

# An Exploration of English Application Writing Teaching based on Genre Approach

## -- Take Speech Writing as an Illustration

Rong Zhi

China West Normal University, Nanchong, Sichuan, 637001, China

### Abstract

Senior high curriculum reveals that students should be familiar with different stylistic text types and also know how to write them correctly in different situations. They face multifaced difficulties in writing due to the shortage of genre consciousness, diverse genre types, lower motivation and enthusiasm in English writing as well as poor writing production quality. The major reason can be traced into the deficiency in writing awareness by students and the lack of systematic genre writing guidance from teachers for learners. Hence, it can be widely seen that learners are puzzled and stressed to commence their writing when they are given different types of writing with diverse themes. Genre pedagogy based on theory of genre and genre analysis attaches importance to that learners should understand discourse structures and linguistic features of texts with different themes. Therefore, genre-based approach to a large extent can help learners ease their writing anxiety and deepen their genre awareness, eventually enhancing their writing quality and linguistic competence. This paper takes the genre of application as an illustration to explore how teachers can employ genre pedagogy to assist developing learners' genre awareness, linguistic knowledge and writing competence through speech writing. Hoping it can provide some further suggestions or implications for application writing teaching.

### Keywords

Genre Pedagogy; English Writing; Application Genre; Speech Writing.

## 1. Introduction

Application is the foundation for many other types of writing. Majorities of areas have added the application writing to be a part of writing of the college entrance examination, which greatly exacerbate the students' learning difficulty and tension on account of its various of discourses text types such as advice letter writing, news report and so on. Through analysis of yearly papers, we can find the genre of application writing is about different texts contents with three types of thematic contexts like advice letter, recommendation letter, notice letter, news report and speech. Students may find it quite difficult and strenuous to write different types of writing. Therefore, it's imperative to teach students to learn how to write the application based on the genre pedagogy so that they can have good command of genres structures and language characteristics of application. If students master application very well, they can lay a foundation for different types of learning and facilitate other genres learning. Generally speaking, application writing is significantly more difficult due to its diverse text types. Some major problems exist in application of learners, such as unobvious stylistic features, incorrect writing formulates, unclear topic as well as contents and irrational logic. The aforementioned problems mainly on account of the lack or absence of teachers' guidance. Without systematic, methodical and hierarchical instruction also makes students unclear about the stylistic features of

application, how to design and organize reasonable contents and how to reflect the theme and writing purpose. Hence, genre-based teaching is an effective way to address those common problems in students' application writing. This paper will take the application as an example to explore how to develop learners application writing under the guidance of genre pedagogy.

## 2. Definition of Genre Approach

Before understanding the genre approach, we should first know that genre means a particular style of category of works of arts; especially a type of literally work characterized by a particular form, style or purpose. Genre-based teaching is a method of teaching writing that draws students' attention to the genre and instructs them within a certain framework (Johns, 2003). According to genre theory, each type of text has a stable form and style, with its unique constituent elements, organizational structures and linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, logical connection means. Therefore, genre approach advocates teachers give writing guidance according to genre type. Feez (2002) refers to that genre pedagogy involves five phases: building the context; modeling and deconstructing the text; joint construction of the text; independent construction of the text; linking related texts. In those five steps, the role of teachers gradually weakens, from the leading role in the first two stages to the auxiliary role in the third stage, and finally to the complete withdrawal. Students complete the transformation from dependence on teachers to semi-independence and then to complete independence.

Genre teaching method centers on the full construction of scaffolding before writing, which not only provides students with a writing framework with context, but also highlights the meaning of discourse types in the context, helps students understand the construction of the text under the target genre as well as the reasons behind the specific structure, effectively solving the problems in students' application writing.

## 3. A Brief Analysis on Merits and Shortcomings of Genre Approach

Over the past few decades, the writing has undergone the development from the product approach to process approach and communicative approach, from genre approach to the process-genre approach. The process-genre approach emphasizes both the construction of content and the writing process, while it's time-consuming, which affects the teaching efficiency. Therefore, genre pedagogy is a suitable supplementary way to compensate for that method in spite of its potential drawbacks.

The essential advantage of the genre-based approach over other writing pedagogies for second language writers is that emphasizing the notion of genre promotes L2 writers' understanding of the relationship between the communicative purpose and the features of text at every discourse level. Genre-based pedagogy enables beginner or lower-level learners master relatively stable discourses patterns that can be used for reference and relied on, thus enhancing writers' confidence in understanding and creating. In a word, teaching writing applying the genre-based approach makes students aware of the fact that people write for a specific purpose as well as audience, that there is a close and systematic relationship between how they write and why they write.

Genre approach also exists some potential demerits. Majorities of teachers tend to explicitly teach genres in order to save time and enable learners can produce outcomes in a short time, which might result in restrictive formulate that constrains learners' creativity and choice. Teachers are likely to insist on students' conformity and discourage individual variation and choice in the process of genre teaching. Due to those factors, students come to perceive genres as rules and doubt their own ability to shape their individual experiences and ideas, accepting the dominance of prestige genres. In the long run, their thinking quality or innovative thinking

in writing will be weakened and their writing motivation or interest may also be discouraged, which are not helpful to develop students' subject core competence.

#### **4. Case Analysis on Speech Writing Teaching Based on Genre Approach**

Reading is a significant way for students to acquire discourse and language knowledge, accumulate and develop writing ideas. Therefore, in-depth study of discourse can help students solve the problem of what to write and how to write. This paper takes People's Education Press Student Book 2 Unit 5 Reading for Writing part "Write a Speech" as an illustration to demonstrate how to help students write their own speech writing with the help of genre approach, how to deepen their understanding on application writing in particular the speech, how to enrich their comprehension on application discourses and relevant writing strategies through cooperative, exploratory and independent learning. Feez's five phases will be adopted to analyze the speech writing based on genre approach.

##### **4.1. Building the Context**

Students read a discourse about "music influences life". The content is that Sarah Williams leads a better life through music appreciation and music therapy. After reading, students discuss freely and share the contents with group members, explore the writing intentions and the writing type. The designing purpose is to make students understand the speech text features through authentic story and realistic context.

##### **4.2. Modeling and Deconstructing the Text**

This step stresses the deep reading. The teacher guides students to refine the text structure, analyze stylistic features and story' characters or experiences, appreciate language features so as to explore the speech's feature and charm and also the meaning of theme.

###### **4.2.1. Make Out the Structure of Text and Highlight the Genre Features**

Teachers instruct students to find the speech structure gradually so that learners are able to know in terms of textual structure, speech consists of three parts: beginning, body and ending. The beginning part involves greeting the audience, introduce self and prepare the topic. The body part involves the personal story and rhetorical devices. Ending part includes summary of main point, call to action and thank the audience. The basic elements of speech should focus on one topic, have a clear structure and engage the audience. Teachers are supposed to present aforementioned information with a clear mind map to obviously reveal the speech elements and structures. Drawing organizational mind map aims at leading students to focus on the structure and logic of speech writing. Through the analysis of speech text, learners have a basic understanding of the organizational structures and elements on speech writing.

###### **4.2.2. Appreciate the Language and Interpret Theme of the Text**

Language is the carrier of theme. Choices of vocabulary or sentences by writers not only enhance the beauty and readability of text but also convey the writing intentions and emotional tendency to the reader. Teachers need to guide learners pay attention to lexical, syntactic, grammatical and rhetorical features in the speech text. Personal story or experiences, rhetorical devices can increase the authenticity and appeal of speech. The most striking linguistic feature of this text is the use of different rhetorical devices such as simile, metaphor, personification, quote, repetition and rhetorical question. Teachers also need to lead students to explore the function and significance of personal story as well as rhetorical devices to a charming and successful speech writing.

##### **4.3. Joint Construction of the Text by Teachers and Students**

In this stage, teachers and students compose a new text together by mobilizing knowledge related to the text, genre structure and features. When designing writing tasks, teachers should

improve the authenticity of writing task situation, pay attention to the compatibility between the writing content and theme. The writing contents should both moderately open and relatively limited, which should be related to theme without much redundant information. Based on those requirements, the following task is given by the teacher: suppose you are going to attend the “BIEC Visionary” English Public Speaking Competition, whose topic is “Music and Me”, please write a speech. Before entering into specific writing instruction, the teacher first guides students understand the writing task and requirements and then constructs the writing from three perspectives of theme or contents, structures and language.

#### **4.3.1. Focus on Themes and Brainstorm Contents**

Construction text needs the joint efforts made by teachers and students together. After presenting the writing tasks, learners are required to brainstorm ideas surrounded with themes or topic related to their life. They can cooperate with group members to generate different and rational ideas to lay a foundation for further writing.

The brainstorm contents should be relevant to the themes or topics. Teachers can provide necessary support or scaffolding in the process of discussing and brainstorming so that the writing process can move progressively. For example, the teacher gives an example for learners before brainstorming, such as story of music about helping people make friends, enhancing students’ learning, inspiring emotions and reducing pressure and so on. All those ideas input is helpful to latter writing output.

#### **4.3.2. Construct Writing Framework**

A clear and logic framework to a large extent eases the writing anxiety and boredom. Framework is the instruction to direct writers where they go and how they go. When learners commence their formal writing, a draft of framework is imperative and helpful for them to sort out and organize their writing arrangement and procedures, which greatly help them avoid the dilemma of disorder. For example, when the teacher asks the students to write the speech framework, the basic framework should involve the beginning, ending, and body part respectively. In particular the body part, teachers had better make students list the topic sentence and supporting sentences or evidences to ensure the cohesion, coherence and fluency of writing.

#### **4.3.3. Considering and Choosing Proper Writing Language**

A good speech writing can be assessed from multi-facets such as its language use and decency, a charming story or personal experiences, necessary rhetorical devices and so on. Those are important elements which are conducive to successful writing. The speech writing language feature should be concise and enlightening. What’s more, the selected speech story should be real and authentic that is close to students’ realistic life. Only by this, can audience gain power and achieve emotional empathy form an alive speech. Most significantly, a certain number of rhetorical devices will make the speech more vivid, attracting and influential. Therefore, the sound speech writing language should take the decency, experiences or story and rhetorical devices into account.

#### **4.4. Independent Construction of the Text**

In this stage, students write independently, following the steps of drafting, discussing, editing, revising and polishing. Teachers show the assessing criterion for learners refer to edit writing samples. Then they can give feedback and evaluation in term of learners’ writing and assessing performance in time so as to learners are able to know their shining points and something for improvements. With the improvement of students' mastery of the genre, teachers will no longer be the only evaluators, and students can fully evaluate themselves and each other, and students' language output ability will be further improved.

#### 4.5. Linking Related Texts

Teachers and students review the feature of speech writing together and establish connections between different types of texts through comparison and contrast. For example, the teacher can guide students review speech writing style as well as its conspicuous language features, and make them find the similarities and differences between speech writing and other types of application writing such as notice, advises and reply letter. Only by this, can students have a command of different application text types.

In a nutshell, the speech of application writing plays a pivotal role in helping learners understand diverse application writing text types. Speech writing is very practical and also a part of college entrance examination. Genre- based approach to a large degree is beneficial to learners master the basic writing structures and language features in a short time. At the same time, learners may better distinguish different text type writing formulates and language features.

#### 5. Conclusion

Genre approach is a suitable and practical method under the background of new English curriculum standard to teach different text types writing in spite of its potential shortcomings. Genre-based teaching pedagogy can help assist students sort out, organize the clue of articles, build content framework and provide opportunities for mutual evaluation. However, there are still some problems need to be improved in this teaching practice. For instance, some students' English writing may be restricted by the framework. Therefore, in realistic teaching, teachers should set up creative writing class to stimulate students distinguish and express themselves on the premise of ensuring that students master basic characteristics of the genre.

#### References

- [1] Acar, A. S. (2023). Genre pedagogy: A writing pedagogy to help L2 writing instructors enact their classroom writing assessment literacy and feedback literacy. *Assessing Writing*, 56, 1-14.
- [2] Feez, S. (1998). *Text-based Syllabus Design*. Sydney: National Center for English Teaching and Research.
- [3] Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and Second Language Writing*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- [4] Lo, Y. Y., & Jeong, H. (2018). Impact of genre-based pedagogy on students' academic literacy development in Content and Language Integrated Learning. *Linguistics and Education*, 47, 36-46.
- [5] Varga, P. A., Hipkiss, A. M., & Staf, S. (2023). Getting to grips with genre pedagogy - Mapping and analyzing the recontextualization of Sydney school genre pedagogy in the Swedish educational context. *Linguistics and Education*, 78, 1-13.
- [6] Yasuda, S. (2011). Genre-based tasks in foreign language writing: Developing writers' genre awareness, linguistic knowledge, and writing competence. *Journal of second language writing*, 20 (2), 111-133.
- [7] Han Jinlong, Qin Xiubai. (2000). Genre analysis and genre teaching method. *Foreign Languages* (1), 11-18.
- [8] Han J L. (2001). English Writing Teaching: Process Style approach. *Foreign Languages* (4), 35-41.
- [9] Luo Chan-Juan. (2022). The main problems and countermeasures of junior high school English narrative writing. *Foreign Language Teaching in primary and secondary schools (Middle School Part)*(03),19-25.
- [10] Song Jiyang. (2022). Teaching plan design for high school English Listening Class based on genre-based teaching method. *Basic Foreign Language Education* (02),52-56.
- [11] Sun Xingwang, Zhou Yong.(2023). The Application of Genre teaching Model in senior high school English Discourse Teaching. *Basic Foreign Language Education* (03),55-61.

- [12] Xing Wenjun. (2020). The performance, attribution and countermeasures of high school students' English writing dilemma. *Foreign Language Teaching in primary and secondary schools* (11),34-37.
- [13] Xiong Yibo. (2018). The application of style writing in junior high school English based on the improvement of thinking quality. *Basic Foreign Language Education* (01),73-77.
- [14] Zhang Guanwen. (2021). Practice of Process Style Writing teaching in junior middle school English teaching. *Foreign Language Teaching in primary and secondary Schools (Middle School Part)*(01), 50-54.
- [15] Formulated by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2020). *English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 edition, 2020 revision)*. Beijing: People's Education Press.