SHORT STORIES FOR UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A GENRE-BASED STUDY

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ABSTRAK

SHORT STORIES FOR UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A GENRE-BASED STUDY

ABSTRACT

SHORT STORIES FOR UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A GENRE-BASED STUDY

Writing short stories is an art that requires considerable knowledge and understanding of both the structure and language used to express meaning. However, studies have yet to provide a conclusive approach that can show how linguistic elements can be used to realise the writer’s communicative intentions. In view of the niche in this discipline, this study attempts to investigate the generic structure of short stories written for upper secondary students by using a genre-based approach, and to provide a descriptive account on the move structure and its linguistic realizations. Thirty short stories from different references were randomly selected and analysed to ascertain the move structure. In addition to this, salient linguistic features were also identified to determine how they were used to realise their intended communicative intentions. It has been found that there is a pattern of organisation in the short stories. Apart from having a five-move structure, each move is distinctively different in its communicative purposes and linguistic realizations. The findings of this study would be particularly useful for classroom practitioners in the context of the teaching English as a second language (TESL) as they may help learners use the schematic structure and the varied linguistic choices in writing short stories.
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<tr>
<td>AVB$_{nc}$</td>
<td>Negative Connotative Adverbial</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARS</td>
<td>Create a Research Space Model</td>
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<td>Cp</td>
<td>Copula</td>
</tr>
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<td>CR</td>
<td>Cataphoric Reference</td>
</tr>
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<td>DC</td>
<td>Dependent Clause</td>
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<tr>
<td>e.g.</td>
<td>for example</td>
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<td>ESP</td>
<td>English for Specific Purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>Independent Clause</td>
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<tr>
<td>i.e.</td>
<td>that is</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITR</td>
<td>Intransitive Verb</td>
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<td>MC</td>
<td>Main Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Nominal Clause</td>
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<tr>
<td>NP$_{nc}$</td>
<td>Noun Phrase with Negative Connotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNP</td>
<td>Proper Noun Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPT</td>
<td>Present Perfect Tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr</td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Subordinate Clause</td>
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<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>Sensory Lexeme</td>
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<tr>
<td>S-V-O-C</td>
<td>Subject-Verb-Object-Complement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Short Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td>Time Clause</td>
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<td>TR</td>
<td>Transitive Verb</td>
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<td>TSC</td>
<td>Temporal Subordinate Clause</td>
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CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Writing short stories is an art that requires considerable knowledge and understanding of both the structure and language used to express meanings. In other words, a writer's ability to produce a piece of written text depends largely on his knowledge of the discourse structure as well as his ability to associate appropriate linguistic choices with the communicative intentions concerned (Lim, 2003). For instance, in shaping the genre of short stories, a writer needs to acquire sufficient knowledge of linguistic choices in terms of vocabulary items, grammatical and discourse structures to enable him or her to write well.

However, as far as the researcher is concerned, studies have so far yet to provide a conclusive approach that can suggest ways on how short stories can be written using a genre-based approach. Models of writing such as those proposed by Elbow (cited in Sokolik, 2000), and Reid and Lindstrom (1985) have only described the initial stage of the writing process. Elbow, for instance, has suggested the 'looping' technique with which writers put down all their thoughts in first ten minutes without worrying about the generic or discourse structure of a text and errors made on grammatical structures and vocabulary. Similarly, Reid and Lindstrom (1985) have proposed the process of paragraph writing in which writers can brainstorm, cluster and use wh-questions to obtain ideas to shape the structure of the written text. However, these two models of writing may have some weaknesses because the process of writing short stories requires more skills other than those discussed above. In addition, these two models have yet to look beyond the surface
level of writing in that they do not emphasize the importance of relating the generic structure of a text to how a writer utilises a variety of linguistic choices to convey his or her communicative purposes.

Nevertheless, the closest examples of studies on short stories were those conducted by McCabe and Bliss (2003), Nunan (1999) and Butt (1995). Nevertheless, these researchers have shown a very vague framework for the writing of stories as the discussion of schematic structures is not linked with the analysis of the linguistic choices. At times, the schematic structures of the text segments and the associated linguistic features often seem to be mutually exclusive. Similarly, the ‘Story Grammar Analysis’ proposed by Hughes, McGillivray and Schmidek (1997) have merely pinpointed the characteristics of a good narrative essay while taking a shallow look at the importance of the rhetorical functions of each text segment. Particularly, language learners are not clearly guided with regard to how linguistic choices can be employed in relation to the rhetorical functions of the writers’ intentions.

As the current frameworks mentioned earlier do not appear to contribute much to the pedagogical needs of classroom practitioners, there is certainly a niche to be occupied. Thus, it is crucial to present a genre-based study on short stories as this may bring forth insights into how learners, particularly the novice and average writers, can effectively acquire knowledge required for comprehending and writing the major sections on short stories. Specifically, novice writers of short stories can acquire the knowledge on how rhetorical and linguistic choices are used to achieve the communicative functions of short stories while those who have achieved a reasonable competency in writing short stories might find it necessary to reinforce and re-enhance their existing knowledge of narrative essays.

In addition to the above reasons, it is also imperative for classroom practitioners to teach short stories as considerations have now been given to writing
short stories in the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) level. Past year examinations have shown that there is at least a question that requires students to narrate real or imagined experiences, or to envision stories (See Appendix B for the types of questions that appeared from 1997 to 2003). With this observation, it is therefore crucial for teachers as well as students to focus on the various ways of writing well-planned and organised short stories.

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the aims, objectives and the significance of the study. This will be followed by a brief description of the organisation of the dissertation. These two descriptions will help to set the setting of the study and to lay down the framework that underpins the importance of the research findings.

1.2. **Objectives of the Study**

Given the gap in the past research mentioned above, it would now be necessary to state the general aims of the present study. The objectives of this study are given as follows:

(1) To identify the generic structures of short stories written for upper secondary school students;

(2) To find out the salient linguistic features commonly used in the moves and steps in short stories.

On the micro level of the study, the focus can be narrowed down by specifically looking at the following objectives. The objectives of this study are (1) to identify the possible moves and steps in short stories, (2) to study the lexical and syntactic choices used to achieve communicative intentions of the stories, and (3) to investigate the implications of studying the generic structures in relation to the linguistic features of short stories. These objectives would therefore serve as a
framework of this study that governs the overall process of carrying out the research.

1.3. **Research Questions**

In relation to the aforementioned objectives, this research attempts to seek answers for the following questions:

1. What are the possible rhetorical moves found in the short stories?
2. What are the linguistic choices in each move and step in the short stories?

As this genre on narrative essays has been chosen based on the notion that it may have important implications for the teaching of English as a second language, insights gained from the study may serve as a resource for language teachers to prepare materials for the teaching of short stories using a genre-based approach.

1.4. **Significance of the Study**

The results of the study serve mainly to show us whether the schematic structure and the linguistic choices that are adopted in the model essays will be pedagogically useful for both classroom practitioners as well as learners in general. While the former may use a genre-based approach to enlighten second language students on how to write effective stories that are coherent and cohesive, students at large may find it helpful to enhance their understanding of story writing as well as their skills in producing a piece of narrative text. The schematic structure and the availability of linguistic choices would be utilized in relation to the communicative intentions of the writers so that learners would not get off the track in writing conventional short stories.
1.5. Conclusion

This chapter has briefly shown the importance of considering the generic structure of a text and its associated linguistic features to convey writers’ communicative intentions. As past studies have shown weaknesses in dealing with how linguistic features can be associated with the communicative intentions of writers while writing short stories, this study attempts (1) to investigate the generic structure of short stories written for upper secondary students by using a genre-based approach, and (2) to provide a descriptive account on the move structure and its linguistic realizations. In other words, a clear outline on what, why and how the study should be done has been described. The idea of ‘what is being studied’ refers to the genre-based study on narrative essays, while the notion of ‘why’ the study is being carried out implies the long term aims and the short term objectives as well as the significance of the study on the stakeholders in the field of teaching English of a second language (TESL). Meanwhile the ‘how’ part of the study (which will be discussed in detail in chapter 3) directly refers to the method used in data collection and analysis. All these areas of study function in an interrelated manner to ensure that a comprehensive study on narrative essays can be done using a genre-based approach.

1.6. Organization of the Dissertation

To facilitate the understanding of this study on narrative essays, the organisation of this dissertation will be described. Chapter One deals with the nature and scope of the study by stating the objectives of the study as well as the significance of carrying out a study on narrative essays. This will be followed by Chapter Two which reviews the literature related to narrative essays as a genre-based study. The significance of the insights will be considered for teaching and learning in the classroom.
Meanwhile, Chapter Three will describe the methodological framework of the study. The corpus of the data will subsequently be defined based on certain schematic structures which qualify them to be selected for analysis. Data collection and analysis procedures will be explained and justified. In Chapter Four, the results of the study will be presented to illustrate how individual moves and steps are realized. Instances of each move and step type will be highlighted and examined in relation to the intended communicative intentions. The findings of the study will then be summarized, explained and justified by looking at their implications for teaching and learning in the classroom.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, discourse will be reviewed by specifically looking at its definitions and related concepts, and by studying contributions of members of their discourse community. This will be followed by a thorough overview on the nature of genre and genre analysis. Concepts related to narratives and stories, particularly, will be explained. As narratives are a type of genre, Swales' (1990) approach of genre analysis which involves a discussion on moves will be adopted. In relation to genre analysis, the importance of genre-based studies in the teaching of English as a second language will be emphasized.

2.2. Discourse

Van Dijk (1988: 1) defined discourse as "a form of language use and how language is used in different contexts". On the macro level, discourse is seen as language use but this broad definition seems to be inadequate and vague as it can refer to any situation that involves the use of language. Due to this broad definition, discourse analysts have modified and refined the definition by later focusing on the elements of who, how, why, when and where language is being used (Van Dijk, 1988).

One distinctive marker of any discourse is its functional aspect, for learning a discourse is learning how its communicative function can be realized. More specifically, attempts are now made to look at how language is used to disseminate, exchange and communicate information, ideas and beliefs in specific situations, at different times and within different social situations (Van Dijk, 1988). Looking at
these ideas of where, how and under what conditions or circumstances discourse is being used, we will not be surprised that the study of discourse encompasses several disciplines which include linguistics, psychology and social sciences (Van Dijk, 1988).

Having had a schema of what discourse is, one needs to understand that discourse includes not only the spoken form, but also the written form. Some analysts label these two forms as ‘talk’ and ‘text’ (Van Dijk, 1988) for the spoken form communicates ideas using spoken language, such as sermons in churches and lectures in institutions of higher learning while the written one uses printed language such as advertisements in brochures and information in pamphlets. Both forms, however, are alike in a way that they both serve the same function that is to impart communicative meanings.

2.3. Discourse Community

Identifying groups of individuals as belonging to certain groups of community is crucial as these groups of people tend to predominate in the development and maintenance of its discoursal characteristics. Swales (1990: 24) has proposed six features for the identification of a discourse community:

(1) Having a set of common public goals which may be formally put down in documents or they may be indirectly understood;

(2) Having mechanisms of intercommunication among its members, which include meetings, conversations, letters and the like;

(3) Using these mechanisms mainly to provide information and feedback;

(4) Utilizing and possessing one or more genres to achieve its communicative aims;

(5) Having acquired some specific lexis; and
Having a basic number of members who possess suitable level of expertise in content and communication styles.

In the present study, curriculum planners, teachers and textbook writers are participants of an academic discourse community. These academicians strive for the same public goal that is to expand the potential of individuals in an integrated and holistic manner so as to produce balanced and harmonious individuals; intellectually, spiritually, physically and emotionally (Ministry of Education, 2003). Not only that, they also need to attend conferences, seminars and training sessions to improve and update skills and knowledge. There are also mechanisms of intercommunication such as using newsletters to get response and feedback from the members of the academic community; own different genres such as lectures and face-to-face interactions to achieve their communicative purpose; and have already possessed some specific lexis in the academic field to enable them to communicate in specific ways that can be understood by the members of the academic community.

2.4. Genre

Given the characteristics of a discourse community, it is now pertinent to review several concepts related to a genre. Genre is thought to be a "fuzzy concept, a somewhat loose term of art" (Swales, 1996: 33) as its definition varies from its original meaning to the present definition in the field of linguistics. Genre is also associated with different interpretations based on different areas of study such as those related to folklore, literary studies, linguistics and rhetoric (Swales, 1996). Due to this multidimensional references made to genre, Swales (1996) has suggested a working definition that could be applied in the teaching and learning setting. Hence, Swales (1996: 45-57) has proposed that (1) a genre is a collection of communicative events in which the language functions as the main role in negotiating meanings in
different situations; (2) the communicative events which occur are seen as a genre when interlocutors share some set of communicative purposes; (3) examples of genre differ in their prototypicality as the properties of the members of the same genre may not be necessarily identical but may bear some resemblance in one way or another; (4) the underlying principle behind a genre sets restrictions on allowable content, positioning and form; and (5) the nomenclature for genres of a discourse community is a vital source of insight.

As a whole, genre is defined as:

"... a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style". (Swales, 1996: 58)

This definition could be explained by looking at stories collectively as a genre. For instance, stories could be referred to as a class of communicative events, which conveys meanings using specific lexis. Teachers, being one of the members who subscribes to the genre, share the same communicative goal that is to extend their own pedagogical knowledge and proficiency for classroom use. The content and manner in which stories are written, are easily recognized by the specialized members and people in the teaching profession. This group of people forms the experts of the parent discourse community. When they exchange shared information through talks and seminars, for example, they actually form a schematic structure of the discourse.

Genre is also thought of as "referring to a sociolinguistic activity in which participants are able to achieve particular goals" (Henry and Roseberry, 2001: 153). Miller (1984: 165) proposed that learning a genre was about learning "the linguistic forms and conventions as well as how to participate in the community's action". This notion is supported by Martin (1993) who has added that genre is a "goal-oriented
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