Genre pedagogy and empowerment: Students' voice

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports a part of a study on genre pedagogy in learning to write a research proposal. It delineates the students' responses on the practice of empowerment reflected in the teaching program. This case study involved fifteen students of an English Department, year three, taking the subject of Research on ELT 1 who voluntarily joined this teaching program. An open-ended questionnaire to gain the students' responses was used as the research instrument. The questionnaire results showed that the students responded positively to genre pedagogy as well as the classroom practices related to empowerment reflected in the teaching program. They gave positive responses on the activities of genre pedagogy, such as reading multiple texts, using *skripsi* (research report for undergraduate students) as a model, teacher's explanation on the schematic structure and linguistic features of the research proposal, the teaching of grammar, and writing different drafts. They posited that those activities were helpful and meaningful to help them write research proposals. Furthermore, the students' responses to classroom activities related to empowerment in the teaching program were also positive. They felt happy after conducting the activities in the program and completing the research proposals. Furthermore, they believed that they were able to write good research proposals. Finally, they also showed their willingness to help their friends in writing a research proposal.

INTRODUCTION

A research proposal is one of the academic texts which has to be written by university students. It is the 'occluded' genre, which is difficult for students to write, but plays an essential part in the students' lives (Swales, 1990). It is substantial because the research proposal provides justification to convince that the research is worth doing and the students will succeed academically (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005).

However, writing a research proposal becomes a problem for the students. As Widiastuti (2010) points out, the problems in the Indonesian context were identifying the research gap, justification of the literature review to be correlated to the proposed study, and justification of the choice of research methodology to answer the research problems. Thus, the study on the research proposal is essential. More specifically, an appropriate approach to learning to write a research proposal that is empowering is needed.

One of the empowering approaches to teaching writing is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) genre pedagogy. SFL genre pedagogy, as contented by Christie (1989, 1991), has an instructional framework that is designed as the tool to empower students for social success. Therefore, SFL genre pedagogy is suitable for the purpose of this study which is to empower students to be successful research proposal writers. Several studies concerning how this school of thought empowers the students have been conducted. In this case, students became more critical language users (Emilia, 2005) and more actively participating in school discourses, and showing a positive attitude toward the program (Emilia, 2005; Chaisiri, 2010; Payaprom, 2012).

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However, in the Indonesian context, the studies which focus on investigating and implementing such an approach to learning to write a research proposal is limited (Emilia, 2016), while other studies focus on the students' problems in writing a research proposal (Widiastuti, 2010; Yusuf, 2013) and the element of the research proposal (Fudhla et al., 2014; Zakiah, 2015). Therefore, this study aims to fill the previous studies gap by investigating how genre pedagogy can empower students in learning to write a research proposal. As a part of the study that focuses on the contribution of genre pedagogy towards students' cognitive and psychological empowerment as viewed from the learning process and products (Wijayanti, 2019), this paper reports the students' responses to this approach in learning to write a research proposal.

LITERATURE REVIEW
There are three main theories underpinning the study. They are SFL genre pedagogy and student empowerment and research proposal.

SFL Genre Pedagogy
This study employs SFL genre pedagogy, which was first advocated by educational linguists in Australia. This genre pedagogy tradition, among two other traditions, is chosen because of several reasons. One of the reasons is that ideologically, this school of thought's instructional framework is designed as the tool to empower students for social success as contented by Christie (1989, 1991). Therefore, SFL genre pedagogy is suitable for the purpose of this study which is to empower students to be successful research proposal writers.

This study adopted a model of SFL genre pedagogy proposed by Derewianka and Jones (2012). The stages of the teaching and learning cycle of this teaching model can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1
A Teaching and Learning Cycle (adopted from Derewianka & Jones, 2012)
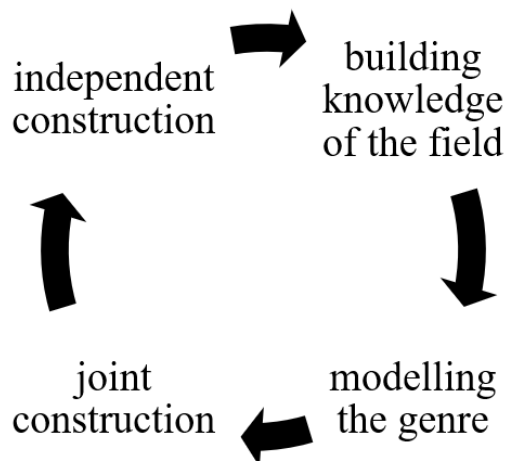
The model consists of several stages in which several activities are conducted. The activities of each stage were adopted from Gibbons (2002), Emilia (2005), and Derewianka and Jones (2012). The activities are building knowledge of the field (BKoF), modeling the genre, joint construction, and independent construction.

Empowerment
The concept of empowerment in relation to literacy used in the study mostly refers to Stromquist (1995, in Stromquist, 2009), who defines empowerment as:

… the set of feelings, knowledge, and skills that produce the ability to participate in one's social environment and affect the political system. This ability can be seen as comprising four dimensions: the cognitive dimension, or the knowledge of one's social reality and the mechanisms that make it function the way it does; the economic dimension, or access to independent means of support, which help make individuals more autonomous in their decisions; the political dimension, or the skills to participate in and modify institutions and policies of one's community or nation; and the psychological dimension, or feelings that individuals are competent, worthy of better conditions, and capable of taking action on their own behalf (p.2)

Stromquist (2009) suggests four dimensions of empowerment, namely cognitive, psychological, economic, and political empowerment which become the basis of empowerment in the study. However, only cognitive and psychological empowerment will be discussed in the present study as the two other dimensions need a longer period to see their impact on learning. In this study, the students are cognitively empowered when they can write research proposals and are able to fulfill all the tasks they have to do in the learning process. Furthermore, the students are considered to be psychologically empowered when they feel that they are able to write research proposals. They think that they are better than before. They believe that they can do better in the future.

Research Proposal
A research proposal has several objectives. First, it communicates the students' intentions by stating the purpose of the study and its importance and the plan for conducting the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Second, it gives the reader information to evaluate the proposed research and provides the reader with a clear indication of what the students are expecting to do, how, when, and why (Emerson, 2007). Third, it will be a mechanism for the students to gauge the level of assistance likely to be given by supervisors and supervisors' reaction to the research plan (Clare, 2003). In sum, a research proposal is the first step in producing an undergraduate thesis. It intends to convince a supervisor or academic committee that the students' topic and approach are sound so that they gain approval to proceed with the actual research and write their undergraduate thesis.

METHOD
This is a case study as it attempted to understand the particular phenomenon in the pedagogy setting where the researcher acted as the teacher in implementing genre pedagogy to the teaching of writing a research proposal. The study was conducted at an undergraduate English study program in one university in Banten. The research participants were fifteen students of the English Department, year three taking the subject of Research on ELT 1 who voluntarily joined this teaching program. Their names in this article are made pseudonyms.

To collect the data, a questionnaire was distributed. The questionnaire was used to get the students' responses toward the genre pedagogy and the empowerment dimension. An open-ended questionnaire was chosen because all respondents could give appropriate answers to the questions as Creswell (2009) suggests that this kind of questionnaire can provide useful information to support theories and concepts in the literature. Eleven questions were representing three central themes, as shown in Table 1.

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed in several steps. The first step was to put the responses into two central themes or categories. They were students' responses toward genre pedagogy, and their responses related to the issue of empowerment. The next step was to do a thematic analysis by putting the students' comments based on the categories. The data were then presented and discussed to support the data from the students' research proposal.

Table 1
The Distributions of Questions based on the Central Themes

		Distributions of the questions
Central theme 1	Students' responses on genre pedagogy to the teaching of academic writing	1. What do you think about reading multiple texts before you write in BKoF stage? What benefits can you get from this activity, and what challenges did you find? 2. What do you think about reading a *skripsi* as a model for you to write a proposal in modeling the genre stage? Why? 3. What do you think about the lecturer's explanation of the schematic structure and linguistic features of the research proposal in modeling the genre stage? Why? 4. What do you think about the teaching of grammar in modeling the genre stage? Why? 5. What do you think about writing different drafts in the joint construction stage? What benefits can you get from this activity, and what challenges did you find? 6. What do you think about the lecturer's feedback to your draft in the joint construction stage? Why? 7. What do you think about the feedback that your classmates give to your draft in the independent construction stage? Why?
Central theme 2	Students' responses on classroom practice related to students empowerment through genre pedagogy	8. What did you feel when you did every activity? Why? 9. What do you feel after you are able to write a research proposal? Why? 10. Do you think that you will be able to write a research report *(skripsi)?* Why? 11. Are you willing to help your friends in writing their research proposals? Why?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part discusses the students' responses to genre pedagogy and classroom practices related to students' empowerment through genre pedagogy.

Students Responses to Genre Pedagogy

In general, the students responded positively to genre pedagogy. There are several themes under this central theme. They are students' responses to reading multiple texts, using *skripsi* as a model, explaining the schematic structure and linguistic features of the research proposal, teaching grammar, and writing different drafts.

Students' Responses to Reading Multiple Texts before Writing in BKoF Stage

The activity or reading multiple texts before writing was done in teaching writing using genre pedagogy. The questionnaire result showed that this activity was essential as Ina said:

> *I think reading multiple texts before writing is very important because it can be a guide for the students to write their proposals..*

Ina's comment indicates the value of reading multiple texts as the guide as Richards and Renandya (2002) contend that reading text can enhance students' exposure to good written models. Furthermore, this activity also empowered the students psychologically since it could enhance the students' motivation to improve their own writing as Risda (a pseudonym) noted:

> *Reading multiple texts was very helpful. I could know what I haven't known before and correct my research proposal by myself.*

Motivation plays an important role in learning language which is dynamic (Dornyei, 2001). Thus, by reading multiple texts before writing, students' motivation to write will be refreshed.

Students' Responses to Reading Skripsi *as a Model to Write Proposals*

In general, most of the students responded that reading *skripsi* was useful as the model to write proposals. *Skripsi* is an academic text that undergraduate students have to write as the completion task for their degree. The students found it useful as *skripsi* could be the guideline for the students to write a sound proposal as Ria said:

> *Reading skripsi was good and really needed for the person for making a research proposal. It would be a reference for them, and they would use it as a guideline because the researcher would know first what the things they would write in the proposal.*

A similar proposition was asserted by Yanti.

> *Reading a skripsi made me know about what steps in writing a proposal, and I got more references.*

The lecturer's idea to employ a *skripsi* as a learning model helped her in scrutinizing the steps before starting to construct her own research proposal.

Students' Responses to Teacher's Explanation on the Schematic Structure and Linguistic Features of Research Proposal in Modelling the Genre Stage

Most of the students responded positively to the teacher's explicit explanation of the schematic structure and linguistic features, as shown by Risda, who noted that she gained new knowledge:

> *The explanation of the schematic structure and the linguistic feature was very good. Before I got this course, I never knew it, but since the lecturer told us, I knew the research proposal's schematic structure and linguistic feature. It was very clear.*

Risda's comment indicates the value of explicit teaching, which empowers the students cognitively since the program facilitates the students to get new knowledge. The teacher's explicit teaching is believed to be effective for the students to learn, as argued by Vygotsky (1978). With the help of a teacher who has more knowledge on writing, the students will get new knowledge on how to compose a piece of writing. This suggests that explicit teaching is critical in every educational program (Christie, 1989, cited in Emilia, 2005).

Students' Responses to the Teaching of Grammar in The Course in Modelling the Genre Stage

In teaching writing using genre pedagogy, grammar is explicitly taught. The teaching of grammar, based on the questionnaire result, was clear and supported by examples, as Tomi said:

> *Her explanation of grammar was really clear. She explained it patiently and also gave us some examples.*

Tomi mentioned the word "patiently" to describe the teacher's effort in teaching grammar. It confirms that grammar for ESL or EFL learners is a challenge. This is in line with what has been suggested by Ellis (2006), who proposes grammatical difficulty. Risda's comment below also showed grammar as a challenge:

> *Grammar was explicitly told. I got it, but sometimes I still could not differentiate which part I had to use present/past tense.*

Risda's note may suggest that tenses for ESL or EFL learners are problematic since the concepts associated with the time, which differs among language communities, can present an additional level of complexity for learners (Hinkel, 1992). Therefore, it is expected that by the explicit teaching of grammar, the students were able to analyze the text and finally could help them write the proposal.

The Students' Responses to Writing Different Drafts in Joint Construction Stage: Benefits and Challenges

Based on the questionnaire result, most of the students found it useful to write different drafts. It helped them analyze the mistakes they made and compare their own writing products. For example, Ina noted:

Writing different drafts was very useful. It helped me analyze the error of my writing, and I also could compare the writing that I made.

This statement indicates the significant value of writing different drafts, which could lead the students to further essential activities, such as comparing, analyzing which encourage students' cognitive processes (Anderson an&d Krathwol, 2001). In addition, Fitri noted that this activity is beneficial:

It was really beneficial. I could know the incorrect parts of my work, then finally could revise it and know the correct one.

By recognizing the problematic parts of her research proposal, Fitri could notice how to realize the correct forms.

Students' Responses to Feedback Given by the Teacher

Feedback was perceived positively by the students because it helps them to revise her work, as noted by Fitri:

It was very helpful. So, I could directly know what parts were wrong and could directly revise them.

Fitri's statement indicates that the process of giving feedback empowered the students cognitively as this could lead the students to use their knowledge (Stromquist, 2009) to understand the feedback as well as use it to revise their drafts. In addition, this activity also psychologically empowered them, as shown in the following response given by Tomi:

The feedback was really made me happy because the teacher patiently read my draft and gave feedback with motivation words like: great! etc.

Tomi's statement described his perception or feeling that his work was appreciated. Tomi's feeling of worth suggested that he was psychologically empowered (Stromquist, 2009). Furthermore, Tomy was happy because the teacher wrote motivation words. This motivation leads to the capability of an individual to take action on his behalf (Stromquist, 2009). Therefore, it suggests that teacher's feedback psychologically empowered the students.

Students' Responses to Feedback Given by Their Classmates

In general, the students gave positive responses to feedback given by their friends. They found it useful to help them revise their proposal drafts. For example, Ina noted:

I thought feedback from friends was also very helpful because we could share our ideas and our understanding with each other.

Ina's note confirms that this activity encouraged the students to higher-order thinking activities, which reflected cognitive empowerment. It supports what has been contented by Liu and Hansen (2002), who argued that peer feedback activity could develop analytical skills and take part in their own learning.

Another benefit of peer feedback was experienced by Umi. She got not only the feedback but also the opportunity to easily revise it because her classmates provided the explanation.

It's very assistive too, and I understood clearly my classmates' opinion of my research proposal because they gave feedback and explained how to revise the research proposal that I already made by the daily language, so I could revise it easily.

Ria's statement suggests that peer feedback is good as it made students free to talk and discuss. This finding is also in line with the study conducted by Lin and Chien (2009), which suggested that peer feedback could release students' anxiety and raise their confidence in writing.

The Students' Responses on Classroom Practices Related to Student Empowerment through Genre Pedagogy

In terms of classroom practices related to student empowerment through genre pedagogy, most of the students gave positive responses. The classroom practices represent the students'

psychological empowerment as they discuss the psychological dimension or feelings that individuals are competent, worthy of better conditions, and capable of taking action on their own behalf (Stromquist, 2009).

Students' Feeling After Doing Every Activity

In general, the questionnaire results regarding the students' feeling after doing every activity were happy and fun as Nia said:

> *In every activity, I felt interested because, with this course, I got new knowledge or information more about the research.*

However, at the same time, Hesti said,

> *I sometimes feel dizzy, confused, but happy.*

Hesti's comment confirmed that learning activities in the program required hard work and extra thought, which might make her dizzy and confused. Confusion, however, is positively related to learning outcomes (Craig et al., 2004; D'Mello et al., 2011). Thus, it suggests that confusion, to some extent, was beneficial.

Furthermore, the students also felt motivated, as shown in the following response written by Tomi:

> *...I was proud to myself that I did it. But the activity in the classroom was really interesting ad motivating me to do better.*

Tomi felt motivated to do better next time. It showed that every activity in teaching writing using genre pedagogy could boost the students' motivation which led them to do better in the future.

Students' Feeling Regarding Their Abilities in Writing a Research Proposal

All students said that they were very happy after they were able to write their research proposal. For example, Ina noted:

> *I felt so happy after I was able to write a research proposal because it meant that I got improvement in my learning.*

Ina's note indicates the value of psychological empowerment as Stromquist (2009) argues that when the individual feels that he is competent, he or she is psychologically empowered.

The students felt very happy since finally, they could complete a difficult task: writing the research proposal, as Risda said:

> *After I was able to write a research proposal, I felt very happy. Finally, I could finish the hardest part in life because writing a research proposal wasn't easy.*

Zinan also expressed a similar proposition.

> *I felt so satisfied because I thought that I was able to finish my research proposal because it's very complicated.*

Both comments, again, confirmed that the research proposal was an occluded genre: a genre that was important but difficult to write (Swales, 1990). Thus, completing this difficult task was relieving. It suggests that genre pedagogy could empower the students psychologically.

Students' Thought Regarding Their Abilities to Write Research Report (Skripsi)

All students believed that they would be able to write *skripsi* because they had sufficient knowledge on how to write a research report. For example, Ria said:

> *I think I will be able to make skripsi. I have learned the things before I make a research proposal, and I will apply the understanding that I have in my research report.*

Ria's comment was strengthened by Yanti. The knowledge she got from the course could convince her to be able to construct her own research proposal.

> *Yes, I did. Because I believed in my ability, I could do it, and the lecturer already gave me some knowledge about that.*

All in all, those responses suggest that the students are psychologically empowered as they feel that they will be able to take action on behalf of their own (Stromquist, 2009). Moreover, cognitive empowerment is reflected as it changes the students' states from unknowledgeable to knowledgeable ones.

Students Responses Regarding Their Willingness to Help their Friends in Writing a Research Proposal

All students mentioned that they would help their friends in writing the research proposal. They thought that helping their friends would make them learn too, as Ina saying:

Yes, I am willing to help my friends in writing their research proposals, because sharing our knowledge means helping each other.

Ina's willingness to help her friends conformed to Fitri's feeling happy to have the opportunity to share with each other. As she said:

Yes, I was. Since I was happy to learn together and share each other, and I realized that I was also very helped by other friends when I still got confused.

Her friends were supportive every time she felt confused. Those who help others mean that they are already capable of doing action themselves. This may suggest that genre pedagogy psychologically empowers the students since it enables the students to do their own actions in the future (Stromquist, 2009).

In sum, the questionnaire results show that the students gave positive responses to genre pedagogy and the practice of empowerment in the teaching program. The responses indicate that the students are cognitively and psychologically empowered through the activities they had conducted.

CONCLUSION

The students gave positive responses to the use of genre pedagogy in learning to write a research proposal. They responded positively to the activities, such as reading multiple texts, using *skripsi* as a model, the teacher's explanation on the schematic structure and linguistic features of a research proposal, the teaching of grammar, and writing different drafts. They posited that those activities were useful and meaningful. Furthermore, those activities helped them write research proposals.

The students' responses on the practice of empowerment in the program were also positive. They felt happy after conducting the activities in the program and completing the research proposals. Furthermore, they believed that they were able to write good research proposals. Finally, they also showed their willingness to help their friends in writing research proposals. Those responses indicate their psychological empowerment as they discussed the psychological dimension or feelings that individuals are competent, worthy of better conditions, and capable of taking action on their own behalf (Stromquist, 2009).

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