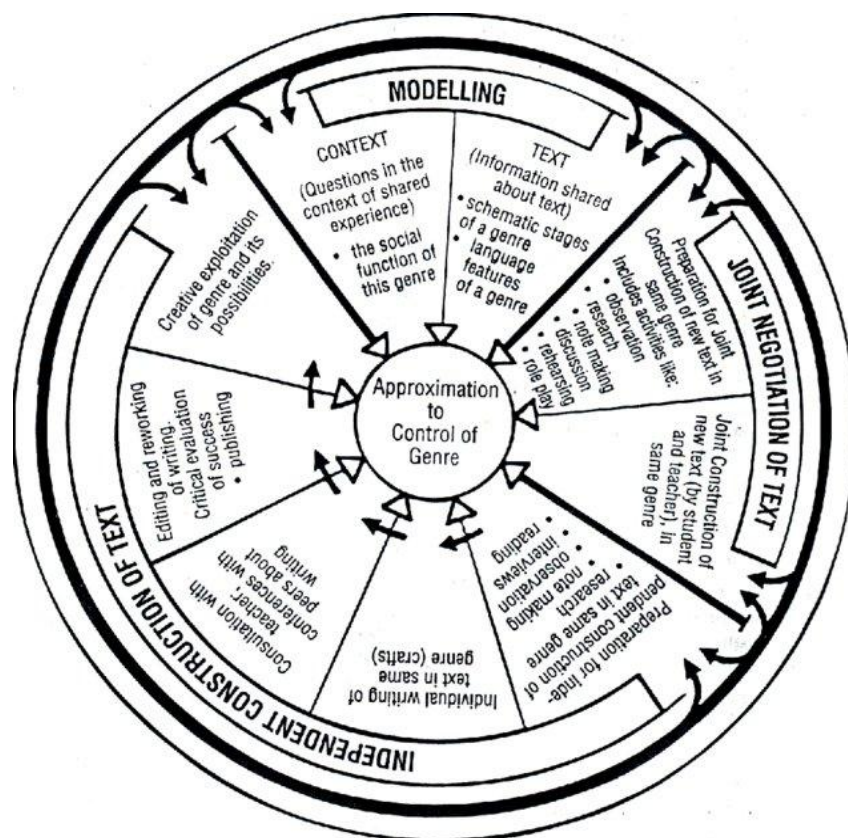


FIGURE 2. Rothery’s Model of the Genre Teaching and Learning Cycle. Adapted from Firkins, Forey and Sengupta (2007)

TABLE 1. The Genre Teaching and Learning Cycle (Dirgeyasa, 2016)

Stage	Description
Modelling	In modelling a text, there are four practical steps, which must be implemented during the teaching and learning process. The four practical steps are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher chooses a certain type of genre writing in order to develop the classroom activities. In this case, the type of genre must match with the students' needs and market needs where they will work later on. The teacher and the students discuss the text genre by modelling and deconstruction or even manipulating the text. The students are directed and situated in order to know and understand the function of the text, the communicative purpose of the text. Take, for example, the genre procedure writing – the function of procedure and the purpose of the writing procedure. The students then study the vocabulary usages of a certain genre procedure, grammatical or structural patterns of procedure, and then the students practice the procedure if necessary.
Joint Negotiation of Text	In the joint negotiation stage, the students start to do something more practical and operational dealing with writing. However, their work or genre writing is not writing at all because they modify and manipulate the text given. The students are still guided and helped by the teacher before they become independent writers of a certain genre taught and learned. As a matter of fact, there are three practical steps concerning how joint negotiation stage is developed and implemented: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The students reconstruct the certain genre writing given. In this case, the student may revise and paraphrase the vocabulary usage, grammatical patterns, and textual devices if necessary, using their own words. The teacher continuously guides the students to discuss and order the students to remember so that they really understand well about the genre type given. Before going forward to stage three, the independent construction of a text, state modelling text and joint negotiation are important to review.
Independent Construction of Text	By having prior understanding and experiences of stages one and two, the students are ordered to write a certain type of genre as what they have learned before. The student writes a given genre type independently. In this case, the teacher must be sure that the students really understand the features of a certain genre, such as the communicative purpose, structural element of the text, grammatical patterns usage, relevant vocabulary usage, and textual devices as well.

The model provides a guideline that aims to help students achieve the main goal of being able to write EFL texts independently. It begins by building students' schema in order to develop their contextual and metacognitive awareness, drawing on the students' existing background knowledge. This is accomplished using authentic texts as a model, several of which would be familiar to students in their daily lives (although perhaps familiar to them in their first language). The model introduces and reiterates a metadiscourse, giving students an opportunity to use a language to talk about language. It also uses intertextuality in the form of linking texts which encourages students to explicitly discuss similarities found in a genre, such as lexico-grammatical features commonly found in texts of a certain genre.

The genre teaching and learning cycle model is grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of socio-cultural learning and especially the notion of instructional scaffolding provided by the teacher to the student in acquiring genre writing skills. The Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development views that the cognitive development of children is advanced through social interaction with more skilled people. In the context of learning EFL writing, the student constantly obtains necessary instructions and guidance to write from the teacher in the form of scaffolding, and they will progress from being helpless to needing help and finally achieving independence in writing. The integration of Vygotsky's theory into the conceptualisation of genre and the model for teaching genre writing is crucial in understanding the transformative state of a learner's schema while acquiring genres.

By conceptualising genre as a model for teaching EFL writing through the integrated theoretical lenses of socio-cultural learning and extensive secondary research, a framework for evaluating the potential of teaching genre based EFL writing is derived, the genre pedagogical framework. The genre teaching framework for language instruction is based on examples of a particular genre (e.g., narrative). In essence, the genre framework supports students' writing with generalised, systematic guiding principles about producing meaningful passages framework for language instruction based on examples of a particular genre. It empowers the acquisition of English writing skills of the linguistically disadvantaged indigenous community. The following section discusses past studies in the global context and the practicality of genre-based teaching from teachers' perspectives.

PAST STUDIES ON THE EFFICACY OF GENRE-BASED WRITING PEDAGOGY TO PROMOTE CREATIVITY

The efficacy of genre-based pedagogy for teaching writing had been tested in global EFL classrooms; past studies provided evidence that the approach is beneficial to EFL students with low English proficiency. One such study by Aunurrahman, Hikmayanti, and Yuliana (2020) explored the effectiveness of genre-based pedagogy on 36 students, and they found that the participants were able to produce texts "independently, critically, and creatively" (p. 1). As teachers successfully conducted explicit teaching and scaffolding of genre linguistic features, students demonstrated independence in writing and were able to utilise information, expressions, and contexts based on the instructed content. Similarly, Gill and Janjua (2020) exposed 40 students to genre instruction for four months, targeting the argumentative genre. The findings showed that the approach positively affected the learners' texts as they scored higher marks after treatment and demonstrated better organisation in writing. The improvement on various aspects of the argumentative genre was said to have been contributed by optimum teacher scaffolding.

In the EFL context, Dong and Lu (2020) exposed 30 students to genre instruction for a total of 20 weeks. The intervention helped the participants gain genre knowledge and improve their writing skills. In turn, learners acknowledged the benefits of understanding certain genre features and they understood the said features well after explicit instruction. The hands-on writing activities also enhanced students' engagement towards the approach. Another EFL study (Mitsikopoulou, 2020) investigated the effectiveness of the genre-based approach on undergraduate students using academic and media texts. Through the provision of explicit scaffolding, the participants exhibited the learning and application of genre writing skills. They identified similar features of the texts, selected appropriate lexico-grammatical features, and consequently reconstructed texts by building upon gained knowledge. The writers demonstrated criticality and creativity in the learning and writing process and meaning-making at the interpersonal and textual levels.

Next, Kessler (2020) also shed light on the pedagogical efficacy by teaching legal genre to six EFL students. Based on in-class observations, field notes, lesson materials, and student interviews, the learners gained metacognitive genre awareness and further developed their writing skills using what they have learnt in class, combined with their prior experiences with related genres. Kessler claimed that the perceived writing quality is affected by the writers' "increased ability to self-report [their] metacognitive genre awareness" (p. iii). Using a quasi-experimental model, Wu (2017) looked into the argumentative writing of 207 students. Pre and post-tests were used to evaluate students' writing performance before and after the intervention. After one semester, the approach successfully improved students' proficiency in writing as their scores improved after the experiment. In fact, students wrote better essays with better use of collocation,

content, and organisation in writing. Finally, from a quantitative case study lens, Emilia and Hamied (2015) focused on teaching expository genre to 19 students. The participants were able to make use of the approach and developed their expository writing skills while demonstrating good control of the genre's schematic structure and linguistic features after one semester's worth of writing lessons. The EFL learners reacted positively to the approach and were conscious of their improved writing skills.

In addition, Horverak (2016a) employed a mixed-methods approach to explore the impact of the genre-based approach on 83 students and four teachers. The four-week experimental study focused on argumentative genre, which resulted in a significant positive effect on students' writing performance. The students scored higher essay marks after the intervention, and qualitative data indicated the overall improvement in structure and content. The same author (2016b) also conducted a follow-up study to determine the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the treatment. Based on interview data and classroom observation, both groups displayed appreciation towards the type of scaffolding instruction provided by the genre-based pedagogy. Specifically, students were of the view that they became better at using textual resources and structured texts and reacted positively to the approach. Furthermore, teachers emphasised the usefulness, clarity, and coherence of the classroom materials; teachers were satisfied with the newly introduced teaching style. The explicit teaching of grammar was also emphasised in the study.

Some researchers also looked into EFL learners' ability to transfer knowledge from their first language (L1). Morell and Cesteros (2019) carried out a quantitative study on 29 graduate students to investigate whether genre awareness of research articles could be transferred from L1 to English. The 15-week intervention was successful in helping students gain a higher level of academic literacy in English, confirming the positive effects of genre knowledge gains in accomplishing further writing goals. The students became more confident in their writing and more aware of appropriate genre features; the genre enhanced their discourse analysis. According to Morell and Cesteros (2019), the ability to identify and characterise textual features was deduced as a requirement for mastering written genres. Another study comparing explicit genre instruction with implicit model instruction was carried out by Liu (2018) on two students. The prior pedagogy was found to increase the rate of learning transfer and encouragement. It showed how students employed strategies of direct transfer, repeated reading texts, generalisation of grammar, and sentence structure rules in order to carry L1 knowledge of topics and various writing elements into their English essays. It was concluded that EFL learners took advantage of their pre-existing L1 knowledge to acquire EFL writing skills better, which was consistent with the findings of Morell and Cesteros (2019).

Although most genre-based studies emphasised students' performance after explicit instruction, some looked into teachers' perspectives; teachers found success and practicality in teaching genre-based writing. The most recent study was by Brisk, Tian and Ballard (2021), who conducted a narrative analysis on an EFL teacher's teaching development in the context of genre instruction. The teacher taught the autobiography genre for four years, in which their teaching style has steadily improved through classroom observation and analysis of evolving writing styles from four EFL student cohorts. The factors that made the teaching improvement possible were well-informed content, guiding instructions, and effective professional development (Brisk et al., 2021). This study provided evidence for the possibility of transitioning into a genre-based pedagogy fuelled by the willingness and determination of the practitioner.

Another case study (Li, Ma, Zhao, & Hu, 2020) shed light on two English teachers' genre-based instructional practices through genre-based pedagogy. The teachers adopted an inductive

and discovery-based approach to teaching EFL genre writing based on observational data, course materials, teacher interviews, and student focus groups. They catered to the students' needs by designing appropriate tasks related to linguistic resources, using local materials to which students can relate. The writing goal was well-established as learners knew what they needed to write, and both teachers found the activities to be useful in improving students' writing skills. In a similar context, a qualitative study that explored the beliefs and practices of six EFL teachers who underwent professional training in genre-based pedagogy was reported by Shi, Baker, and Chen (2019). Data from classroom observations and teacher interviews showed that the approach positively affected teachers' cognition about writing instruction, and the teachers were empowered to incorporate the approach into their writing lessons. Prior to the workshop, the teachers were adamant about their traditional pedagogical practices but became more aware of genre-based writing instruction. It was also reported that future EFL writing lessons should emphasise various writing elements such as coherence and grammar.

Additionally, Nurlaelawati and Novianti (2017) employed a qualitative case study to determine the current knowledge and understanding of the genre-based approach on six preservice teachers. Based on questionnaire data, classroom observation, lesson materials, and teacher interviews, the teachers strongly believed that the approach was "very useful and applicable" (p. 160) for teaching EFL writing. They were of the view that the approach helped activate students' knowledge of language structures, and the exposure to certain text types will build their lexicogrammatical schemata.

Based on the critical analysis of past studies, we propose a genre pedagogical framework to overcome EFL writing challenges experienced by low proficiency *Orang Asli* students in Malaysia. The following section discusses past studies in the global context and the practicality of genre-based teaching from teachers' perspectives.

DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

By introducing the situational factors that contribute to *Orang Asli* students' low English proficiency and highlighting their writing challenges, we have established a clear and novel research gap that few studies to date, have attempted to address. Therefore, we put forward the genre pedagogical framework as a potential means to help these disadvantaged and underprivileged students gain an advantage in learning how to write better English essays. Backed by past studies on its efficacy on low proficiency EFL learners in various contexts, there is adequate evidence that the framework can enable teachers to raise their students' genre awareness (Kessler, 2020; Mitsikopoulou, 2020) and help them overcome the main challenge of reducing linguistic and grammatical errors in writing (Emilia & Hamied, 2015; Horverak, 2016a, 2016b; Wu, 2017).

At the Modelling stage, the teacher will provide and use model texts as a basis for explicit instruction of genres such as narrative texts encompassing common linguistic features (e.g., present tense, first-person pronoun), writing elements pertaining to the organisation of the text (e.g., introduction, thesis statement), and the main communicative purpose (e.g., to give a recount of an event or story). By comparing and contrasting the similarities of these texts, novice writers then use the new information and compare it with their pre-existing writing knowledge, altering their schema in the learning process. The transition from being helpless in writing to being able to at least replicate the learned genre features empowers EFL learners to write texts independently (Aunurrahman et al., 2020). Straightforward, genre-based instruction will also enable these

students to effectively transfer writing knowledge from their L1 into EFL (Liu, 2018; Morell & Cesteros, 2019). Additionally, the Joint Negotiation and Independent Construction phases of the framework encourages students to participate in writing activities that are engaging and motivating (Dong & Lu, 2020; Horverak, 2016b).

The writing activities designed for promoting creativity place a strong emphasis on students' ability to write creatively while adhering to the genre rules. This is because creativity has a strong impact on the acquisition of foreign languages, enabling learners to master their target language (Nosratinia & Zaker, 2015; Shepard & Runco, 2016). Writing lessons through incorporating creative elements "not only provides learners with the primary impetus to learn a language, but also sustains the language-learning process" (Liao et al., 2018, p. 215). By integrating creativity into engaging writing lessons, the genre pedagogical framework will be able to foster *Orang Asli* students' original thinking, generate students' motivation, and increase their attention span in the EFL classroom (Avila, 2015; Jones & Richards, 2016; Kaufman, 2016).

Teachers who have incorporated genre-based instruction into their everyday classes have found it to be useful and informative (Li et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2019). However, the fact is that the genre pedagogical framework can only be successfully implemented if teachers are ready to embrace new pedagogical practices and adapt to their students' needs in EFL classrooms. For the framework to be truly effective, they will need to constantly adjust their teaching styles to differentiate strategies and provide optimum scaffolding at all times (Aunurrahman et al., 2020; Gill & Janjua, 2020; Mitsikopoulou, 2020). Nonetheless, the possible application of the framework in the Malaysian EFL context is extremely hopeful as reactions towards the gist of the proposed framework have been positive for teachers (Nurlaelawati & Novianti, 2017), students (Emilia & Hamied, 2015), and both (Horverak, 2016b).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper attempts to bridge the gap between indigenous students' writing challenges in the current context and effective literacy pedagogy for the continuous improvement of the disadvantaged indigenous community by presenting a conceptual framework that endorses the teaching of genre writing to indigenous students in the Malaysian EFL classroom. It focuses on using creative pedagogy to nurture *Orang Asli* students' creativity in the EFL classroom and promote their English language proficiency simultaneously with writing activities aimed at building their creativity. It also fills the gap in the literature as no study has investigated the effectiveness of genre-based pedagogical approaches to teaching writing to *Orang Asli* students in Malaysia. The new knowledge produced by this study serves as a reference point to other EFL teachers involved in teaching indigenous students and has the potential of meeting the increasing demands of EFL teachers' pedagogical practices in the indigenous community. We recommend research that enables stakeholders to improvise and facilitate more effective measures to ensure the success of indigenous students with specific reference to EFL writing mastery. It will enable the improvement of the teaching and learning of EFL among the indigenous community like the *Orang Asli*, where relevant pointers can be taken into consideration for the training of the teachers' needs in relation to various techniques and methods that would benefit the minority, indigenous community in Malaysia.

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