

Using Literature to Teach English Academic Writing in Business School of Management

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Abstract

This paper is a case study on using English literary work in Academic Writing class for Business School of Management. This case study tries to narrate the effects of using literary works to teach English in non literature students. First, the background of Business School's perspective towards Literature is explained. Then, the theories on importance of Literature in learning English are presented. After giving the context of the case study, findings and discussion enriched with real excerpts from student's work are given.

This research was designed and applied in Universitas Pelita Harapan Surabaya on the previous academic year. This is a progressive research, therefore surprising outcomes and details are welcomed to enrich the findings. Data is taken from observation, interview with the participant, and documenting student's work. Then, data gathered is triangulated across sources.

Keywords: academic writing, liberal arts, TEFL, reflective essay

Introduction

There are two stereotypes given into students of Management's program in Indonesia. One is they come from economically rich family background. They have parents that own a company, rather big or small. Their option of career in the future already decided since kids, which is to continue the work of their parents. They are the future boss of their parents' company, no matter what they

do. This kind of students doesn't bear the burden of seeking job during or after collage. So the goal of their studies is to equip them skills to be the leader of a company.

The other stereotype is Business School of Management program's considered as the most work applicable. People thought that having a degree in Management means you could easily get a job with high payment, they were considered as being able to manage all kinds of work field. Thus, their main reason of choosing Management as their major is not in the pursue of the science of management itself, but for the benefit of money coming later.

This presupposition make them only interested with work related, highly applicable topic during school. They tend not to understand it as science. For examples, in an accounting class, student more interested in how to use an accounting computer program than understanding the whole concept of accounting. They tend to ignore any philosophical value behind the science of accounting being taught. So does with English subjects, acquiring English as second language is considered only as additional tool or skill to do business or work with foreigner. Most of the questions arise from Business School of Management students are how do we make business letter or how to lobbying native speaker. The others aspect of languages indirectly applicable to work – office environment are considered as not necessary. Literary works such as stories, poem, play and pop-lit such as movies are considered only for the purpose of fun, and not supposed to be taught at school. Sadly such idea also believed by some academicians. They thought that literary works would only bring benefit for students of Literature.

There are several reasons why literature can transform students' lives. Literature allows students to widen their imagination, enable them to make well-informed decisions, construct their personal identities, and helps them in better communication.

“Teaching materials without any values in it makes it harder for learners to connect emotionally, moreover to organize and characterize or to communicate the emotional response towards the value given, unlike school textbooks which are dull and over-synthetic, literature vividly expose learners to a world of highly crafted alive language.” (Sudargo, 2013)

Povey (1972) encourages the use of literature to familiarize students with vocabulary and complex syntax. McKay (1982) urges the use of literature for two reasons. The first one is the argument

that literary works take role relationship and social context into consideration, so students might be triggered to be more aware about language use. The second one is the influence of literature in motivational or affective and experiential factors in learner's reading proficiency. Maley (2001) most of all presents seven reasons why literature is suitable in EFL and ESL, they are universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy and suggestive power, and ambiguity. Oster (1989) also supports literature use since it "enlarges students' vision and fosters critical thinking." Hadaway, Vardell and Young (2002) points out literature's advantages; they are contextualization of language, social and affective factors embedded, and natural and meaningful use of language. Lazar (1993) mentions that literature could be a tool to promote chances of discussion, controversy, and critical thinking.

The discussion of using literature in English Language Teaching, even as Foreign Language is actually not a brand new issue. Centuries ago, we had already benefit from English Literature in many foreign countries. However, as issues of Canons and the very definition of Literature and Classics become gray, English Language Teaching also needs to move to a new sphere. Settings, language styles, and topics discussed in 18th century-literary work may find difficulties for students of the 21 century. As Turker puts it:

"Teaching English through literature has become the fashionable phenomenon. However, the teaching is to feed student heavy, repetitive and somewhat redundant literature, which has little or no relevance to his immediate problems. This affords little opportunity for creativity. The student is told of literary terms and the meanings of words, and is finally asked to analyze the subject of literary piece, which is often too abstract a task for the non-native speaker. The process of analysis, therefore, takes the form of repeating the material understanding mostly by memorization and at best, partly by rephrasing. Students at the intermediate level become frustrated by being able partially to understand but unable to respond. I believe this frustration is the by-product of non involvement; the students are static participants in a one-sided process." (1991)

Methodology

This paper is a case study research conducted in a class of Academic Writing for students of Business School of Management. This research was designed and applied in Universitas Pelita Harapan Surabaya on the previous academic year. This is a progressive research, therefore surprising outcomes and details are welcomed to enrich the findings. Data is taken from observation, interview with the participant, and documenting student's work. Then, data gathered is triangulated across sources.

Academic Writing is a mandatory course for all students across majors in Universitas Pelita Harapan. However, unlike general mandatory courses in basic Indonesian curriculum for higher education, or so called MKDU, mandatory courses in Universitas Pelita Harapan are under supervision of Liberal Arts Department. Liberal Arts is not a common education field in Indonesia, it focuses on constructing a whole approach education to produce holistic human being. The tradition of the liberal arts emphasizes holistic intellectual development rather than vocational and professional training. An understanding of human cultures, the natural universe, and social sciences provides the foundation for comprehending the complex and evolving world in which we live. This distinguished design embodied in courses named as general courses of MKDU but described slightly different with sharper focus. Take for example, instead of regular Civics studying constitutions and memorizing chapters in UU, Civics in Liberal Arts study the philosophy of nationalism, building ethics of Pancasila and humane citizenship, and critical analysis toward politics. Instead of allowing each faculties to merely supply students with specific skill based courses, Liberal Arts conducts a university level course in Character Development to enhance students personality and character, build an awareness of strong characters, help them develop their humanistic aspects broader than working skills. So does Academic Writing.

Most General English courses in universities focus the teaching on grammar studies, structural syllabus, and writing essays for school projects. In Liberal Arts, Academic Writing goes beyond that border. First of all, Academic Writing course equips students with the standardized writing skills in higher education such as anti-plagiarism campaign, standardized essay structure, and library research. Furthermore, this course also allows students to develop their critical thinking skills, logics development, and promoting awareness sensitive to issues around their real world. In the run of making holistic human being, Academic Writing in Liberal Arts also enhance students'

soft skills such as imagination, confidence and courage to be creative, community concern, and reflective trait.

The literary work discussed in this research is Hilary Mantel's historical fiction *Bring Up the Bodies*. It is a sequel of *Wolf Hall*, both retell a darker era of Britannica Kingdom under King Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell. *Bring Up the Bodies* brilliantly whispered the shadows of a gory narrative on the descend of Anne Boleyn – from Queen to death, and the ascend of Jane Seymour – from neglected to Her Majesty. This masterpiece had acclaimed much applause both from expert critics and popular reviewers, it won 2012 Man Booker Prize, 2012 Specsavers National Book Awards "UK Author of the Year", 2012 Costa Book Awards and shortlisted for 2013 Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction.

Findings and Discussion

Mostly, English language education goes polarized between two poles; 'Traditional' and 'Progressive'. Those who firmly believe that traditional approaches are more effective tend to conduct classes in focus of employment, vocational training, promoting single standard language with emphasis on formal writing and grammatical rules. On the other hand, a progressive approach prefers to recognize varieties and creative personalities with attention to speech and expression accommodating pluralism. However, such context is not always applicable in non-English speaking countries such as Indonesia.

“...those whose first (and perhaps only) language is English may assume that their language is the natural medium of education; also that it is culturally neutral. However, people for whom English is a second (or third or fourth) language tend to have quite distinct, because more detached, views of the subject; they inevitably experience it cross-culturally. Basically, for many, English represents access to specific knowledges and skills and tends to be identified with the technology and science as well as the economic and cultural models of the modern West. Hence the characteristics emphases of advanced courses in English for Academics Purposes (EAP) and, more explicitly, English for Special Purposes (ESP),

which often feature materials relevant to Business, or Computing, or Engineering, or Law.” (Pope, 1998: 32)

Most academicians in third world countries are busy struggling to survive the market needs on skillful labors.

“In such contexts, however, the ‘Traditional’ and ‘Progressive’ polarities featured in the previous section tend to get scrambled or replaced. From one point of view, English in EFL/ESL would seem to be squarely aligned with the ‘Traditional’ side: an emphasis in employment, specialism, promotion of a single standard, concentration on writing, and so on.” (Pope, 1998: 32)

However, it does not mean that only native speakers of English could experience a dynamic language learning process.

“And yet, the fact is that in many respects EFL/ESL is the most dynamic and resourceful area of the subject: the space where much of the most innovative work in cross cultural teaching and learning goes on, and where there is usually a direct and interactive engagement with contemporary genres, discourse and varieties of speech and writing in general. Moreover, the latter often goes well beyond, though it may also include, the relatively familiar areas of poetry, prose and drama as such. Thus, along with instances of other discourses devoted to word-play (such as jokes, anecdotes, adverts and news stories), literary texts are often used in ELT to extend and enliven the learning process. In short, there is a lot about ESL/EFL that is ‘Progressive’ too.” (Pope, 1998: 32)

As it is proposed by Bloom (1956), comprehensive education ought to strive for progress and performance not only in cognitive domain within the instructional effect, but also the development of affective and psychomotor domains in nurturant effects. Educational objectives according to Bloom can be classified into three domains; cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Cognitive domain has six objectives; students are able not only to remember, but also to understand and explain information in their own words, apply it to solve real-life problems, break down the information, combine its elements and create new information, and also make good judgments and decisions. Bloom originally presents this taxonomy in hierarchical arrangement starting with ‘knowledge’ as the lowest level up to ‘evaluation’ as the highest level. On the other hand, affective

domain stands from five objectives showing intensive emotional commitment response; students become aware to receive, motivated to learn, become involved in, integrate the new value into his pre-existing set of belief, and act in accordance with the value character. Furthermore, psychomotor domain connects with reflex movements, basic fundamentals movements, perceptual abilities, general physical skills, complex skilled movements, and non-discussive behaviors to communicate feelings and emotions.

The first few meetings of Academic Writing course equip student with the standards of essay writing such as anti-plagiarism concept, APA format, and simple short paper structure. After that, using extensive reading method, student is given the particular novel entitled *Bring Up the Bodies* completed with the required essay topics to be done throughout the rest of the semester. At first, just as predicted before, the student expressed his complain against such project. He felt the reading material was too heavy and out of his competence. He mentioned that he was not attracted to any literary works especially historical topic. Yet, throughout the semester, his attitude changed. To exemplify this, real excerpts from the student's work will be inserted below, still in its real raw format with the mistakes and errors in language production.

The first two projects were essay on the biography of Hilary Mantel and the historical context of the real event. After researching the topic, the student came to lecturer stating his surprise that such dark story actually existed in the history of a great kingdom he knew. He mentioned that at first he thought novels were always fictional and had no relation to reality. Even though he still felt the novel would be difficult to read, but he got interested in trying to continue the project.

After mid term exam, the next two projects required the student to discuss deeper issues found in the analysis of the novel. Despite difficult vocabularies encountered in the novel, doing this project enriches the student's lexicon storage with new entries even the ones outside his usual discipline. Now, not only being able to mention jargons in Business, the student was able to write using terms found in Law and Literary Genre.

“If we look at the contents of the novel that has been read, then we would immediately know if the core story of the book is that the removal of the Queen Anne chair queen. If we look in more detail, a love that was built from scratch should also beautifully not terminate with a bad ending. Love King Henry VIII to Queen Anne more and even more faded. This was

compounded by the failure of queen Anne cannot produce a child within marriage for nearly seven years. It's also what makes consideration by King Henry VIII to get rid of the queen from her chair. King Henry assisted by Thomas Cromwell to get rid of the position of the queen. On the other hand, there is Jane Seymour who wants to replace the queen which means to be married to King Henry. Love theme from the novel describes the love story between a third person with a man who already has a previous partner. Love stories contained in the novel is more directed to the dark romance between Lord Henry VIII and Jane Seymour.” (excerpt of student’s work)

Furthermore, student was able to recognize the complex pattern of problem presented in the story plot. He realized that any phenomenon might have two sides, both darker and lighter, not all things could be easily criticized as absolutely right or wrong just the way textbooks jugded things.

“In this novel, so many conflicts and events that affect early love between Lord Henry VIII and the Anne Boleyn. Struggle for power and true love story became a fixture in the British Empire. Jane Seymour's own presence, start making love story started by Henry and Anne became displaced and made her became one of the main stars who are highlighted in this story. Although in this novel, romance between the two new partner is a bit smelly criminality and unethical, but it seems their relationship is expected to be able to improve the fate of the kingdom that do not have successors. Jane Seymour present to provide new hope for the kingdom of England, which may unfortunately could not be given by Anne Boleyn. This love story is even more interesting with the start of the plan between Henry and Thomas Cromwell in his attempt to get rid of Anne’s queen position.” (excerpt of student’s work)

Student was also stimulated to think about ethical dilemma occurred in the story. Within the plot context, King’s act of taking the third wife is legal by the law yet the student managed to find a flaw from such an act. He managed to put other consideration to evaluate a decision. This story give him an understanding that some acts could be considered legal, yet unethical. While most

business managerial ethics stop the discussion on legal level, this student started to see that human being needs nobility.

“According to the rules governing the kingdom, took a third wife should not included as crime because basically, a king may have the right to seek a new partner to continue the government seat. And on the other hand, was a queen should also understand and be able to understand the condition of the kingdom which requires a successor to continue the reign of the king's seat. In general, when a man has been committed to a relationship with a woman and decides to marry her, the man ethically should remain loyal and committed to the end to be with her partner. In religion was taught that if a man has decided to take a woman, he must spend the rest of her life with the same woman until death do them both. Though the till even the worst conditions experienced by the couple, move or moved liver disorder left her partner is not the ethical thing.” (excerpt of student's work)

On the last week, upon Final Examination, the student was asked to write a reflective essay as a closure on this project. Encountering a literary text set on a background so far away from the student's own indeed brought up difficulties and challenges, yet he rose up beyond the wall. Even though *Bring Up the Bodies* narrate a story happen hundred years and thousand miles away from him, despite all cultural margin and language barrier, he managed to capture some essences and see his own reflection in the mirror.

“I honestly think that this is very confusing novel. I'm not lying. Because this novel is a true story so that it represents what is really happening. This novel is a novel that makes me quite amazed and pretty to think if there was foul play going on in the government of the British Empire. I feel it is really happening today, though in many ways that I alone cannot be a good guess. For me this book and this story make me able to think more clearly and be better again. Not only thinking of themselves as well as the name and position, but this novel taught me more than I imagined. This novel teaches a good thing which I think primarily good for me and for others. *Bring Up The Bodies* tale also teaches about how to survive in the face of any

problems and continue to be positive and strive to uphold our rights even in difficult conditions though. Within each option there will be consequences that we take and face. This novel contains a conflict between some choices to be made between ethics and love and destiny kingdom itself.” (excerpt of student’s work)

At last, this literary text did not only escalate his English and writing skills, but also pat him on his shoulder and carved a lesson for him personally. Even though he won’t be king of any country, but he can still be a good leader in the future.

“Royal element makes the story of this novel increasingly look attractive and elegant. On the deeper side, this novel teaches that as the head of the public, we must set a good example by keeping the good name of our own. We need to know between which one should and must be done, and what we should avoid. Because the errors choose, we will not only make our name tarnished, but also will make others accept and do bad example.” (excerpt of student’s work)

Conclusion

Value is not merely transferred via cognitive mediums such as memorization or synthesis, it needs to be embedded deeply in order to transform student’s life in his affective and psychomotoric domains. Going beyond cold words and stiff structures of text books, literary works are able to penetrate deeper into student. They mercilessly tease student’s highest cognitive domain to work out hard, softly whisper into his affective domain, and then challenge him to make decisions.

“When our schools practice educative assessment, assessment which is primarily to educate, our children and teachers will perceive assessment as a core of learning. Educative assessment is worthy of attention and closely linked to real world demands. Wiggins beautifully propose the term ‘educative assessment’ and encourage teachers to carefully assess their students. This concept reforms world’s paradigm on assessment focused on three intellectual targets. Shortly speaking, in educative assessment,

achievement target is an integration of subject matter knowledge, technical skills, and performance competencies.” (Sudargo, 2013)

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Biodata

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