



LITERATURE AS THE SUPPLEMENT TO READING SKILLS

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1. Introduction

Celebration is one of the most important qualities a person should have nowadays. It is not just only by doing everything we do with enthusiasm, but also with joy. STIKS Tarakanita (STARKI) is a campus that focuses on two majors, namely Diploma III Secretary Program and Strata 1 Communication Studies Program. However, the author is going to limit the scope and discussion about an activity at Secretary Program only, since the author is the English lecturer in this program; specifically Business Reading 1 subject. Therefore, the author put enormous interest with this English subject. Before this preliminary study, the author had been teaching the class for more than half semester, or more or less three months. The author realized that, as a foundation subject, Business Reading 1 should be taken seriously by the English lecturers, or else the students will not perform as expected in the next levels. The other impact is the next lecturers who are going to teach the class will find difficulties in teaching the students on higher level subjects. By conducting this preliminary study, the author wanted to amplify the celebration spirit where all the students can enjoy their learning better in the school.

Business Reading 1 subject mostly discusses about lighter topics such as daily routines, administrative assistants, receiving visitors, understanding and communicating with different cultures and filing. The course focuses

on improving students' critical thinking in reading about business-related topics, vocabularies and grammar accuracy. The purpose is good, however, not all of the students have the same interest, motivation and input backgrounds when learning English. This fact gives birth to a new problem in teaching the subject. Some students perform extremely progressive in the course, but some perform reluctantly. However, the author believed that this problem can be solved with a proper treatment. Therefore, a classroom action study was conducted.

2. Discussion

This program was conducted after seeing the mid-term test results of the author's Business Reading 1 students. Their score was below the expected score, which was around 45-55 out of a hundred. After examining the content of the subject, the author developed some assignment programs as a scaffolding to improve students' interest and motivation in the reading subject.

“Scaffolding, as most people know, is placed around the outside of new buildings to allow builders access to the emerging structure as it rises from the ground. Once the building is able to support itself, the builder removes the scaffolding. The metaphor of scaffolding has been widely used in recent years to argue that, just as builders provide essential but

temporary support, teachers need to provide temporary supporting structures to assist learners to develop new understandings, new concepts, and new abilities. As the learner acquires these skills, so teachers need to withdraw that support, only to provide further support for extended or new tasks, understandings and concepts". (Gibbons P., 2002)

The first assignment program was called 'Book Report' and the second one was 'Weekly Report'. These tasks exposed students with tremendous reading and writing activities meant to stimulate students to, like it or not, first, learn more about English vocabulary and grammar and second, be more attentive to punctuation and so on, that will help them read better and efficiently later. De Ford (1981: 657) in his observation on first-graders indicates that there is a supportive, interactive relationship between the reading and writing processes. Moreover, by reading literature like novel, the students could imagine better of how they should put their thoughts in their writings. That idea comes from Bazerman (1980: 656), when he states that the connection between what a person reads and what the person writes seems so obvious as to be realistic. That is why the author employed the program in such ways.

In 'Book Report' assignment, the students were required to have a novel which they had to read every week. They were not asked to finish the novel though, but instead, to make a report regarding their thoughts about the novel every week until the end of the semester. 'Weekly Report', in the other hand, was more like their space for free writing. They could write literally anything in this assignment. This task was only given to students who performed not really well in their Business Reading 1 mid-term test. Therefore, the students whose score was lower than 50 points in their mid-term test had to do both 'Book Report' and 'Weekly Report' assignments.

The tasks had their own challenges, especially for the students. In 'Book Report', they were expected to write a piece of writing with a minimum of 250 words on the first meeting and it was increased 50 words each meeting. Since the program was started from the middle of the semester, they were expected to have six book reports in total; meaning, in the last meeting, their 'Book Report' minimum words were expected to be 500 words. The same rule was more or less the same with the 'Weekly Report'. In the first meeting, the students were expected to write at least 100 words and the minimum requirement number was increased 100 words each meeting. Therefore, by the end of the semester, they were expected to have written a 500-word essay. The students were also expected to submit the assignment at least one day before their following Business Reading 1 class via email to the lecturer. On the other hand, the challenges for the lecturer was to give weekly written feedback in the form of comments on students' work one by one and there were 35 students in the class. Moreover, the lecturer should always observe the improvement of students' writing every week.

In the first week of the task, the author observed that some of the students worked extremely minimalist. As mentioned previously, they were told to write minimum 250 words for their book report test. Some of them only wrote exactly 250 words for their task. Not only that, some of students even wrote less than 250 words, when actually the minimum requirement was less than half page. In terms of grammar and punctuation accuracy, the students made major and frequent errors. There were only two students who did the book report well in terms of grammar, structure, and content. Then, the lecturer gave the students feedback as the author planned before. The feedback was mostly only about students' grammar errors, punctuations and contents. Some of the students even replied the e-mail saying '*Thanks for the feedback*', or '*I didn't notice that before. Thank you very much.*'

In the second week, after giving them feedback of what the author really expected of them to do, the quality of the students' Book Reports and Weekly Reports was improving. They tried their best to write more than 300 words and they made less typo, even though some grammar errors still occurred here and there. Their punctuation and letter capitalization use got better as well. Overall, the students performed slightly better than in the first week.

In the third week of the task submission, the students performed even better. They submitted the task 2 days before the deadline, there were less grammar errors, and even more; their content of writing got more interesting and dynamic compared to the two previous weeks. In this week, they started to forget about the minimum words they had to write; most of them wrote more than 500 words and few wrote one or two pages long. Their vocabulary got more various as well, they started to experiment employing some new vocabularies in their writings, even though they still made some mistake in the use of those vocabularies.

In the last week of the task submission, their Book Reports and Weekly Reports got more stabilized. The grammar, typing and punctuation got much more accurate. The vocabularies and content were more various and rich. In the fourth week of the tasks, the author was confident that students' writing got much better compared to the first week.

Then, in the fifth week, the author gave the students a reading quiz containing 70 questions

about vocabularies from TOEIC Wordlists number 151-300, some English grammar questions (present simple, past simple, present progressive, past progressive, present and past perfect, and simple future tense) and two reading passages. The results showed that their Business Reading 1 scores improved drastically. Students' average score, which previously was around 45-55, increased into 70-80.

3. Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, the author is interested in seeing the correlation between students' exposure with writing tasks to their reading skills. Literature like short stories or novels could help the students engage more with their reading through their connection with the characters from the story of their choice. The data from Week 1 until Week 4 showed that students learned from their previous mistakes and performed better each week. Because in Book Report task they had to read their novels and make a reflection out of it, automatically, their reading and writing skills had improved at the same time. And also, in the Weekly Report, those students got more exposure than others. As a matter of fact, their scores in the reading quiz given to test their reading skills improved significantly, compared to their score in their mid-term test. Thus, the author concludes that, in some extent, literature could supply students to improve their reading and writing skills. (wa)

References

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