EFL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES TOWARD TEXT-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore Indonesian EFL teachers' perspectives of the Text-Based approach (TBA) to develop students' writing skills. Specifically, it attempted to explore: (1) teachers' understanding of TBA, (2) teachers' perspectives of the implementation of TBA to develop students' writing skills, (3) teachers' perceived difficulties and problems of TBA to develop students' writing skills. The research employed a qualitative approach. Five English language teachers at a senior high school in Jambi Province, Indonesia participated in this research. The data were collected using open-ended questions via *Google Form* and were analyzed following Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis procedures. The results revealed that all participants had a good understanding of the concept of TBA, in which the definitions of TBA given by all the participants were related to the concept of TBA proposed by some scholars. All the participants also claimed that they have implemented and agreed that TBA can improve the students' writing skills by analyzing the structure, language features, social function, and vocabularies based on the text given. However, the participants still faced some difficulties in implementing TBA, which include students' low ability, selecting an appropriate text, time management, and lack of facilities.

Keywords: text-based approach, writing, teachers' perspectives, implementation, problems, difficulties

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the important skills that need to be developed by students. According to Walsh (as cited in Klimova, 2014) writing is significant since it is widely used in both higher education and the workplace. Students who lack the ability to express themselves in writing will struggle to communicate effectively with teachers, employers, peers, and just about anybody else. Proposals, notes, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, and other forms of professional communication are all part of a college student's or successful graduate's everyday life. Thus, the writing skills that the students need to acquire are greatly beneficial due to communication activities both in school and university are mostly in writing, the students are required to have good writing skills.

Harmer (2007) argues that there are numerous reasons to encourage students to write in and out of class. For instance, writing allows them more 'thinking time' than trying to have a spontaneous discussion. This gives students more time to digest language that is, to think about the language - whether they are studying or activating. Despite the fact that writing skills are important for every student during their school and college life, Harmer's statement reflects us that writing skills are also useful for our life outside the school. Moreover, Hyland (2003), stated that writing is an intricate structure that can only be learned by developing the ability to manipulate lexis and grammar.

However, due to its complexity in terms of language rules, writing has become one of the challenging skills for students especially for EFL students where English is rarely used in daily conversation. According to Agustien (2020), in countries such as Australia and Singapore, English is used in daily life so that the children in those countries already learnt the spoken language first. On the other hand, for the students in a non-English speaking country such as Indonesia, the situation is very different. EFL students come to school without any English background, and it is also common to find EFL teachers who do not speak English fluently. Agustin added that most EFL teachers in Indonesia prefer to start teaching English from written language (reading and writing) such as vocabulary, and grammar rather than spoken language (speaking and listening). Students start to learn spoken language when they have already learned or had knowledge of the written language.

Writing session in the EFL classroom, as stated by Alwasiah (as cited in Emilia et al., 2014), consisted of very few acts of writing, saying that "practice of writing does take place in the class, yet it contributes almost nothing to the build-up of writing skills". Harmer (2007) argued that one of the challenges that writing teachers encounter is their students' reluctance to participate in writing activities with any passion. Emilia et al (2014) suggested that choosing an approach that can accommodate time, students' needs, and practice is one of the teachers, responsibility for the betterment of writing activity in the classroom. There are four alternative approaches in teaching and learning writing: the "product-focused approach," and the "process-focused approach" the text/genre-based approach to teaching writing, process and genre-based approach to teaching writing (Elashri, 2013). The term Text-Based Approach (TBA) is also known as Genre-Based Approach to EFL teaching and learning.

TBA can be one alternative for the teachers to improve students' proficiency and their interest in English writing. Bawarshi & Reiff (2010) stated that TBA can help children improve their cognitive development by giving them opportunities to practice writing. Therefore, this study aimed to explore EFL teachers' perspectives of the text-based approach to develop students' writing skills.

To date, a number of studies on the issue of the implementation of Text-Based approach in the classroom have been done. Rustipa et al. (2021), for example, explored EFL teachers' challenges in Text-Based language teaching in the new-normal era to achieve communicative competence. The study involved 15 teachers and employed an open-ended survey question and followed up by an interview via a telephone call to collect the data. The results revealed that teachers faced several challenges in implementing

Text-based teaching in new-normal era to achieve communicative competence. The main problem was the lack of knowledge of the teachers toward Text-Based approach.

Another research was conducted by Ardiansyah (2017) explored Teachers' Perceptions on the Process of Genre-Based Approach in Teaching Writing. The study involved two English teachers from one of the Islamic senior high schools in Kawali, Ciamis, West Java, Indonesia. The study employed descriptive qualitative design since this study focuses on the implementing of genre-based approach in teaching writing covering the perspectives, problems, and solutions toward the implementation of genre-based approach in teaching writing. The data were collected by using open ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The findings showed that the English teachers faced several problems in implementing an approach in teaching writing based a genre. They felt difficult to assess a big number of students with several domains in limited creativity in their thinking. The main suggestion that the teachers are suggested to apply an approach based on genre in teaching English, not only in teaching writing but in teaching listening, reading, and speaking since this method can improve students' proficiency in learning English as a foreign language.

Syafitri (2016) explored the way English teachers of SMA 4 Solok implemented genre-based approach in teaching writing. Three English teachers in West Sumatera were recruited in this study. The study used two instruments, namely classroom observation and interview. The findings showed that the teachers have not implemented genre-based approach in teaching writing optimally. Lack of comprehension about the basic principles of genre-based approach has been the main cause. The teachers experienced in familiarizing grammar and vocabulary to the students. It is hard for them to find appropriate materials which are close to their life.

Ragawanti (2019) conducted a research entitled "Text-based learning in EFL classrooms: Problems and strategies viewed from the sociocultural approach". This study provided an overview of the EFL pre-service teachers' problems and strategies in their first-time teaching English using Text-based learning viewed from the sociocultural approach. This study involved 10 student-teachers from Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana who were taking their microteaching class. The sources of data used in this study were reflective journal, post-observation reflective writing, and critical-friends group (CFG) reflective writing. The research found that the teacher-participants gets difficulty in choosing authentic materials such as videos and stories that suit the materials being taught and that suit the students' proficiency level. Subsequently, they find the students get confused in understanding the expressions used in the text, the text structure and, accordingly, the content. The next example is about graphic/table organizer. Some teachers get confused with translating the key features of particular text into an instructional language in the table organizer. From their observation, the students also get confused to understand the instructional language and to complete the table, and the activity of completing the table organizer becomes complicated and time-consuming.

Considering a large number of secondary school institutions in Indonesia, the above-mentioned studies undertaken in the Indonesian context embody relatively few studies. Moreover, the studies that have been undertaken have some differences from the present studies either in terms of the method or focus of the study.

While Syafitri (2016) used classroom observation, and interviews, the present study used open-ended questions as the instruments to collect the data. Ragawanti (2019) recruited pre-service teachers as the participants of the study. Meanwhile, the present study involved senior high school teachers with teaching experience that ranges from 11 to 32 years. Thus, the following research questions were formulated to guide the present study:

1. What is Indonesian EFL teachers' understanding of Text-Based Approach (TBA)?

2. What are the teachers' perspectives of the implementation of TBA to develop students' writing skills in EFL classrooms?

3. What are the teachers' perceived difficulties and problems in the implementation of TBA to develop students' writing skills?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Text-Based Approach (TBA)

According to Mumba & Mkandawire (2019), the Text-based Approach was prompted by Halliday's (1978) idea of language as Social Semiotic, or language that people use to construct meaning. As the name implies, TBA improves learners' communicative skills by requiring them to understand a variety of texts. The Text-based approach requires teaching and learning should focus on all the four language skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening) and all activities are designed with reference to a particular text. Arimbawa (2012) stated that the text-based approach is based on the idea that learning to use English improves when teachers introduce students to entire spoken and written texts in appropriate situations. As a result, the text-based approach is critical in ensuring that learners' communicative skills are improved. It develops a teaching and learning program on the basis of "text." Any meaningful stretch of words, whether oral or written, is referred to as text. Texts differ in terms of purpose, structure, and lexicogrammatical features.

There are five-phase of teaching model for the successful implementation of the text-based approach. Building the context is the opening phase, followed by modeling and deconstruction of the text, joint construction of the text, independent construction of the text, and finally, linking of texts to related texts (Feez & Joyce, 1998; Agustien, 2020).

The first stage is Building the context, at this stage teachers develop the learners' literacy. discuss the genre under discussion involving its communicative purpose, text (generic) structure, and linguistic features. This shows that TBA allows explicit teaching of grammar.

The next phase is modeling of text, where students explore not just the ideas presented in the texts; they explore what elements there are in a text, how texts are structured and what written language features are used. In essence, this stage is meant to expose students to the English language and how it is used in various contexts.

The third phase is Joint construction of the text, students are given the opportunity to learn together how to use dictionaries, finding sources on the Internet, checking conventions, and so on. Together they learn how to structure explanation texts, construct noun phrases, find technical terms, write drafts using the template, correct grammatical mistakes, peer review, and so on.

The fourth step is Independent construction of text**,** teacher can start with the independent writing activities. This does not mean that students must work 100% independently. When needed, students can always consult with teachers or their peers.

The last stage is linking related texts**,** at this stage creativity is encouraged to create different explanation texts in different contexts. Students can create colorful explanation brochures, flyers, booklets and so on. By doing these activities, students are given the opportunities to display their potential academically and artistically (Agustien, 2020).

2.2   Advantages of TBA

Mumba & Mkandawire (2019) mentioned several advantages of Text-based Approach in teaching and learning of English language: This approach broadens learners' ability to express meaning; multimodal learning improves comprehension, memorization, and learning; it also builds potential for understanding and expression of meanings, which helps them participate in community practices with language; it focuses on teaching explicitly about the features of spoken and written texts and links to the cultural context of their use; and it provides a foundation and context for teaching all language skills and for fostering language development. Additionally, Mohlabi-Tlaka et al (2016) argued that this approach is designed to help learners build up confidence in different contexts and helps them become competent, confident and critical readers, writers, viewers and designers of texts.

3.   METHODS

3.1   Research Design

This research employed a qualitative design embracing case study approach. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a process of understanding that explores a social problem that builds a complex, analyzes words, and reports detailed views of an informant in natural form.

Furthermore, a case study, according to Creswell (2012), is a detailed examination of a constrained system, such as an activity, event, process, or group of people, employing a significant amount of data collecting. "Bounded" implies that the example has been restricted for study purposes by temporal, geographical, or other physical boundaries. Here, in this study, the case is the EFL teachers' perspective toward TBA to develop students' writing skills in one senior high school in Sungai Penuh, Indonesia.

3.2   Research Participants

The participants of the present study were five English language teachers at one Senior High School in Sungai Penuh, Indonesia. The participants consisted of four males and one female. Each of the participants was given a pseudonym with codes T1, T2, T3, T4 (males), and T5 (female). They were considered appropriate to be selected as the participants because all of them are experienced teachers with a range of 11-32 years of teaching. Patton (1999) suggested that one of the aspects of qualitative research is focusing on what people experience and how they interpret it. To answer the research questions, purposive sampling was employed to select the participants. According to Creswell (2009), purposive sampling is the method used mostly by a researcher in qualitative research.

3.3   Data Collection

The data were collected through open-ended questions. According to Creswell (2012) often the distinction between qualitative research and quantitative research is using closed-ended questions (quantitative) rather than open-ended questions (qualitative). It provides a greater range of responses from the general inquiries than the closed-ended one. Due to the limitations of data collection, open-ended questions were created in the form of an electronic questionnaire (Google Form).

3.4   Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures based on Miles et al. (2014) were employed in the present study. The data analysis consists of three simultaneous flows of activity. They are data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions.

4.   RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Teachers' understanding of TBA

The result of open-ended questions via *Google Form* showed that the participants have a different understanding of the Text-based approach. T1 has mentioned that TBA is an approach that can be applied in teaching English in general and consist of five stages of activities:

> *I think TBA is an approach that can be used in teaching English in general. There are 5 steps in TBA: The first is Building knowledge of the field. The second is modeling of the text, the third is joint construction of the text, the fourth is independent construction of the text, and the fifth is linking related text* (T1).

T1 statement is in line with the five-phases teaching model for successful implementation of the text-based approach mentioned by Feez & Joyce (1998) and Agustien (2020). They are, building the context is the opening phase, followed by modeling and deconstruction of the text, joint construction of the text, independent construction of the text, and finally, linking of texts to related texts.

According to T2, TBA aims to equip the students with meaningful communication based on the given text by teaching them instructions and practices that can enhance their language skills.

> *TBA is teaching the students with guidance and practices to develop their language skills for meaningful communication based on the text given.* (T2)

A similar response was given by T4:

> *TBA is an approach in teaching English that is used by English teachers to present their learning-teaching process by using text. The text might be found from many resources like newspapers, magazines, internet, radio, television, and many others.* (T4)

The response from T2 and T4 is relevant to Arimbawa (2012) who argued that the text-based approach is critical in ensuring that

learners' communicative skills are improved. It develops a teaching and learning program on the basis of "text." Any meaningful stretch of words, whether oral or written, is referred to as text. This approach provides students with guide practice as they develop language skills for meaningful communication through the whole text (Rozimela & Zebua, 2019).

As for the T3 and T5, they agreed that TBA can be used as an approach oriented to students' ability to compose text:

> *TBA is learning that is oriented to students' ability to compose text.* (T5) *Text-based integrated approach is learning-oriented to students' ability to compose texts. This approach is based on text modeling and analysis of its features explicitly and focuses on the relationship between the text and the context of its use* (T3).

Mumba & Mkandawire (2019) believed that a text-based approach is an approach that helps learners be able to handle a variety of texts to help them use language effectively. Text-based Integrated Approach helps learners to comprehend not only language but also other non-linguistic texts.

Based on the findings above, it appears all respondents had a good knowledge of the definition of text-based approach. It may be observed from their opinions, which were in line with the concept of text-based approach by some scholars.

4.2 Teachers' perspectives of the implementation of TBA

4.2.1 Teachers' perspective of TBA to develop students' writing skills

The obtained data showed that all participants have implemented TBA in their class. The first question asked about their opinion on whether TBA can improve students' writing skills or not. Based on the result of the open-ended questions, each of the participants believed that TBA can improve students' writing skills. This was mentioned by T1 & T2, *TBA can develop students' writing skills. TBA can also improve students' reading skills.* As for the T3, he assumed that '…*this approach is designed to help students build confidence in their different contexts and help them become competent, confident and critical readers, writers, viewers, and text designers'.* Similar statements were also stated by T2, T4, and T5, *'it can promote the students' writing skill'*. Further discussion will go through how TBA can help students enhance their writing skills

4.2.2 Teachers' perspective of how TBA can improve students' writing skills

The second question asked the participants to give their opinion on how TBA can improve students' writing skills. T1 argued that implementing TBA will give a chance for the students to write a text whereas most of them have no experience to write a text. He said, *'Most students never try to write a text. By applying this approach students can learn and try to write the text.* As for the T5, she mentioned that '*In this approach, students learn how to write in a text'.* The different statements have been given by T3, T4, and T2:

> *'The teacher provides a text model to explain to students, including its organizational structure and linguistic characteristics. The teacher can also demonstrate to students writing text of a certain type in front of the class, so that students will also know how the teacher writes, revises, and edits his writing'.* (T3).

> *Text model presented in teaching-learning process can be the real example and guideline for students to develop their writing skills.* (T4).

> *By understanding and comprehending the contents of the text, they will have an input or information towards what they are going to write. So, through the text, it could help them to compose or develop their writing competence.* (T2).

Based on the response from T3, T4, and T2. It appears that TBA will facilitate the students to develop their writing competence by comprehending an example of text including its structure and language features.

4.2.3 Activities in TBA to improve students' writing skills

The third question of this part was related to the activities in implementing TBA to improve students' writing skills. According to T4, activities in implementing TBA to develop students' writing skills are *teachers' explanations, students' questions, students' discussion, role play, and task/ homework/ students' project.*

However, other participants (T1, T2, T3, and T5) have different activities in implementing TBA to develop students writing skills.

> *They are trying to find the right structure and appropriate words to use in their writing, although they write different topic. They also try to create the new paragraph by analyzing the text given by the teacher. It can be more than one texts* (T1).

> *Some activities that can do by the students in text-based teaching to improve their writing skill. They should comprehend the text, knowing the structure and lexicogrammatical and also the vocabulary.* (T2)

> *The students analyze the structure of the text and the linguistic elements of the text being studied.* (T3)

> *Students learn how to produce text by understanding the genre, social function, structure, and language features of the text.* (T5)

The responses from four of five participants showed that activities in analyzing the structure, language features, social function, and vocabularies based on the text given will enhance students' writing skills. Hammond & Derewianka (2001) defined text-based approach underlines the value of analyzing the social and cultural context of language use in a piece of writing. The context

determines the aim of a text, its overall structure in terms of language features, and text features, which are frequently in the form of linguistic conventions.

4.3 Problems and Difficulties in implementing TBA to develop students writing skills.

The result of the open-ended question showed that the teachers faced some difficulties in implementing TBA to develop students writing skills. The difficulties faced by the teachers can be categorized as students' low ability, selecting an appropriate text, time management and lack of facilities.

4.3.1 Students' low ability

Based on the obtained data, in implementing TBA, four participants T1, T3, T4, and T5 have mentioned that they were facing some difficulties or problems regarding the students' low ability in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and lack of motivation. It is in contrast with Harmer's (2007) statement, he asserts that writers should focus on language use (grammar, vocabulary, linkers), punctuation, spelling, writing repetition of words and/or content, and so on. This indicates that teachers should pay attention to the numerous stages in any piece of writing while teaching it.

4.3.2 Selecting an appropriate text

The result of open-ended questions found that T2 had difficulties in choosing a text that are appropriate to the students' needs and their English competence. He stated: *There are some problem faced in text-based learning, they are providing the text closely to students' needs, and the levels of students' English competence.*

4.3.3. Time management and lack of facilities

Other problems faced by the teachers were time management and lack of facilities, it can be shown from the T2 statement. He mentioned, other problems were '*time provided based on curriculum and equipment needed in teaching and learning.* Similar statements were also mentioned by T4. He said, '*Lack of learning teaching material resources'* is one of the problems in implementing TBA to develop students' writing skills.

Based on the findings, the difficulties or problems in students' low ability and selecting an appropriate text were similar to those faced by pre-service teachers as revealed in Ragawanti (2019). For the students' ability problem, it was also similar to those faced by the participants of the previous research conducted by Ardiansyah (2017).

5. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

The main purpose of this research is to explore EFL teachers' perspective of text-based approach (TBA) to develop students' writing skills. The results revealed that all the participants had a good understanding of the concepts of TBA. Based on open-ended questions data via *Google Form.* The definitions of TBA given by all the participants were related to the concept of TBA proposed by scholars. The results also showed that all the participants have implemented TBA to develop students' writing skills. All

participants agreed that the implementation of TBA will facilitate the students to develop their writing competence by comprehending an example of text including its structure and language features. Activities in analyzing the structure, language features, social function, and vocabularies based on the text given will improve students' writing skills. However, the participants still faced several problems and difficulties in implementing TBA which include the students' low ability, selecting an appropriate text, time management, and lack of facilities.

As with any research, this study has some limitations. First, this study is a mini-research limited instrument which is open-ended questions via *Google Form.* Future research should use additional instruments such as classroom observation in order to provide richer information on the TBA to develop students' writing skills. Second, the present study involved a small number of participants from one high school. Future research should recruit a bigger number of participants from different geographical areas. Also, this study focused only on teachers' perspectives of TBA to develop students' writing skills. Further research should also involve students to investigate their perspectives toward TBA in writing.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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