

Teaching English through Literature in Post-Pandemic Era: A Case at An Indonesian Islamic Higher Institution

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Abstract. There has been little discussion about the impact of the pandemic era on the use of literature in English language teaching. This article offers an overview of the use literature to teach English in an Indonesian Islamic higher institution within the post-pandemic era with the focus on the multimodality of literary texts and *sorogan* teaching method. This article is underpinned by and is aimed at exploring two arguments. First, the pandemic era has massively encouraged English teachers to utilize technology in their teaching in that the printed version of literary texts should become multimodal. Second, literary texts should be presented as an accessible and engaging language input. Following a qualitative analysis technique, this case study involved 37 students of State Islamic Institute of (IAIN) Metro, Indonesia. The research data were drawn from a questionnaire, the students' comments on the channels, and the students' self-generated channels. The findings of the research show that: (1) multimodality in the form of sound, videos, and music should be taken into account when utilizing literary text to teach English in the post-pandemic era, and (2) the literary texts should be appropriately adapted to reduce the language complexity either by using the students' national language or by implementing such a teaching method as *sorogan* which is familiar to Islamic institutional context. Multimodality, familiarity, and simplicity should become the characteristics of the literature used to teach English at Indonesian Islamic universities.

Keywords: literature, materials adaptation, multimodality, post-pandemic era, *sorogan*.

1 Introduction

A large number of studies and publications have indicated increasing interest in the use of literature to teach English in various educational contexts including religion-affiliated universities. It is evident that literature and religious tradition are interconnected in that the existence of religion is often supported by literature and vice versa (Boscaljon & Levinovitz, 2018: 2). The interconnectedness between English language teaching, literary text, and religion has now faced the challenges brought by the pandemic era of Covid-19. Among the challenges are the presentation of literary text from print to electronic media, and the needs of appropriating the text to meet the criteria of *dulce et utile*, entertaining and educating, for particular type of university such as peripheral Islam-affiliated university.

Much research on the use of literature in education has focused on teaching literature with the help of virtual environment such as podcast, social media, and skype (María Luisa Carrió-Pastor, 2018); the use of literature to promote creativity, critical thinking, and multimodality (Gregori-signes, 2014; Ibarra-Rius & Ballester-Roca, 2019); and the use of literature to develop English language skills and personal development (Ashrafuzzaman, Ahmed, & Begum, 2021; Isikli & Tarakcioglu, 2017). Despite a wealth of articles on the use of literature in education and in English language teaching, no thorough description had been made of its use to teach English at Indonesian Islamic higher education in the post-pandemic era.

To address the above-mentioned situation, the present article is an attempt to create an up-to-date survey of the use of literature to teach English at an Islam-affiliated university in Indonesia. The writer seeks to answer two questions that have challenged scholars of English language teaching and Islamic societies more generally. The first is why multimodality should be considered in teaching English with literature in the post-pandemic era. The second question is why Islamic traditional teaching method should be adapted in situating literature for teaching English.

The answers to both questions make a valuable contribution to the field of teaching literature with the help of virtual environment, particularly podcast and YouTube, for Indonesian Islamic higher education. Particular attention is given to the combination of *sorogan*, a familiar teaching method in the Islamic pedagogical tradition, with the principles of literature teaching approaches such as text approach, context approach, reader approach, and language approach.

2 Sorogan Teaching Method

Indonesian Islamic tradition recognizes four teaching methods that have been long practicing to date, namely: *sorogan* (individual learning process), *wetonan* (collective learning process), *majlis ta'lim* (memorizing method), and *mudzakarah* (scientific meeting method). *Sorogan* itself is teacher-centered and textbook-oriented in nature. It is characterized by oral, face-to-face, and top-down instruction (Ma'Arif, 2018). In the practical level, a learner bringing a book or a text meets a teacher individually. The teacher then might teach the student how to read and comprehend the text. In the philosophical level, *sorogan* is method used to introduce the Islamic manners (*adab*) related to how a Muslim learner should behave in his or her learning process (Irwansyah, Andianto, & Madkur, 2021). Thus, *sorogan* is more than just a teaching method since it is implicitly used to instil Islamic code of conduct through the instructional process.

3 Methodology

This research describes the use of literature to teach English and the implementation of *sorogan* method in the post-pandemic era. This research study used quantitative data collection methods and relied on simple random sampling. It employed a questionnaire consisting of close-ended questions based on 5-item Likert scales. The questionnaire was

created and distributed online via google form. The target population of this research included the students of the English education department of State Islamic Institute of (IAIN) Metro. A total of 37 participants, including 29 females and 8 males involved in this research study. The research data were derived from the participants' opinions and expressions stated in the questionnaire and the comment menu of Youtube channel. The participants were asked for their opinion about their familiarity with *sorogan* method, the presentation of literature through Youtube and Podcast, and the advantages and disadvantages of *sorogan* teaching method within the post-pandemic teaching context. The data analysis followed the steps proposed by Hood (2009) namely: (1) collecting data, (2) thinking about the data in relation to the aims of the research project, (3) categorizing or coding the data, (4) reflecting the data, (5) organizing the data to see patterns and connections, and (6) connecting the emerging themes and issues to relevant theories and concepts.

4 Finding and Discussion

Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on the use of literature for English instruction at the Islamic Higher institution. This paper presents two plausible impacts. First, the pandemic should influence the presentation of literary works as a springboard for the classroom activities. Literary works need to be presented virtually by emphasizing the aspects of multimodality. Second, the pandemic might lead to the adjustment of *sorogan* teaching method when used to support the use of literary work for teaching English. When normally *sorogan* teaching method is fully conducted within the scheme of face-to-face instruction, it should accommodate blended learning strategy, combining virtual learning and face-to-face learning, in the post-pandemic times.

4.1. The Multimodality of Literature in the Post-pandemic Era

Before discussing the survey results, demographic information is presented in order to provide detailed information about the characteristics of the questionnaire respondents. Table 1. displays the information.

Table 1. Demographic of the Participants

Item	Percentage
Gender	
Male	21.6 %
Female	78.4 %
Educational background	
Islam-affiliated school	64.9 %
Public school	35.1 %
Familiarity with <i>Sorogan</i> method	
Familiar	56.8 %
Unfamiliar	43.2 %
The use of literature to teach English	
Strongly disagree	0%
Disagree	0%

Neutral	2.7%
Agree	35.1%
Strongly agree	62.2%
The use of <i>Sorogan</i> method in reading skill	
Strongly disagree	0 %
Disagree	0 %
Neutral	10.8 %
Agree	37.8 %
Strongly agree	51.4 %
The presentation of literature through Youtube of Podcast	
Strongly disagree	0%
Disagree	2.7 %
Neutral	8.1 %
Agree	24.3 %
Strongly agree	64.9 %

The great majority of the respondents were female (more than 75%). Most respondents graduate from Islam-affiliated schools (approximately 65%), with approximately 57% are familiar with *sorogan* teaching method. All participants would love to learn English through literature with more than 60% of them strongly agree with the utilization of literature in English classroom. While approximately 57% of participants have experience with *sorogan* method, 38% agree and 51% strongly agree with the implementation of *sorogan* method, in combination with literature, for reading skill enhancement. It is worth noting however, approximately 3% of the participants disagree with the presentation of literature through Youtube or Podcast. The last point mentioned sheds light on multimodality aspect of literature used to teach English.

When most participants agree and strongly agree with the transformation of literary text into Youtube and Podcast, it confirms that multimodality is of a significant aspect. At this juncture, literary text is now transformed into and is combined with sound, pictures, and colours. In this study, lecturer-generated multimodal was designed simply. It involved static picture combined with sound. The main objective of the material was to help students understand every single word in the story. The translation from English into the students' native language was then used. As there was no direct interaction between the lecturer and the students, this juncture seemed to be teacher-centred.

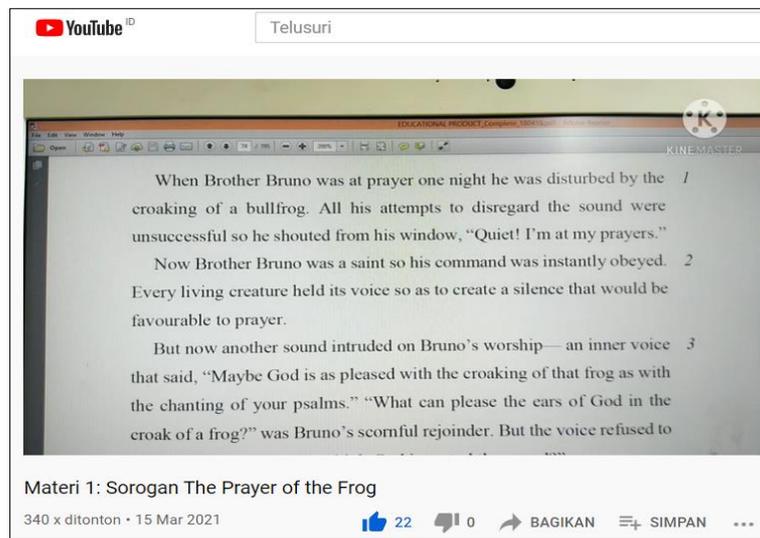


Figure 1. Lecturer-generated multimodal materials (<https://bit.ly/3epYsME>)

Toward the materials designed by the lecturer, some comments from the students are worth noting.

“I think this text uses **narrative text** because here the teacher explains to readers and listeners so that they can access or have positive values that are taken such as the occurrence of an event, story background and other explanations and the reader can also understand the dimensions about an envious priest but afterwards amazed by the sound of a frog...” (NIS/F)

“In my opinion, the selection of the text contained in the story emphasizes linguistic competence. Based on the character of the text, it can be said that the story uses a literary approach as a **source of teaching**. In this context, it is indicated by the use of popular stories as teaching materials, because the target to be achieved is the mastery of linguistic competencies.” (AA/M)

“I argued that, the text presented on the YouTube video content refers to the purpose of **character education**, as there is an introspection of a servant in worship without hurting the surrounding creatures” (LH/F)

The students’ comments does not only reflect their awareness of the type of the text and the possibilities of using literary text as a source of English language teaching and as a medium to instill character education, but also, from the lecturer’s perspective, reveals the aspect of whom to teach. At this juncture, the lecturer could see that the students seemed to have positive perspective toward the use of literary text in English classroom. The lecturer then encouraged them to reconstruct or redesign the literary text, the story of *The Prayer of the Frog*, by inserting more modalities such as music and moving picture.

The students' producing a multimodal text is of great significance for nowadays English instruction. Jakobsen & Tønnessen (2018) reported that in the time when most today's curriculum of English instruction does not involve the students' production of multimodal texts, teachers ought to have students create ones. It is through the production of multimodal texts that the students would gain their full potential for meaning making in their English classroom.

It is safe to state that the production of multimodal texts, both by lecturer and students, are in tune with the needs of nowadays English instruction. The lecturer, on one hand, has to present multimodality to anticipate the students' learning tendencies namely visual, auditory, and kinesesthetic. The students, on the other hand, need to produce multimodal texts so as to realize their full potential in the meaning making process during the English instruction.

4.2. The Adoption of Islamic Traditional Teaching Method

While the previous discussion deals with the multimodality of the literary text used to teach English, this part highlights how the text should be best implemented in Indonesian Islamic higher institution. This study is underpinned by an assumption that the implementation of *sorogan* method, as an Islamic traditional teaching method, needs to be adjusted into the relevant approaches of literary text teaching. For such purpose, three approaches are used in combination namely language approach, text approach, and reader approach. The tenet configuration of the existing approaches is then actualized into three teaching steps: language focus, generating storyline, and personal reflection.

a. Step 1: Language Focus

This first step followed the tenets of the language approach including such as utilizing literary text to improve language skills; exploring English vocabulary in a literary text; discussing English linguistics aspects in literary text (Bloemert, Jansen, & van de Grift, 2016). At this juncture, the lecturer designed simple multimodal materials of the literary text, as can be seen in Figure. 1 and be accessed through the link attached below the Figure 1. In designing the materials, some criteria were taken into account such as: 'students' social background, content, visual aspect, text exploitability, reading scheme, teaching approach, and types of school' (Irwansyah, 2020). Thus, a literary text derived from Christian tradition, *The Prayer of the Frog* (Mello, 2003), was considered a promising and appropriate. It was promising in the sense that the selected text promotes multiculturalism. Kafka (1991) urges that multicultural perspective needs to be integrated into classroom activities so as the students would respond cultural background diversity properly. The text was also appropriate for it was comprehensible in the sense that its linguistic aspects were not too hard and not too easy either.

b. Step 2: Generating Storyline

This second step adopted the tenets of the text approach including generating storyline, showing character development, identifying wh- (who, what, where) aspects, and exposing literary terminology (Bloemert et al., 2016). At this stage, the lecturer arranged a face-to-face meeting with a tight health protocol due to the covid-19 pandemic. The aim of the meeting was to confirm the students' comprehension of the big picture of the story. Not only does this

step focus on the text approach, it also deals with confirming and providing feedback related to pronunciation and comprehension aspects. Figure 2. displays the implementation of *sorogan* method in the pandemic era.



Figure 2. The Impementation of *Sorogan* Teaching Method

The *sorogan* meeting was built upon the assumption that knowledge might be transferred through online media while Islamic manners (*adab*) ought to be inculcated through face-to-face meeting (*talaqqi*). This assumption is in tune with such terms as explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge or academic knowledge might be shared through people-to-document approach, while tacit knowledge through one-by-one or mentorship approach (Smith, 2001). Thus, the implementation of *sorogan* method in this study embraced both explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. At this juncture, the explicit knowledge is synonymous with language usage or the rules of making language, while tacit knowledge is closely connected to language use which refers to the communicative practical use of language. Both language usage and language use include in the implementation of *sorogan* method.

Step 3: Personal Reflection

As the students, at this stage, are required to reconstruct a multimodal material as a substitution to crafting critical report of reading experience, a reader approach was applied. Accordingly, the lecturer main roles included stimulating the student's personal reaction, encouraging their critical thinking skills, and emphasizing students' reading pleasure (Bloemert et al., 2016).

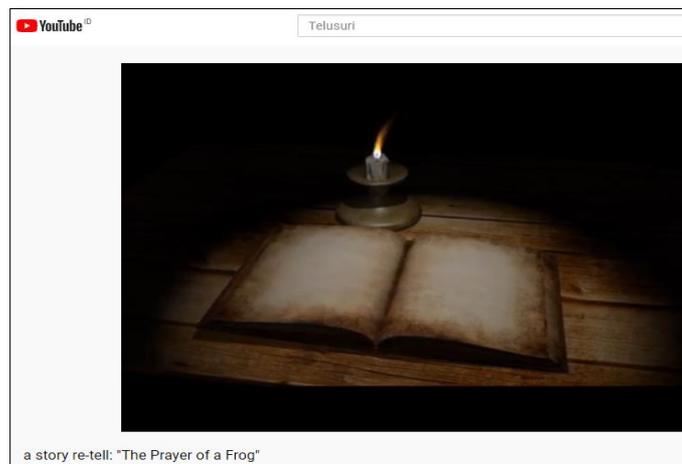


Figure 3. Student-generated multimodal materials (<https://bit.ly/3re6vkW>)

One point which is worth noting is that most students, if not all, dealt easily in reconstructing a multimodal material. They seemed familiar enough with the software or application commonly used to produce an audio visual presentation. More notably, students could generate a fruitful personal reflection in the form of: (1) reconstructing the story by changing its point of view (<https://bit.ly/3re6vkW>; DK/F), (2) adding audio-visual effect to make the story more interesting (<https://bit.ly/3rgSOlj>; TW/M); and (3) revealing the moral value of the story (<https://bit.ly/3krCuN7>; KK/M).

5 Conclusions

Of the best ways to utilize literary text in English classroom at Indonesian Islamic higher institution era are to improve the multimodality of the text and to adopt the *sorogan* teaching method. The literary text multimodality could be enhanced by having the students enrich the audio visual aspects of the given text, while the *sorogan* method might be adopted by including applied technology. This study concludes that the teaching of literature in the post-pandemic era should pay attention to the interconnectedness of text, teaching method, and technology. The text ought to be interesting and comprehensible to the students. Lecturer might sometimes adapt literary text by reducing its language complexity. The text should also be accommodative to multiculturalism and be presented as a multimodal material. The teaching method, called *sorogan*, proves to be familiar to most students of Islamic higher institution and is remarkable for two stages. At the first stage, *sorogan* seemed to be more teacher-fronted when it is applied to share implicit knowledge. In the second stage, it becomes more student-centred when it is implemented to generate tacit knowledge. This study also concludes that the use of technology helps students connect the literary texts with their existing knowledge and experience. Technology also helps students construct their own multimodal version of the literary text. It supports the students' creativity and personal reflection toward the literary text.

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