



HOW STUDENTS MAKE MEANING IN LITERATURE CLASS: STUDENTS' IDEOLOGICAL STANCE IN THEIR WRITTEN RESPONSES

Fiftinova

English Education Program

Sriwijaya University

Palembang, e-mail: fiftinova.hakim@gmail.com

Abstract

Literature teaching plays important roles both in language learning and cultural enrichment. By having literary experience, students are expected to explore the language used in literature and at the same time to use language for writing and talking about their perception about the world. As students of English education program are the ones whom are, in the future, responsible for the teaching of lower level ones: elementary, junior and senior high level, analytical, intellectual capability as well as cultural awareness should be owned by them. Therefore investigating how students actually realize their ideological stance in a written response to literary text is required. In order to explore students' ideological stance, the language used by college students for realizing their cultural understanding or belief as a response to literary texts was investigated by using Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Through the analysis, belief systems or position students take after reading literary texts can be identified. This analysis is based on the concept that language represents ideology (Kress, 1976; Halliday, 1994; Fairclough, 2003; Eggins, 2004; Van Dijk, 2006). This presentation is devoted to explaining and discussing ideology or cultural value students shared in their responses, and to give information what teacher should do in stimulating students' ideological stance.

Key words: literature teaching, ideology, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

INTRODUCTION

Literature teaching plays a very important role in language learning. Literature teaching enables the students to explore the language used in literature and to use language for writing and talking about the literature (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000: p.3). By focusing on these two approaches, it is expected that literature teaching are able to invite the students to understand literary works. Another important role of literature is cultural enrichment as suggested by Floris (2004) and Collie and Slater (1987) as cited in Parkinson & Thomas (2000, p. 9). Establishing cultural enrichment in literature teaching accommodates students for seeing the world that surrounds them. Through literature, students learn to see "a world through another's eyes, observing human values and a different kind of living, and discovering that others living in very different societies" (Floris, 2004, p. 2). By using literature in teaching English, students are trying to build an understanding about culture, ideology, religion, and traditions from different point of view (Carter and Long, 1991: p.2).

Developing cultural enrichment in literature teaching is also insistent for English education program. The reason is that the students of the English education program are the ones whom are, in the future, responsible for the teaching of lower level ones: elementary, junior and senior high level. They should be prepared for this sake. In line with this, the preparation of the students of English teacher education program is part of faculty's, university's and country's challenge to get into globalization era as soon as Asian Free Trade Area (AFTA) implemented (see Ramsden (2003)). One effort that can be done for facing the nation's competitiveness is to have those students-teachers culturally aware, analytical, intellectually curious, employable, and capable of leadership.



Response-based instruction, which starts to be used in many EFL literature classrooms, enables the learners to explore both language and cultural learning (Purves, Rogers, and Soter, 1990 : p. 70). Further they assert that these classes allow each student to express their own response about a certain phenomenon after reading literary works. The central notion of this response-based classroom is reader-response theories (Beach, 1993). It highlights that the readers are the ones who actively create meaning from the text while reading. These reading activities, according to Rosenblatt (1978), are portrayed as a transaction between the readers and the texts. That is readers have a chance to make his past experiences, beliefs and assumptions interact with the perspectives in the text. In this case, students or readers have an opportunity to make meaning independently based on their own interpretation while reading. Its purpose is to encourage students to respond to the text and express their own ideas, opinions, and feelings.

Previous study of response-based program in literature instruction has given some evidences that it is very useful to be applied in the classroom. It allows the students to respond creatively and critically (Rudi, 2001) and to engage higher order thinking. Furthermore, it positions the students to effectively construe meaning or to make sense the content in literary text (Musthafa, 2008: p. 252).

Since reading has a correlation with writing, response based literature classroom typically allows the students to make response in a form of writing. By writing the responses after reading, students are actively constructing the meaning in much the same way to the reading. The construction of meaning only differs in the way that writing process, at least, requires the students to be aware of the structure of a text, grammar, linguistic choice and linguistic style. Writing requires us “to organize our thoughts in some ways and also requires us to think beyond the obvious” (Purves et al, 1990: p.137). Additionally, through writing the responses the students make meaning by adopting “ways of organizing experience, information and ideas in distinctively language patterns” (Christie in Coutoure (1986: p. 221)).

However, to make meaning as a response to literary text is assumed to be hard job. The language of literary texts is often difficult and odd. Literary texts are difficult so that “learners do not understand them, or understand them only by dint of time-consuming and wearisome dictionary work” (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000: p. 12). It is more problematical when students should reflect on the meaning on a written text. Regarding with this, they should consider the meaning they construct from the text, and how to realize those meanings in an appropriate language use. How students make meaning, specifically to make an ideological position, is harder than merely meaning making. The students should go beyond the text, and share their background knowledge about a certain social issue.

Based on the explanation above, how students actually make meaning in a written response to literary text, particularly those produced in literature classroom should be investigated. The reason is it will give us information how the teaching and learning activity of literature classroom helped shapes students’ response to literature in terms of the language used for realizing cultural understanding as a form of students’ response. It is assumed that the strategies provided by the teachers for responding a literary text potentially influences the way students write responses, whether ideologically or not.

Another reason why this study needs investigation lies on the notion that the production of response to literary texts is distinctive person to person. It means that the way high education students develop response-writing differs with those written by elementary, junior, and senior high students (Musthafa, 2008). Higher level education learners are those who tend to be autonomous, who has got enough experience through their lives, and those who have their own ideas and feeling about the world around them. Regarding to this, it is presumed that if college students are given a task to respond to literary texts, their response will be richer and more complicated than young learner. Furthermore, it



can also be inferred that students with different level of achievement respond in different ways. To this case, however, there is still little explanation from previous research, how they differ one to another, especially when it is about the meaning construction of a text which refers to ideological stance students take.

In order to explore students' ideological stance, the writer investigated the language used by college students for realizing their cultural understanding or belief as a response to literary texts by using Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), which is originated from systemic functional linguistic theories, provides frameworks for examining the language as semiotic systems: language as a resource for making meaning. In this study, therefore, SFG is used to investigate how the language provides its users to choose a certain linguistic features in a text.

By using SFG, linguistic features of students' texts can be figured out. Through the analysis, what belief systems or position students take after reading literary texts can be discovered. This analysis is based on the concept that language represents ideology (Kress, 1976; Halliday, 1994; Fairclough, 2003; Van Dijk, 2006). According to Eggins, language are influenced by "our ideological positions: the values we hold (consciously or unconsciously), the perspectives acquired through our particular path through the culture" (2004: p.10).

Studies on text analysis using SFG have been widely conducted by many researchers. Radic-Bojanic & Wattles (2007) have conducted an analysis on online debates using three systems of SFG: transitivity, mood and theme-rheme. The findings show that the meaning making process and the language usage have fulfilled the social purpose of an online debate which is to convince other debaters about the speaker's opinion. Gallardo (2006), Iwamoto (as cited in http://www.stylistic&linguistic_analysis_human.kanagawa_u.ac.jp/gokkai/publ/pdf), and Lirola & Smith (2006) have investigated how transitivity, mood or theme-rheme patterns established in literary text. Through the patterns, it can be seen how cultural and situational contexts embedded in the text and what ideology that commonly appears.

The application of SFG has also been widely used for analyzing students' compositions. Jenkins & Pico (2006), for instance, have investigated how SFG can help lecturers and students with different purposes of using English (Australian and Argentina students) write argumentative essays. The results show that the linguistic findings from SFG analysis to Australian students' essays can be used by the lecturers as a basis for improving their teaching. On the other hand, in Argentina, where English is the object of study, linguistic findings become the main concern of both lecturer and students. Research on student's academic writing using SFG approach has also been conducted by Emilia (2005) and Wang (2007). Having conducted a study on the application of critical Genre-based Approach (GBA) to the teaching of argumentative writing, it was found that students become more aware of the schematic structures as well as evidences sequences of argumentative text (Emilia, 2005).

Nevertheless, to date, investigations using FG to a text produced in response centered classroom are hardly found, specifically studies on the meaning construction for showing students' understanding (ideology) on a literary text. Consequently, this leaves a space for the writer to analyze students' written responses in order to identify the process of meaning-making of an ideological stance and thus offer solutions to the problem the students and teachers face when dealing with response to literary texts.



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Literature Teaching: Language and Cultural Learning

Response-centered classroom, like any other approaches of teaching literature, provides two prominences of learning. First, teaching literature invites the students to be able to improve their language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening (Musthafa, 2005: p.206; see also Purves et al, 1990, Cox, 1999 and Rudi, 2001). Further Musthafa (2005) asserted that through literature i.e. novel, short story, drama, they find and learn new words, phrases, or idiom. Afterwards they are able to apply it in their speaking, listening and writing. Furthermore, the place of language in the learning and teaching of literature is also emphasized on the language classroom practice. This refers to “all language used by the teachers and learners in writing and talking about the texts and related matters” (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000: p. 3).

Another issue about language learning is directing students to have emotional involvement with the target language (Sivasubramaniam, 2006). Sivasubramaniam states that the use of emotional involvement will promote motivation in the classroom (Carter and Long, 1991; Collie and Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993). This motivation, then, will be an effective means for the students to read, talk and write. Literary texts as the instrument for inviting the students’ response contain a potential number of meanings which they can generate and negotiate in the classroom. It means that the students have a motivation to respond by expressing their feeling and ideas so that the learning activities become an active “process of response” (Collie and Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993). This motivation will be indicated explicitly by the willingness and the joy students involve in “their search of meanings” (Sivanubramaniam, 2006).

The skills in using language in literature classroom especially in college level are required and practiced in order to promote the understanding. According to Ramsden (2003: p.6), understanding here refers to “the way in which students apprehend and discern phenomena related to the subject“. In addition, the vital competence in academic disciplines and the application of knowledge consist in understanding. In light of this, teaching literature enables the students “to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space, and to come to perceive traditions of thought, feeling and artistic from with in the heritage the literature of such cultures endows” (Carter and Long, 1991 in Floris 2004). It is expected through literature teaching the students are able to see the world from different eyes. Finally, the students will understand and become broadly aware of the social, political, historical, cultural events happening in a certain society (Floris, 2004 see also Sivasubramaniam, 2006).

Since response-centered classroom encourages the students to respond to literary texts by expressing “their understanding, their attitudes, or their beliefs and judgments” (Purves, 1991) and emotion and feeling as well, the students are actually expressing cultural knowledge toward a certain issue in the texts. The focus of the response-centered program is to affect the beliefs and attitudes of the students and to raise or change their consciousness about cultural aspect (Purves, et al, 1990). Furthermore, through the emotion articulated by the students, it can be seen how “feelings are shaped by attitudes and beliefs” (Beach & Marshall, 1991). This recognition of the position students take is more explicitly obtained if we go beyond description and toward explanation. As an instance, in the case of character analysis of *My Cousin Clarette*, a student-reader may become annoyed when finding Clarette insulted the Victoria’s fashion style. This annoyance probably comes from attitude about respecting difference. That is Clarette should highly appreciate the way Victoria used fashions as a personal expression. Here, the lecturer assists the students to articulate their experience, “to deepen them and to challenge their assumptions” (Purves et al, 1990).

To sum up, even though the learning of language and culture in Literature classroom does not state explicitly that both language and culture are similarly important, the students in response-centered approach are unconsciously invited to use language for convey their understanding. In light of this/given that, response-centered classroom encourages the students “to generate language and develop proficiency in the use of the target language by providing them with an emotional involvement with the target language” (McRae, 1991 cited in Sivasubramaniam, 2006).

Ideology as Context of Situation

Another important context situation which influences the text is ideology. According to Eggins, in every language used in texts and interaction, there will be “ideological position we hold (consciously and unconsciously), the perspectives acquired through our particular path through the culture” (2004: p.10). Ideology simply refers to attitudes, set of beliefs, values and doctrines with reference to religious, political, social and economic life, which shape the individual’s and group’s perception and through which reality is constructed and interpreted (Taiwo, 2007). In addition, ideology can be defined as value and norms assigned in narration text, film, songs, and also social activities (Fairclough, 2007). On the other hand, Van Dijk explained ideology from different perspective. He asserts that ideology is a belief system which is socially shared, fundamental, and gradually acquired (2006). In other words, he wanted to say that ideology is not personal beliefs of individual people; it is not ‘negative’; it is not kind of false consciousness; it is not necessarily dominant; and it is not the same way as any other socially shared beliefs or belief systems (Van Dijk, 2006).

The identification of ideology is valuable in order to “make explicit the ideological positions encoded, perhaps in order to resist or challenge them” (Eggins, 2004). As for teachers and researchers, the identification of ideology is important for knowing the way students think and understand about a certain issue, thus to evaluate it. In this study, the identification of ideology is valuable to explain or to understand the value, norm of belief students take as reflected in the texts. Specifically, the ideology is helpful in explaining the process of meaning-making (Fontanini, 2001).

Another purpose of investigating ideology is to see the criticality of language as the resource of meaning-making (Fairclough, 2003:9). This criticality can be seen by defining whether text is critical or descriptive. According to Fairclough, an ideology of language is said to be critical if there is “a modality of power in it” (2003). It means that ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation. On the other hand, descriptive ideology refers to positions, attitudes, beliefs and perspectives without a sense of power in it.

In order to examine the ideology of the texts, there are some sets of questions that can be asked (Fairclough, 1989: 111). The questions are enclosed in appendices. Related to the textual analysis using Functional Grammar, this study focuses on the following questions:

1. Are there words which are ideologically contested?
2. What experiential values do grammatical features have?
 - a. What types of process and participant predominate?
 - b. Is agency clear?
 - c. Are nominalization used?
 - d. Are sentences active or passive?
 - e. Are sentences positive and negative?



3. What relational values do grammar?
 - a. What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?
4. What expressive values do grammatical features have?
 - a. Are there important features of expressive modality.

RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative study focuses on explaining the language choices made by students and also the motives behind those choices. Three undergraduate students of English education program became the participants of the research. They were asked to make a written response to a modern novel created by Butt Wilson. These written responses were then documented in order to examine the transitivity and mood system of the language. To find out how teachers guided the students in constructing meaning, class observation was also conducted. This time the writer observed the class for about four meetings. This seems too short observation, but the writer thought it was enough for illustrating what influence students' language choice in which ideology is indicated.

To analyze the data from documentation, the linguistic features of students' texts were transcribed by using two language systems in Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG): transitivity and mood. These two systems were tabulated in a table simultaneously. The result of the transcription, after that, was organized based on their emergence frequency. For instance, for the transitivity system, the frequency of participants, material, verbal process, relational process, behavior, mental process, existential process, circumstances were calculated so as to find what language patterns students tend to use. In this case, descriptive statistics tables were used for illustrating the frequency.

As discussed in the method of analysis above, this study used Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as a framework for analysis. By employing this framework which has been the work of Halliday and his associates (Halliday and Mathiessen, 2004; Eggins, 1994; Gerot and Wignell, 1995; Martin, Mathiessen, and Painter, 1997; and Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, Yallop, 2000) the ideology which underlies that linguistic representation can be obtained.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis of transitivity, theme-rheme and mood above, the ideology existed in students' text can be figured out. The ideology is context of situation that potentially influences the text (Eggins, 2004). To do this, this study used a checklist from Fairclough (1989: p.110-112). Table 1 demonstrates some questions about ideology related to this study.

Table 1 Ideology Check list

	Question	T-1	T-2	T-3
1.	Are there words which are ideologically contested?	Parents' Divorce	-	-
2.	What experiential value do grammatical features have? (resulted from transitivity analysis)			
	a. What type of process and participants predominate?	Relational	Relational	Relational
	b. Is agency clear?	Clear	Clear	Clear
	c. are nominalization used?	No	No	No
	d. are sentence active or passive?	Mostly active	Active	Active
	e. are sentences positive or negative?	Mostly positive	Positive	Positive
3.	What relational values do grammar have?			
	a. what modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative)	Declarative, Exclamative	Declarative	Declarative
4.	What expressive values do grammatical features have?			
	a. are there important features of expressive modality?	Yes.	No	No

See Fairclough, Power and Ideology (1989)

From table 1 above, it can be inferred that text T-1 (written by high achiever) indicates a more ideological stance rather than the two other texts. First, in terms of the words that ideologically contested text T-1 has *parents' divorce* as a social issue which is brought to the text. It becomes one of the topical themes raised in the text as in *parents divorce can give bad effect on children*, although not highly distributed throughout the text. Conversely, text T-2 (written by mid achiever) and T-3 (written by low achiever) does not bring any social issue to the text. According to Fairclough, ideologically contested word is a cue of ideological stance because there is a focus of ideological struggle in it (1989: p.114).

Based on the analysis of transitivity above it is found that the major process types of text T-1, T-2 and T-3 are relational process. Relational process above does not show any power relationship between agent and patient. The relationship occurs in relational process is relating participants (carrier/token) to its identity (attribute/value. Through the analysis of transitivity, it implies that the text does not indicate an ideological assumption.

Through the analysis of mood, it is shown that most of the clauses in text T-1, T-2 and T-3 are in declarative mood. It means that all the writers of the texts are the one who serve as the "giver of information"(Fairclough, 1989: p.126). In this case the writer has a position of power. That is to give information. It is ideological since the giver of information is the one who wants the addressee or the reader to believe the truth existed in the text.

Another evidence of ideological assumption is the availability of expressive modality. Expressive modality refers to "the writer's authority with respect to the truth or probability of a representation of reality" (Fairclough, 1989). This modality includes modal finite like may, might, must, should, can, can't or ought. Text T-1 uses several modal finites which indicate an ideological interest, i.e may, can while text T-2 and T-3 seldom use this modal finites. Modal finites *may* used in the first clause, for instance, *It may also what Clarette feels when her parents intend to get divorce* indicates the probability about the reality happens to Clarette. This can be also seen in *the writer may*

try to tell the readers...in clause 11. In addition, modal finite *can* is employed in the final clause of the text ...*the story tends to tell the readers that parents' divorce can give bad effect on children*. In this clause, the writer of text T-1 evaluates parents' divorce by stating that it is not good for children. This statement is ideological for it has an "authenticity claims, or claims to knowledge, which are evidenced by modality forms" (Fairclough, 1989).

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that there is an indication of ideological stance in text T-1. On the other hand, Text T-2 and T-3 is less ideological. It can also be inferred that text T-1, which is written by high achiever, is more critical rather than the two other texts which are created by mid and low achiever respectively (see table 4.2 below for more details).

Tabel 2 Ideology in Students' Text

	T-1	T-2	T-3
	Parents' divorce can give bad effect on children. It can be seen by the character of Clarette who is fashionable, annoying and manipulative girl.	Clarette is unhappy, annoying, and moody person.	Manipulative, annoying and fragile
Category of Ideology	Critical	Descriptive	Descriptive

Based on the table above, text T-1 is critical in the way that it has social effect (Fairclough, 2003) and contains the nature of power or domination. That is by giving a certain position to the issue raised in the text.

Through class observation, the writer found out that students seldom address a certain social issue when they discussed the literary text they read. They love to show their likeness or unlikeness, agreement or disagreement to a certain issue which is simple but not sufficient to make them critical and analytical. To achieve this goal, teachers should create more qualified questions for class discussion and students' writing task. Also, teachers should invite the students to widen their knowledge, perception, belief about the world so that students' cultural awareness will be enriched.

CONCLUSION

The discussion above informs the process of meaning-making experienced by the students. The students' belief about a certain social issue will influence the meaning-making in written text. That is a more critical belief will promote students critical thinking and will lead to more expressions and argumentation from the students. Students can "generalize, evaluate and synthesize" through it (Purves, 1990). Teachers, in this case, should empower students to be knowledgeable, critical and analytical.

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