

REVIEW OF THE SFL GENRE-BASED APPROACH IN A THAI TERTIARY CONTEXT

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Abstract

Writing is a highly complicated process, made up of various sub-processes that occur not one after another in a strict linear pattern, but 'cyclically and in varying patterns' (Caudery, 1995). For this reason, writing for different purposes requires different skills and language resources, making writing one of the most difficult skills for students to master. Therefore, it is important that instructors teach their students about different language resources required for each kind of writing, and raise awareness of the relationship between contextual features, including writing goals, and language patterns. This paper reviews relevant literature about writing instruction from three genre traditions (New Rhetoric, English for Specific Purposes- ESP, and Systemic Functional Linguistics- SFL); proposes SFL as the most appropriate theory for Thai English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners; discusses previous studies on applications of the approach in the writing classrooms of Thailand; and draws conclusions on guidelines for future research.

Key words: Genre Schools, SFL Genre-Based Approach, Thai EFL Learning Context, Academic Writing

Introduction

Globalization has had widespread influence on the process of language learning and teaching (Jindapitak & Teo, 2011). In the Thai learning context, English language has become an essential skill for students to master as Thailand has now become a member of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The teaching of English in the classroom has played an important role in training and equipping students with the skills necessary for cross-border communication and lifelong learning. To cope with current changes,

graduates with outstanding competence in English are required to meet the high demands of the industrial sector (Kongpetch, 2006). It is thus very important that language teaching and learning at a tertiary level in Thailand responds to these demands to ensure that the workforce has skills consistent with market requirements.

While English language proficiency is highly desired by a number of workplaces, research (Chaisiri, 2010; Foley, 2005; Rayupsri & Kongpetch, 2014) has shown that the overall English language competency of Thai students is still relatively poor, especially in regard to their written skills. A number of studies have reported that academic writing in English is the most difficult skill to master by Thai students (Chinnawongs, 2001; Padgate, 2008; Syananondh & Padgate, 2005). Padgate (2008) also reported that even though some students had fluent spoken skills, they had problems with written English. These findings reinforce the need to improve the academic literacy skills of Thai students.

Numerous strategies have been used in Thai writing classes to enhance student proficiency. The most common include: group-writing activities (the co-construction of texts by students working together- Lakarnchua & Wasanasomsithi, 2013, p. 114); mind-mapping (the gathering and outlining of ideas- Davis & Liss, 2006); and peer feedback (writers reading each others' work and making comments or asking questions- Kulprasit & Chiramanee, 2013). Outcomes reported from the use of these strategies vary. For example, group writing and peer feedback have been found to promote collaborative learning; mind-mapping may have been used to prepare ideas and discussion more successfully. However, despite these positive impacts, limitations of these strategy approaches have also been reported. For example, group-writing activities have been found to place limitations on individual students' learning opportunities or result in the tasks not being completed on time (The University of Queensland, 2016). As writing classes usually consist of students with mixed abilities (Kulprasit & Chiramanee, 2013; Nuangpolmak, 2012), students with stronger academic performance may take control of the tasks while lower achieving students may opt out. Mind-mapping may be useful in terms of content preparation, but it could be considered as time consuming by some students as it involves the use of images, symbols and colours (Fiktorius, 2013). Similarly, peer feedback could have a negative impact on student writing (Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Eugenia Arnaudo Stine, 2011) because some students may have insufficient language knowledge and make feedback on surface errors or give advice that does not help (Bijami, Kashef & Nejad, 2013). Most importantly, these strategy approaches focus on learners in isolation while

the knowledge of how language is used in a context has been left out.

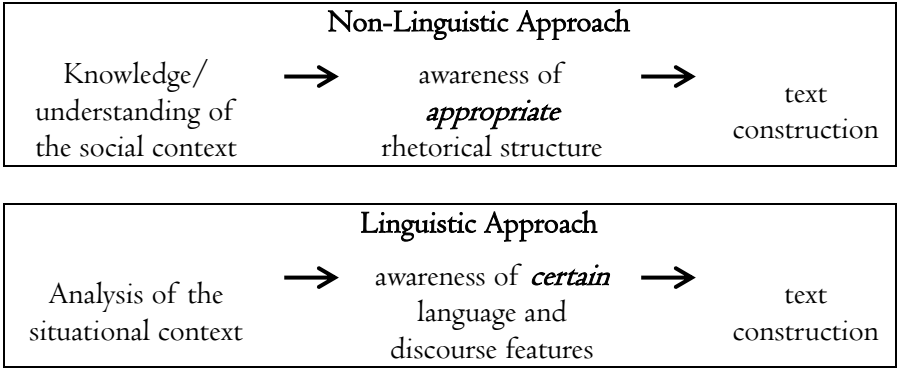
These concerns imply that successful writing involves a number of contributing factors. In addition to training students with the skills or abilities to prepare their writing content, the knowledge of language and context should also be included to support students to effectively organize different types of text to meet different disciplinary purposes. Evidence of this was reported in findings from the recent study by Piriya Silpa (2015), investigating teachers' perceptions of students' English essay writing, and finding that major problems in student writing included: the mismatch of the assignment goal and students' written work; text organization; and grammar or language structure. This means that, in addition to the strategy approaches discussed above, the approach which could help Thai students improve their writing should be the one that builds knowledge about valued disciplinary texts and their context of use. This includes the writing purpose and audience, the rhetorical structure of a text, and the realization of that text structure through language choices.

Genre-based approaches have been found by a number of researchers to best meet the needs of student writers because their focus is on the construction of texts which are purposeful, socially situated responses to particular contexts and communities (Hyland, 2003, p. 17). However, each of them explains the relationship between language and context differently, and that relates more or less to linguistic patterns. This paper examines the three genre traditions using the genre-based approaches. The aim is to identify the most appropriate way for teaching of writing in a Thai EFL learning context, and outline implications for future research.

The Genre Traditions

There are currently three main schools of genre that have influenced international language learning and teaching: New Rhetoric, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The three traditions differ in terms of principles and pedagogical practices, and are appropriate to different learning groups, but a clear distinction can be made by categorizing them as 'linguistic and non-linguistic' (Johns, 2002). This representation is presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure I: Differences in linguistic and non-linguistic approaches (cf. Johns, 2002)



Non-linguistic approach

Being influenced by post-structuralism, the New Rhetoric School falls into the category of the non-linguistic approach, and studies genre as the motivated, functional relationship between text type and rhetorical situation (Hyland, 2003, p.22). Scholars from this school argue that genre is ‘evolving and dynamic’ and explicit genre teaching restricts the improvement in student writing (Hyon, 1996, p. 709). This approach therefore focuses less on the lexico-grammar or rhetorical structure but puts more emphasis on the situational context where different genres occur (e.g. Adam and Artemeva, 2002; Coe, 2002). For this reason, the main goal of the New Rhetoric School is to train students and professionals to be aware of the situational characteristics and social functions of the text in which they are engaged, and to select the appropriate rhetorical structure based on knowledge of the social context when writing. This approach is more appropriate for native-speaking learners as it focuses on the consideration of appropriate language use in different social activities, thereby requiring higher level of language skills. Not surprisingly, there has not been any report of previous studies using this approach in the Thai educational context.

Linguistic approaches

The linguistic approach concentrates on the lexico-grammatical and/or rhetorical realization of the communicative purposes embodied in a genre. The schools which fall into this category are ESP and SFL. Their method is based on training students to examine the situational context, interpret the linguistic and discourse structures, and then construct the text.

Classroom activity informed by these traditions would involve analyzing different text types and raising learner awareness of their rhetorical structure before starting to write.

From Figure 1, we can see the ESP and SFL schools concentrate on both the form and function of language. The two schools are similar in many ways, but distinctions can be drawn based on the theories which underpin them and their pedagogies.

ESP

From an ESP perspective genre is defined as ‘a group of documents which share some set of communicative purposes’ (Swales, 1990, p. 45). Genres as characterized in terms of ESP are located within ‘discourse communities’ (that is, groups of people who share certain language-using practices- *ibid.*), which contain a series of moves, and develop, use, and modify written genres in response to the current rhetorical situations they face (Adam & Artemeva, 2002, p. 180). For this reason, the ESP tradition expects the writers to shape and manipulate genres as well as the choices of their content and style to suit certain purposes of different discourse communities (Hyland, 2003). The approach however does not provide guidelines of pedagogy nor descriptions of text and context, for example, the explanation of how language features configure the move has not been given. The ESP approach has been widely used in teaching English for specific careers, such as engineering, tourism and business, and for academic purposes. Its CARS (Creating a Research Space) model- Swales, 1990) is oriented towards the writing of research papers or theses. In the Thai context, previous studies used the ESP-genre based approach as an analytical tool to investigate the structure of academic papers in Thai journals (Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2013) or the structure of English acknowledgements of PhD thesis of Thai students (Jaroenkitboworn, 2014). The ESP genre-based approach has also been employed for instructional purposes in writing classrooms (e.g. Changpueng & Wasanasomsithi, 2009; Malakul and Bowering, 2006) to assist students to better write request emails (Changpueng & Wasanasomsithi, 2009) and scientific reports (Malakul & Bowering, 2006).

SFL

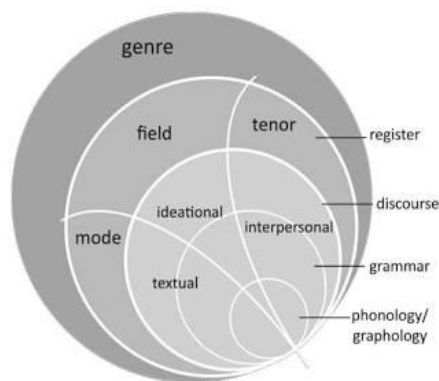
The SFL genre-based view defines genres as staged, goal-oriented social processes (Martin, 1997, p.13). ‘Genres are social in the sense that they are created by people in their social interaction with each other; they are

goal oriented in that they exist to serve specific purposes; and they are staged because it usually takes more than one step for people to achieve their goals' (Fang, 2015, p.105). For this reason, each established genre contains a predictable sequence of stages (called the generic structure). Genre theorists argue that students need explicit instruction of genres, their structures and linguistic realizations if they are to participate in mainstream textual and social processes within and beyond the school (Macken-Horarik, 2002). While genres in SFL terms could be predictable and recognizable as 'recurrent configurations of meaning' in a culture (Martin, 2009, p.19), they also respond to changes in people's ways of life and cultural worldviews, as well as to the immediate situational context and participants' intentions (Fang, 2015, p.105).

A notable distinction of SFL genre-based approach is that it has a theory which systematically links features of context to features of texts in a relationship of realization. This means that SFL understands the meaning of a text to depend not only on its wording, but on its context of use (Martin, 2014, p. 313), and context in terms of SFL consists of two interdependent strata: context of situation (the environment where the text is created) and the more abstract context of culture (cultural backgrounds, beliefs and social values).

In Martin's (2014) model both context and language are modelled as levels or strata. Context is understood as the more abstract stratum of genre which is realized by specific contextual variables known collectively as register (i.e. field, tenor and mode). Strata of language in Martin's model include discourse semantics, lexico-grammar and expression. In Figure 2, the language systems at each stratum are further organized according to the particular meanings they make. These language systems are called metafunctions. In the following section, I will further explicate the perspectives of stratification and metafunction in the SFL model in relation to how these concepts inform its genre-based writing pedagogy.

Figure 2: Stratification of language and meaning (Martin & Rose, 2011: 271)



Context (genre and register)

At the stratum of the context of culture, Martin and colleagues (e.g. Martin & Rose, 2008) describe genre as the recurring, recognizable patterns of language, which have evolved to achieve particular social purposes.

The context of situation recognizes that text is an authentic product of a social interaction (Eggins, 1994, p.23). This stratum involves the selection of different types of language in relation to the three register variables of tenor (the role of the relationships assumed by interactants), field (the social activities of the participants) and mode (the channel and/ or medium of communication chosen- Halliday, 1978, p. 31). A distinctive feature of the SFL model is that each of these variables has been found to be connected, in a relationship of realization, to a particular meaning system of language, including interpersonal (the use of language to enact relationships), ideational (the use of language to construe experience) and textual (the use of language to organize discourse). Relations between register variables and language metafunctions can be demonstrated in Table I below.

Table I: Relations between register variables and language metafunctions (Martin & Rose, 2008: 12)

Register		Metafunction	
Tenor	'kinds of role relationship'	Interpersonal	'enacting'
Field	'the social action that is taking place'	Ideational	'construing'
Mode	'what part language is playing'	Textual	'organizing'

As different patterns of language are used to construe different social activities, there are a number of texts organized to meet different aims. These texts are identified as a sequence of stages. The sequence is identified by the symbol ^, meaning 'is followed by'. For instance, the generic structure of an explanation can be represented as follows:

Explanation: General statement ^ Sequenced explanation

Within each stage, certain language features are used to achieve the function, and the unfolding stages establish the whole text structure. Table 2 below demonstrates the generic structure and language features used in an explanation.

Table 2: The generic structure and language features of an explanation (Choy & Cherk, 1990, p. 90)

Genre	Social function	Generic structure	Significant language features	Sample Text
Explanation	To explain why a particular phenomenon occurs.	--General statement (Paragraph 1) -- Sequenced explanation (Paragraphs 2-6)	--focus on generic, non-human nouns (bold) -- use mainly of action verbs and verbs of being in simple present tense (underlined) -- Use of conjunctions and words which signal cause-effect (brackets) -- Technical terms	How man ravages the earth P.1 Water <u>is</u> one of the most precious things on earth and a vital part of our daily life. But (as) population and industry <u>increase</u> , more and more water is being used and returned to the environment polluted. P.2 Factories <u>are</u> a major (cause) pouring vast amounts of chemicals into the water. One of these is <i>cadmium</i> , a heavy metal which (causes) kidney disease. Many rivers throughout the world from the Elbe in West Germany to the Rimac in Peru have <i>cadmium</i> levels well above the safety limit. P.3 When towns and villages do not <u>treat</u> their <i>sewage</i>

				<p>before letting it run back to streams and rivers, it not only <u>kills</u> the fish in the water by removing the oxygen from the water, it also upsets the balance in nature. In India, for example, only about eight towns and cities <u>are</u> able to fully treat their <i>sewage</i> before it reaches the river, and over 2500 towns and cities have no <i>sewage treatment plants</i> at all. Yet many of India's rivers are used for bathing washing and drinking.</p> <p>P.4 Fertilizers also find their way into rivers (causing) plants to grow too quickly. These plants then <u>choke</u> the waterways and when they die they <u>take</u> precious oxygen from the water.</p> <p>P.5 In addition, around one million tons of dirty water is pumped annually into the sea from tankers that clean out their empty tanks with sea water. (As) oil floats on water without getting dispersed, they <u>remain</u> potential threats for a long time. If they <u>come</u> near land, they can (cause) severe damage to fish and birds as well as pollute beaches and marine vegetation. (For this reason), major oil slicks are monitored by satellite.</p> <p>P.6 One of the dirtiest seas in the world <u>is</u> the Mediterranean which receives around 430 billion</p>
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				tons of waste a year in the form of oil , <i>sewage and radioactive materials</i> . It is estimated that it will take about 70 years for its waters to renew themselves. Governments <u>are</u> now very aware of protecting the <i>ecological balance</i> of the seas by controlling what factories give out.
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An illustration of how Field, Tenor and Mode are realized can be summarized as follows.

Field: the knowledge of how human activities cause water pollution; concurrently associating present events, action processes

Tenor: an expert in the field explaining the effects of human activities on water pollution; sharing information as a ‘knower’

Mode: written, monologue, naming examples of causes of water pollution, explaining and relating events through causative connectives or causal elements.

Pedagogy

Based on the gradual release responsibility (the teacher shift from assuming all the responsibility for performing a task to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 211), the SFL genre-based approach has the potential to help Thai EFL learners improve their writing. By providing descriptions of language structures and patterns which realize and indeed construe particular academic contexts, teachers can be explicit with learners about the semantic demands of any writing tasks. The teaching and learning activity of the SFL genre-based approach follows four different stages in the ‘teaching-learning cycle’ (Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan, & Gerot, 1992) below.

Building the knowledge of field

This initial stage aims at building learners’ knowledge of the general context of the topic. It involves discussion of cross-cultural similarities and differences that occur to create understanding of the purpose of various written genres among students. The range and nature of activities depend on

the extent of learners' language development and their familiarity with the topic or text type. Classroom activities may include exploring cultural similarities and differences related to the topic, practicing grammatical patterns, and building up and extending vocabulary.

Modeling of text

The main goal of this stage is to introduce the learners to a model of the genre they will be reading or writing so it focuses on the analysis of the genre through a model text related to the course topic. Classroom tasks and activities include reading the model text, developing an understanding of the social function and purpose of the text, developing an understanding of the overall organization and development of the text and developing an understanding that the organization of the text is functional i.e. the text is as it is because it is purpose filled. The questions which may be used in the classroom are such as: what is the purpose for writing this text? Who is the writer and who will be the reader? What is the relationship between the writer and reader? How is the text organized? What is the generic structure? What are the major language features which realize the context?

Joint construction of text

Based on teacher assessment of the extent of the learners' knowledge and understanding of the field, the aim of this stage is for the teacher to work with students to construct a similar text to provide explicit guidance and support in order to convert and reshape language from the spoken to the written mode. The support focuses on the structure of the genre and progressively, when the learners have demonstrated control of the generic stages of the text, on aspect such as the language features. Many jointly constructed texts maybe composed to ensure the learners have understood and have the awareness of the language features used.

Independent construction of text

In this last stage, the teacher assigns a writing task by providing the topic and asking students to write independently. The teacher's role here is to provide constructive comments and advise learners on what further development may be necessary (Hammond et al, 1992).

The discussion of the learning cycle shows that SFL genre-based approach provides explicit instructional guidelines for teacher to follow, and also descriptions of certain language features can be used to raise student

awareness of how each kind of genre is constructed. This shows that SFL genre-based approach is the most appropriate for Thai EFL learners. The following section therefore discusses previous studies which have employed the approach in the classrooms in Thailand.

Research related to the application of SFL genre-based approach in Thailand

The SFL genre-based approach has widely been used for the teaching and learning of school genres in Australia across different levels of education, namely: primary, secondary and adult education. In Thailand, most of the previous studies focused on the application of the SFL genre-based approach in the classrooms, especially writing classes, while the application of the approach for other purposes was still rare. On investigation, the study which has employed the SFL genre-based approach for the purposes other than teaching was that of Piriya Silpa (2009). Using the approach as an analytical tool, the study investigated the pattern of Thai EFL students' online discussion and found that online posts are organized by students in a consistent pattern at a macro-structural level consisting of three macro-stages, namely, 'Opening Bonding', 'Responding' and 'Closing Bonding'. 'Bonding' macro-stages work to build relationships and to maintain a community in the online setting, while 'Responding' macro-stages respond to the writing task as set by the teacher, representing a new form of social practice with the characteristics of both spoken and written language.

Previous studies which have applied the SFL genre-based approach in the writing classrooms have focused on particular text types, for example, exposition (Kongpetch, 2006); a review report (Payaprom, 2012) or recount (Rayupsri & Kongpetch, 2014) while some studies have investigated student writing ability in different genres throughout the semester i.e. exposition and discussion (Srinon, 2010); recount, argument, instruction/ process, and persuasion (Chaisiri, 2010); and personal recount, taxonomic report, comparison/ contrast report, and persuasion (Ngonkam, 2013). These previous studies followed the learning cycle in classroom instruction, however, the study of Rayupsri & Kongpetch (2014) implemented what they called a Process-Genre approach in a classroom instruction of how to write a recount. The Process-Genre approach is a combination of the process approach (involving: brainstorming, drafting, editing and publishing stages) with the SFL genre-based approach (involving: building up the knowledge of field, modeling of text, joint construction and independent construction

stages). By excluding some stages from both approaches, the Process-Genre approach consisted of: building up the knowledge of field, modeling of text, drafting, rewriting, and publishing stages. While other excluded stages (e.g. brainstorming and editing) could be included within other stages, the absence of the 'joint construction' stage in the Process-Genre approach is somewhat problematic in that it is the stage that allows teacher to show students how choices are picked up and how the managing choices flow in the text. By missing this stage, students may not have enough input of the particular genre descriptions, which may result in an insufficient understanding of the learnt genre type.

As far as assessment is concerned, previous studies investigated students' attitudes toward the SFL genre-based approach and indicated student development by examining student improvements in different ways. Ngongkam (2013) focused on the quantitative assessment of exam scores while other studies examined student abilities in taking control of texts in different perspectives, including the generic stages in isolation (Srinon, 2010) or the generic stages and language features (Chaisiri, 2010; Khongpet, 2006; Payaprom, 2012; Rayupsri & Kongpet, 2014). Evidence of student improvements was mainly made by comparing individual students' first and final drafts (Chaisiri, 2010; Khongpet, 2006; Payaprom, 2012; Rayupsri & Kongpet, 2014; Srinon, 2010). The different methods of investigation were, however, found in two studies (i.e. Chaisiri, 2010 and Payaprom, 2012). Chaisiri (2010) compared the drafts composed by the same student on different topics (Internet and smoking), and in Payaprom (2012), students' writing drafts were compared with a prompt text (a text poorly written by two amateur reviewers shown to students in order to rewrite or adjust based on the knowledge they have learnt). The comparison of texts written by the same student on different topics or the comparison of students' drafts with the prompt text was able to demonstrate students' ability from a broad perspective. However, the degree of improvement or changes of their abilities in taking control of the language was not able to be explained explicitly. Because of the important relationship between context and language choices, an analysis of the first and final drafts written on the same topic by the same student would demonstrate more explicitly how students improve their writing skills after the teaching intervention. Moreover, the selective assessment of language used in student writing may not help to explain students' writing development explicitly as any stretch of language functions simultaneously to enact the three kinds of meaning. The discussion above reflects the need of an assessment tool which allows both teacher and students to examine how language is used to explain the three meanings, and

enables the teacher to monitor student writing development in a continual basis.

While most of the previous studies agreed that students have positive attitudes toward the SFL genre-based approach, and the approach has been found to have the potential to help Thai students improve their writing, the findings in Srinon (2010) and Ngonkam (2013) were not completely consistent, due to limitations in the studies. Srinon (2010) found that students' development varied; that is, some students could follow the generic structure prototypes as outlined in the literature review while others could not. The study suggested that students should be familiarized with the background knowledge of the theory as well as the learnt genres at early stage. The time required to develop understandings of SFL's metalanguage (a language for talking about language and its use, in the context of academic written discourse- Humphrey and Feeze, in press) suggests that the SFL genre-based approach should be taught to Thai students during early courses. In addition, Ngonkam (2013) found that student scores had not statistically improved, though students had positive reactions to the instruction and felt the approach had enhanced their writing skills. There could, somewhat, be some limitations to this study. For example, the combination of different genres for teaching within one semester could lead to confusion among students, and the quantitative assessments as well as the comparison of different genres to indicate students' literacy development did not seem to be valid.

Implications for future applications of the approach and research

The discussion above shows that there has not yet been sufficient studies relating to the efficacy of SFL genre-based approach in a Thai EFL learning context. This section discusses some implications for future research, based on the findings from those studies.

The potential of SFL genre-based approach to help Thai EFL learners improve their academic writing

The findings from the studies reviewed above indicate that the SFL genre-based approach is useful in helping students to improve their writing, even though variations of improvements were found in some of the studies (for example, Srinon, 2010 and Ngonkam, 2013). Applications of diverse text types however have not been made. Further study is therefore needed to confirm previous findings and to see if the approach can help students successfully compose their writing assignments for different text purposes. To

confirm those positive findings from previous studies, further study could employ the SFL genre-based approach to identify the effects of teaching other genres, for instance, a procedure, a sequential explanation, a description, etc. to see how effectively this approach helps students improve their writing skills.

The limitations pointed out by those previous studies, however, need to be taken into account. As clearly pointed out in the studies of Srinon (2010) and Chaisiri (2010) that students needed support and the knowledge of the learnt genres at an early stage. This reflects that the instructional process however needs to be adjusted to ensure that students are informed of explicit conceptions of what is expected as the outcome of a particular genre to create a metalanguage and build on prior knowledge of students and teachers at an early stage.

The need to extend the approach application for purposes beyond writing

Previous studies in Thailand which employed the SFL genre-based approach were to help students improve their writing. However, the application of the approach for other purposes is still rare. Further studies should extend the application for other purposes, for instance: critical discourse analysis, the teaching of reading and oracy, multiliteracies, and assessment.

Rather than limiting the application of SFL theory to a classroom environment in Thailand, the genre-approach could be used as the analytical tool for discourse analysis, for example, the study of language used in English news reports or other text types in Thailand.

As for the purpose of teaching other skills, Kongpetch (2014) proposed the application of the SFL genre-based approach in teaching a narrative in a reading classroom and discussed its benefits in terms of teaching Isan folktales in a reading classroom. Kongpetch claimed that the genre analysis could help to raise student awareness and assist them in making better predictions while reading and the Isan folktales can familiarize student cultural knowledge, thereby improving comprehension. The analysis of genre prior to reading a narrative has the potential to help students improve their reading, however, a report of such application has not been made. Further study may follow the guidelines made by Kongpetch (2014) to help students improve their understanding of narrative texts.

Furthermore, SFL genre-based approach could be applied in the study

of multiliteracies. By examining how meaning is made via language and other resources (e.g. images or other digital media), the findings can lead to better understanding of the new way of communication, which represents the new way of learning.

Finally, the problems and limitations raised by previous studies reflect the need for a development of toolkit which serves for both instructional and assessment purposes. The need for instructional adjustment has been clearly stated in Chaisiri (2010) and Srinon (2010) that students need to be informed of expectations and clear conceptions of the taught genres. This implies that 'a representation of language in more abstract terms i.e. as genres which move through particular stages to achieve different social goals, does not provide beginning students with sufficient support for crafting texts' (Moon, 2012, p. 45). Therefore, adjustment could be made in the application of the SFL genre-based approach in the Thai EFL classrooms to support students throughout the whole process of learning. For assessment, there have not been consistent criteria set up to indicate students' ability in using language at different levels to communicate meaning. Therefore, a framework which can be used in professional learning to develop metalinguistic awareness at multiple levels and across multiple meaning systems should be developed to provide students with explicit guidelines for assessment at an early stage, to help them set the goal for learning, and later the teacher can continue applying that framework in the classroom learning activity while students can also follow the guidelines to frame their pathway for literacy development. Such instructional and assessment tools will create a shared knowledge of metalanguage between teacher and students of the expectations of the writing of particular genres, and help the teacher to identify students' ability more effectively.

By recontextualizing the SFL model, the two useful frameworks which could serve these needs are the 3x3 (Humphrey, Martin, Dreyfus & Mahboob, 2010) and 4x4 (Humphrey & Robinson, 2012; Humphrey, 2013) toolkits developed by Humphrey and colleagues. The first (Humphrey et al, 2010) is a 9 cell matrix which identifies language used to realize the three functions of language (ideational; interpersonal, and textual meaning-see Halliday, 1994) at three different levels: whole text (genre), paragraph (discourse), and sentence (grammar). It provides the guidelines for the analysis of student writing in the academic domain in general.

The second is a sixteen cell matrix 4 x 4 toolkit which was further developed from the previous one to provide a more concrete model of assessment tools. The 4 x 4 framework describes the organization of

language in terms of four meaning systems (ideational meaning, logical meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning- see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) at four levels of language: whole text (genre), paragraph (discourse), sentence (grammar), and word level (see Humphrey & Robinson, 2012; Humphrey, 2013). The 4x4 toolkits have been designed for more specific genres, for example, an exposition (Humphrey & Robinson, 2012) or an evaluative report (Humphrey, 2013).

The 3x3 and 4x4 toolkits have the potential to be useful for the writing classrooms in Thailand or other EFL classrooms in that they provide explicit guidelines of how meanings are realized through the selection of language choices at different levels. Furthermore, the toolkits have been developed by simplifying the terms and reducing complexity, so they can be used by teachers who do not have background in SFL, or, in some cases, in linguistics (Humphrey & Feeze, in press, p.2). As for the Thai EFL learner group in particular, the framework which has the best potential to support students is the 4x4 toolkit because the concrete descriptions of how language choices are used to realize the four meanings from different levels of genre, discourse, sentence and word would reflect more explicitly how students take control of the language. However, none of the previous studies has employed the 3x3 or 4x4 toolkits in their analysis. Further studies incorporating the teaching and assessment process of student literacy development through this lens should be made to identify more explicitly student literacy development.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the three schools of the genre-based approach and distinguishes their potential benefits and applications in writing classes for Thai students. A detailed discussion has been made with regards to the application of the SFL genre-based approach in a Thai educational context, as well as a review of previous studies. This paper is limited in scope because there were limited studies available for review based on the SFL genre-based approach. Further research is particularly important at this point in time as Thailand embraces its role in the ASEAN Economic Community in an increasingly globalized world when the competitive deficiency of English skills of Thai students has been identified.

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