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Genre-Based Approach: Can It Improve the Informatics Engineering Students' Writing Skill?

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Because instructional process in English for Specific Purpose (ESP) context is oriented to students' academic and professional settings within discourse community, challenges appear. Learning language and learning using language are directed to improving students' language skills to survive the 21^{st} century. On the other hand, score-documentations proved that the students performed low skills; especially writing skill. This study aims at improving the students' skill in writing explanation text by using Genre-Based Approach (GBA) to Informatics Engineering students of a private university in South Tangerang, Indonesia. Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted to the third semester students of the university within two cycles. To validate the findings, writing test, observation and questionnaire were employed. The test result proved implementing GBA improved the classroom's average score from 54 to 59.95 in cycle 1. This improvement was supported by the students' engagement and enthusiasm to the instructional process as suggested by questionnaire and observation respectively. Further, the implementation of cycle 2 revealed the average score improved from 59.5 to 70.5. This score improvement is followed by the students' agility and cooperativeness during the instructional process. This concludes that implementing GBA can improve the students' skill in writing explanation text. This finding is expected to give insight for teachers to undoubtedly using GBA in English for specific purposes context.

Keywords: English for Specific Purpose, GenreBased, Informatics Engineering

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INTRODUCTION

For its dynamic principle, English for Specific Purpose (ESP) expanded its mainstream from prioritizing descriptive analyses of linguistic features with wider categories of register such as medical or scientific language (Belcher, 2004) to highlighting genre analyses and their communicative functions and effects in discourse community Bawarshi et al. (2010). This shifting is acceptable to adapt to the needs of teaching English in the current context. Genre analysis offers fundamental view that language is understood and processed in the text form that can be any meaning-producing event (Knapp and Watkins, 2005) which can be interpreted to bracing language learners for their own discourse community. This principle brings pedagogical implication to teaching ESP that instructional process should scaffold the students to be well-equipped in professional and academic settings Bawarshi et al. (2010).

However, the trend of teaching ESP in Indonesia should be criticized for some points. First, many institutions including the Informatics Engineering of a private university in Tangerang,

which hereinafter shall be referred to as the setting of this study has no clear design to teaching ESP. An observation to ESP modules used found grammar and other linguistic features the dominant materials the students learn. Texts are very few and not related to the discourse community. Consequently, a survey proved that practicing language skills were minor and writing activities were alienated in most of the meetings. Whereas, ESP in higher-level education suggests writing skill (Coffin and Donohue, 2012) important to learn that even Aunurrahman et al. (2017); Emilia (2011) conclude that first-semester university students are advised to possess the knowledge and skills in writing for they will be assigned with many essays or research paper. Beyond that, writing skill is also important as a communication medium be paramount to survive the 21^{st} century. On the contrary, the lack of including genre-specific writing that suits with the curriculum consequently brings lack of experience in writing (Rahman and Mojibur, 2011). This was proven by an evaluation to a module the program gives to the third semester students. The evaluation focuses on finding out what activities the module serves to teach English in a semester. It was found that grammar focus grabs more than half of the whole activities followed by small portions toward language skills. The percentage of activities in the English module of English for the third semester students is depicted in **Figure 1** .

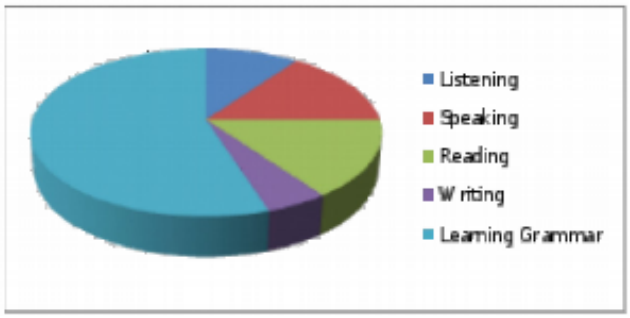

FIGURE 1 | The Percentage of Activities in the English Module

Figure 1 shows that the instructional activities the module offers concern with empowering the students' English proficiency instead of bracing the students' topics related to informatics engineering that are useful for their working-demands in the future. As the topics are not interesting, the students' engagement with the instructional process is low (Setyowati et al., 2017).

Second, a survey towards students' attitude to writing skill shows that most of the students' response to writing is negative as they found the instructional process not interesting. They are also less confident in writing for having the poor vocabulary, grammar and ideas. On the contrary, some students showed good motivation in learning writing skill but face challenges on the best method to learn it most effectively.

Third, the lecturers' attitude in teaching them English needs to be rejuvenated. Most of the activities were lecturing where the lecturers took the dominant role, conducted very few to almost no discussion in the writing process, and performed monotonously.

These findings were the causes to the students' low achievement in writing shown by the lecturer's document of the students' final writing-score. The average score the class could achieve was only 54 which, if converted, mean most of the students obtained score D. Accordingly, a one-for-all solution is needed to cover the mentioned-problems. As suggested by the current language-teaching approach, this study proposed genre-based to improve the students' writing skill. Emilia (2011) states that the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) is developed in Australia designed to surmount the unsatisfying product of the Process Approach. GBA in the ESP platform perceives that language works through texts to help learners have access to communicating activities that accrued culture and experience in particular academic, professional and occupational communities (Hyland, 2003).

Teaching English writing through GBA seems to be arguably new in ESP context at the university level (Dirgayasa and Wy, 2014). At this level, Bruce (2008) suggested four similar types of text. They are explanation, discussion, report, and description. This study focused on improving the students' skill in writing explanation text as one of the suggested genres in the syllabus. The materials were suited to explanation texts for Informatics Engineering students which focus on the organization of information related to the conclusions, choices, and outcomes whose social and educational purpose is to explain how or why a phenomenon occurs Vorvilas et al. (2011). This text is divided into four. They are (1) sequential explanations consisting of a causal sequence and results responsible for the occurrence or appearance of a certain phenomenon such as how central processing unit of a computer works; 2) factorial explanations explaining responsible factors for the appearance of a particular phenomenon like the factors cause the destruction of a software system; 3) consequential explanations explaining the consequences of a phenomenon such as the consequences of gadget to social activities; and 4) conditional explanations explaining the necessary relations that appear between various events that, in turn, characterize a phenomenon such as conditions which force a computer to automatically shut down.

A study about the role of genre in language teaching was conducted by Ueasiriphan et al. (2019). This study focuses on the effects of a genre-based approach to technical writing to Thai engineers. Interview, observation, and written test conducted by the author suggested that the genre-based approach is more effective than the conventional method for teaching writing for the students. However, this study was implemented to engineer students with different backgrounds of English proficiency, while my study is limited to only informatics engineer students with almost homogeneous in terms of English proficiency.

The other study was an evaluation of ESP textbooks by using genre-based approach Darani et al. (2014) . The researchers evaluated five ESP textbooks on computer engi-

neering by using Swales' ESP genre-based theory. The study indicated that in spite of a tendency to broaden the environmental scope of mainstream computer engineering as it was claimed by the authors from Iran, the traditional frameworks dominate and textbooks are not responsive and persist to students' needs and advances in genre theory in this field. This study is considered related to my study as this used the genre-based approach in evaluating the book. The difference lies in the objective that my study focuses on improving the students' writing skill. On the other hand, their study focuses on evaluating the book.

As a novice approach to teaching reading-comprehension at higher education, the genre-based approach was implemented by Sadeghi et al. (2013) to around 55 junior and senior students at a private university in Kurdistan, majoring in Biology. This study compared the genre-based to teaching the control group consisting of another 55 students by using the traditional method. Having given a 30-item proficiency test and 30-item reading test, this study found that genre-based approach is more significant in enhancing the students' reading comprehension than the traditional method in comparison. This is to show that the genre-based approach is reliable that supports my study on the same approach. The difference lies on the research design where they took experimental design. Another difference is on the subject that this study scrutinized the effect to Biology students while my study is on informatics engineering students.

Many other researchers conducted GBA to overcome various problems students face respectively. GBA to particularly teaching writing is not novel. Therefore, the novelty of this study is not on the approach used to teach writing skill, but whether this approach works effectively to be implemented in ESP context to teach writing skill. To be initially assumed, its implementation is considerably and unexpectedly able to overcome the problems students face in writing explanation text. A forceful reason to this is GBA consists of three distinctive features: generic structure, purpose and or rhetorical structure, and linguistic features that guide the students to understand more how to write well. Accordingly, this study aims at improving the Informatics Engineering students' skill in writing an explanation text.

The pedagogical implication of GBA emphasizes the idea of learning as a staged, goal-oriented social process Santosa (2011) where students find and transform complex information, understand and apply the self-gained knowledge and solve the problems by themselves. GBA is a social process in which knowledge is transmitted in the social context, through relationships that are defined in the ideology of the culture and value systems. Instead of a language, genre is a prototype of a social process that embodies a social goal and particular staging to achieve the goal. Emilia (2011) adapts its implementation in classroom in 4 steps: (1) Building Knowledge of the Field (BKoF) aiming at building students' knowledge about the genre being discussed generally; (2) Modeling as deconstructing the model of genre for scrutinizing its communicative purpose, steps, and language features by demonstrating them together through activities of semantics, grammar, lexicon, and phonology which are all known with top-down activities; (3) Joint Construction of the Text (JCOT) to reconstruct the communicative purpose, social norms, steps, and language features of each text and starting to write the complete text in group; (4) Independent Construction of the Text (ICOT) to assign the students to work individually. The pedagogical implication of the genre derives from the teaching procedures is shown by **Figure 2**.

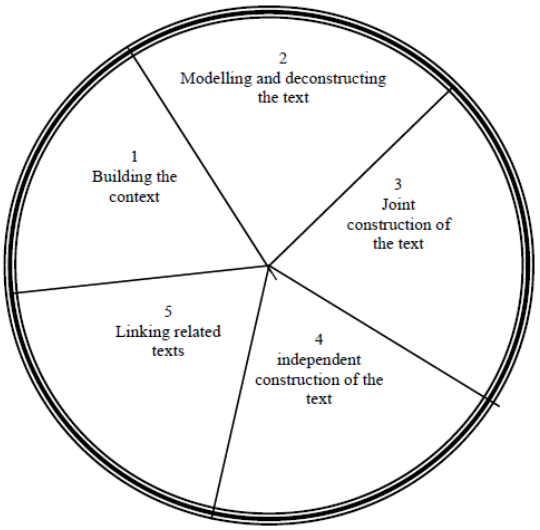

FIGURE 2 | The Pedagogical Implementation

Additional reason choosing GBA to implement is it is, by nature, an approach that envisions academic and professional demands through writing activities. Writing is perceived as a physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium Nunan (2003), encoded in celestial phenomena Rochberg (2004) and chained by acceptable grammatical structure (Hutchinsson, 2005) with some components such as (1) ideas: clarity, relevance development, quantity persuasiveness; (2) Flavor: interest, style, sincerity; (3) form: organization and analysis (4) wording: word choices and arrangement; and (5) mechanics: punctuation errors, and grammar; (Broad, 2003). On the other hand, Bratcher and Ryan (2004) propose content, context, mechanics, structure, and process. In conclusion, students are good at writing if they perform quality (1) content: generate ideas and provide supporting details: knowledgeable, thorough development of thesis, substantive, relevant to assigned topic; (2) organization: express fluent expression: well-organized, ideas clearly stated/supported, succinct, cohesive, and logical sequence; (3) grammar: use correct grammar: correct agreement, effective complex construction, tense, word order/function, number, pronouns, articles, prepositions; (4) vocabulary: effective word/idiom choice and usage, use effective word/idioms: word form mastery, sophisticated range, appropriate register; and (5) mechanics: use correct English

writing: correct spelling, demonstrating mastery of conventions, capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphing.

METHODS

This was a classroom action research carried out in a private university in South Tangerang from May to July, 2019. The procedural implementation of this study dealt with the one proposed by Kemmis and Mc. Taggar in Nunan (1993): (1) planning (2) implementing (3) observing (4) reflection. As a discourse community in this ESP study, the third-semester informatics engineering students in the academic year of 2018/2019 were chosen. The subject chosen is students class TI-P-001 consisting of 20 students. The following procedures were also conducted to make the research valid:

1. Writing Test

Writing test was given given in the pre-test and in the end of every cycle to reflect the result of GBA implementations. The students were asked to compose an explanation text in 150 – 200 words with time allocation 80 minutes.Topics for the pre-test, test1 and test 2 are successively how cellphone works, the process of operating a computer, and how internet works. The instructional tests were readable and reliable. Technically, the students were not allowed to use any technology-assisted device and were observed by proctors during the test to gain fair result. Then, their texts were assessed based on five indicators. They are content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanism which share an equal portion in determining the final score. The scoring rubric is shown in **Appendix** .

In analyzing the data from the performance test, descriptive analysis was employed. Mean score was obtained from dividing the total score by the number of students, and the score percentage (P) was to classify students who obtained above 70 categorized as good in writing. It was calculated from dividing the number of students who obtained score 70 (R) multiplied by 100% then divided by the number of students who joined the test. Additionally, the primary data were justified by findings of both observation and questionnaire to obtain triangulation sources validity.

2. Observation

The implementation of instructional process was observed by a passive observer to take noted points which can be used to prove or to justify the finding of the primary data. The observer used field notes to find out the lecturer's and the students' activities, such as whether the lecturer implemented steps in GBA, accommodated and facilitated the students in learning both group discussion and individual assignment, and whether the students engaged the instructional process. The observation was conducted during the implementation of GBA in cycle 1 and cycle 2.

3. Questionnaire

To crosscheck the findings from the writing test and observation, a set of questionnaire was used. In the last meeting of every cycle, the students were given a questionnaire about the instructional process. The instrument was already validated by using face validity by one of senior lecturers in the department. This is to justify whether or not implementing GBA is good from the students' perspectives. There were 10 closed questions given, such as whether the students find GBA helpful in understanding and creating explanation text, whether the instructional process ran effectively, whether using GBA could enhance the students' skill in arguing, and so on.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This classroom action research was conducted within two cycles. The first cycle was accomplished in four meetings and the second cycle was in three meetings. The instructional process obeyed the steps of GBA which consist of background knowledge of the field, modeling, joint-construction of the text, and individual construction of the text. The evaluation was given in the pre-treatment step as well as at the end of each cycle. The average score in each evaluation is depicted in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1 | The Students' Mean Scores

Pre-Cycle	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
54	59.95	70.5

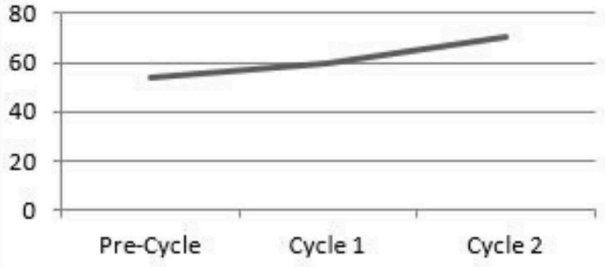

FIGURE 3 | **The Students' Writing Score Improvement**

To find out how GBA works to improve the students' skill in writing can be by looking at the improvements in each indicator. **Figure 3** demonstrates the average improvement the students obtained from pre-cycle to cycle 2.

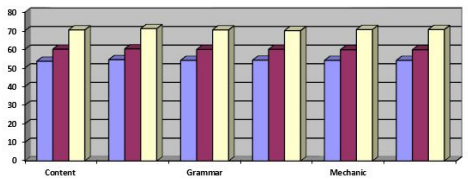

FIGURE 4 | The Improvements in Every Indicator from Pretest to Cycle 2

Figure 4 shows improvements of the students' score in every indicator from pre-cycle to cycle and as well as from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The score in the pre-cycle suggests that treatment was urgently in need. Score 54 is the result of averaging scores of that most of the students possessed limited knowledge of the instruction (53.6), incomplete text elements, errors in punctuation, improper or poor in transitional words (54), inconsistent in grammar (54), and limited range of vocabulary (54.1). Accordingly, it is advisable that GBA be implemented as this approach provides students complete materials of linguistic unit needed in writing the text as well as practical steps in writing a well-organized text (Santosa, 2011).

The Improvement after Cycle 1

Cycle 1 was begun by stimulating the students' background knowledge to explanation text. Question-and-answer activities were chosen to find out whether they know what builds a good explanation text. Afterward, the students were taught on linguistic units that build a good text. It starts from paragraph arrangement to phonological transcribing. This process is called top-down activities. The activities were varied from dictating correct pronunciation of words, matching, true and false, cloze test, and paragraph arrangement. After modeling the linguistic unit used in explanation text, the students were instructed to work in the group (JCOT) as suggested by the teaching method. In this step, they were prepared to discuss a topic on how computer works in general and constructed their ideas together. A series of bottom-up activities which start from building a sentence to building a text was accomplished within group collaboration. They shared ideas, negotiated, and debated to construct a text. After that, when the students were considered able to construct a text, ICOT, was begun. In this step, every student was assigned to construct their own text based on their experience from working in a group.

After conducting a series of meetings in cycle I, it was found that GBA helped the students (1) understand typical purpose of explanation text, and could construct main ideas of each paragraph (average score 59.7), (2) use linguistic unit needed to write an explanation text such as diction in computer engineering (60), (3) chain their ideas and structure of complex sentence (60), (4) comprehensive in uniting paragraph to organize a text (60.25), and (5) provide fairly complete element of text which is easy to understand (60). On the other hand, observation showed that the students were engaged in all activities and enthusiastic to learn how to express their ideas into words and chained them all together in a text. On the other hand, the questionnaire proved that they agreed to claim GBA helpful in understanding and writing a text with proper diction, and cohesive devices, constructing ideas using complex structure, and uniting paragraph(s) to a good organization. This is in line with Dirgayasa and Wy (2014) that GBA helps students understand the communicative purpose, generic structure or rhetorical structure, and the realization of the linguistic features because GBA actually does not only provide knowledge, competence and skill in writing but also emphasizes on the process as well. Consequently, evaluation at the end of the first cycle concluded that the students' mean score rose to 58 on average.

Though some positive wash-backs were found, the average score was actually low in any standard. This low score was obtained because some problems were still found. First of all, some students initially ignored the variant choices of cohesive devices. They tended to use monotonous devices repeatedly in a text they wrote. On the other hand, the teacher was lack of elaboration of the grammatical concept used in writing explanation text to the students and profoundly focused on teaching the generic structure of the text. It was also predicted by Harmer (2000) that some factors influencing the success or failure of learning are students' entry behavior, learning motivation, and lecturer's competences both professionally and pedagogically. This finding was beneficial as an evaluation to designing the second-cycle program, such as (1) reintroduce the process of conducting genre-based approach; (2) re-explain more comprehensively the variant choices of cohesive devices as well as proper diction by introducing them thesaurus tool; and (3) exemplify the use of complex sentences in a paragraph.

The Improvement after Cycle 2

The instructional process in cycle 2 was based on the evaluation from cycle 1 without significantly changing the activities. This cycle was aimed to enrich the students' experience of learning explanation text aiming at their score improvement. As shown in Figure 4 to figure 8, even though improvement occurred, the average score of each indicator was not satisfying. This is based on the minimum standard that to reach "the good" category, the students have to obtain score 70. Accordingly, the activities were repeated by some modifications.

The lecturer started this cycle by re-organizing question and answer session related to explanation text. After that, the students were given an overall evaluation of their final score in cycle 1, so they could conduct self-evaluation and prepare for the coming cycle. After that, modeling activities were repeated with forcefully strengthening the students' grammar in structuring a good complex sentence as the dominant type found in explanation text. Afterward, JCOT was emphasized with an emphasis on sharing ideas to produce insightful content about the role of the central processing unit in a computer system.

They were asked to research materials about it before starting to compose their text. After reading the sources, they were led to share ideas and negotiate what to write on the paper. The papers were then evaluated by the lecturer. In the second last meeting, the students were individually asked to compose their own text on the same topic.

After conducting the test in this cycle, it was evident that the students' average score improved to 70. This score was resulted from the students' more insightful and complete element (score 70.4) as they conducted scientific step of reading before writing, from the students' ability in organizing the text more systematically with effective use of transitional words (score 60.25), performed consistently-accurate grammar especially in structuring complex sentences (704), putting wider range of vocabulary (70), and were good in coherence and cohesiveness with almost to no error in punctuation (70.6). Observation revealed that the students were engaged in conducting all the activities as they were more experienced in it and the instructional process was dominated by the students' contribution to sharing and negotiating their thought in all steps. This is in line with Hyland (2003) that GBA as a process, basically provides cyclic contextualizing modeling-negotiating-constructing. On the other hand, the questionnaire found that the students agreed that genre-based helped them understand explanation text more comprehensively; which led to (2) the students' experience to writing explanation text more systematically. This is in line with Firkins et al. (2007) that GBA either as a product of writing or a process of teaching and learning significantly helps and facilitates the student to write better. Leeuwen (2005) also agreed that GBA helps the students to serve the communication activities, functioning as "templates" for doing communicative things. This finding validates that genre-based approach was able to improve the students' skill in writing explanation text.

CONCLUSION

As the use of GBA in ESP context is rare, this study gives insight and pedagogical practice to using GBA for Informatics engineering students. Evidently, a long series of studies eventually revealed that using GBA for informatics engineering students at University X could improve the students' skill in writing explanation text. It is proven by the writing test and supported by the observation and questionnaire results. This finding is beneficial to all education practitioners who are assigned to teach English for the specific purpose that GBA is implementable not only to teach general English but also English for the specific purpose. It is suggested that the use of GBA can also be implemented to many discourse communities such as secretary department, accounting department, international relation department, and others.

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APPENDIX 1. WRITING INDICATORS

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Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

TABLE 2 | Appendix 1. Writing Indicators

	Aspect	Description	Score
1. Content			
	Unsatisfying	Not complete and difficult to understand	0-20
	Fair	Provide quite intelligible explanation	21-40
	Good	Provide fairly-intelligible explanation	41-60
	Very good	Provide intelligible explanation	61-80
	Excellent	Provide strongly intelligible explanation	81-100
2. Organization			
	Unsatisfying	Lack organization, and does not utilize any transitional words/phrases	0-20
	Fair	Ideas disconnected, lack transitional words/phrases	21-40
	Good	Loosely organized but main ideas understood, incomplete but logical transitional words/phrases	41-60
	Very Good	Fairly well organize and use effective transitional words/phrases	61-80
	Excellent	Well organized and use effective transitional words/phrases	81-100
3. Grammar			
	Unsatisfying	Errors in grammar are frequent but the text can be understood	0-20
	Fair	Can frequently handle basic constructions quite accurately but doesn't have consistent control of the grammar.	21-40
	Good	Grammar control is good. Able to write the language with fair structural accuracy	41-60
	Very Good	Almost no errors in grammar and consistent in structural accuracy.	61-80
	Excellent	Equivalent to that of an educated native writer.	81-100
4. Vocabulary			
	Unsatisfying	Very limited or poor range, very limited knowledge of words and words forms	0-20
	Fair	Limited range, confused use of words and words forms	21-40
	Good	sufficient choice of words but some misuse of words forms and vocabularies	41-60
	Very Good	Effective choice of words and words forms	61-80
	Excellent	Very effective choice of words and words form	81-100
5. Mechanic			
	Unsatisfying	No mastery of convention, dominated by errors of punctuation: periods, commas, semicolons, quotations, and marks and initial capital letters.	0-20
	Fair	Frequent errors of punctuation: periods, quotation, semi colons, commas, and marks.	21-40
	Good	Occasional errors of punctuation: periods, quotation, semi colons, commas, and marks.	41-60
	Very Good	Well organized and utilize punctuation: periods, quotation, semi colons, commas, and marks.	61-80
	Excellent	Well organized and utilize punctuation: periods, quotation, semi colons, commas, and marks.	81-100
Final Score		$\sum$ each indicator divided by 5	