

TEACHING LITERATURE THROUGH POETRY: A SHIFTING READING ORIENTATION FROM EFFERENT TO AESTHETIC

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ABSTRACT

There is a paradigm shifting in teaching literature from transmission to transactional. However, most of Indonesian English teachers in teaching literature still apply transmission approach which shows they are not ready yet for the changing. This article attempts to show the shift of paradigm in reading orientations and its implications in teaching literature through poetry by describing the writer's experience in learning literature through poetry. Discussing six important points, this essay is purposed to give alternative teaching-learning literature which would provide good points for students as well as teachers.

Keywords: *paradigm shift, reading orientation, teaching literature, poetry, efferent, aesthetic*

I. INTRODUCTION

For years, a number of researchers and theorists have been discussing on the issues relate to Language Art readers about the process involved in understanding literature (Rosenblatt, 1988; Cox and Many, 1992). They shifted teaching literature paradigm from transmission to transactional which reveals reciprocal relationship between the reader and the text. In transactional theory, reading orientation changed from efferent to aesthetic. Aesthetic reading allows students to read and experience with the text which focuses on their interests and understand the meanings. Here, there is an interpersonal negotiation (Goodman in Cox and Many, 1992) that takes place when readers read the text in processing of constructing reality which emphasizes the important role of reader in constructing the meaning of the texts.

There is possibility many teachers have not prepared yet for this changing. The teachers are also unsure what role they should play. They are attracted to provide students with fun meaningful activities in learning literature like learning poetry but they do not have clear idea how to conduct the activities. For years, even today, for example, the way teaching-learning poetry, materials are chosen by teachers without considering students' background knowledge and students' interest. Then in assessing, students are asked to read aloud the text in front of the class, included the gestures, the voices and the intonations. For higher level assessment, students are asked to interpret the poetry but the final answer is in teacher's hand. In interpreting poetry, most students in colleges still use different reading orientation, in which the students only read the literary works in figuring out the information not go beyond the texts nor have fun in readings. The teachers still apply transmission approach which is much argued by many researchers as an approach which does not create students' critical thinking in teaching literature (Meyers in Keyser, et al. 1997).

This article is purposed to elaborate paradigm shifting from transmission to transactional paradigm and its implication to teaching literature by describing writer's experience in teaching and learning literature through poetry, consisting of six sections; (1) what literature means and what learning literature means, (2) Paradigm shifting from transmission to transaction (3) efferent and aesthetic reading orientations, (4) teaching literature approaches (5) ideas of using poetry in teaching literature (6) assessment

II. DISCUSSION

Literature and Learning Literature

Talking about what literature is, Purves et. all in Musthafa (1994) defines literature as work of art that seeks to please the person who made it and the person who attend it. Historically, literature has been used to define writings of some significance regardless of subject matter which imply some criteria of quality or value such as intellectual, moral, esthetic, political, national. Literature is a type of discourse that is characterized by the domain of value '

artistic' the content value 'fictional' and functional value 'positively affective', or simply 'divertive' (Steen, 1999). The characteristics of literature works are written texts, marked by careful use of language including features such as metaphors, in a literary genre (poetry, prose, drama or novels, etc), and pictorial graphical representation (e.g caricatures, drawings, calligraphies, etc) also audiovisuals like what TV and Video present and through sound arrangements. Literatures works are read aesthetically, intended by the author to be read aesthetically, contain many weak implicatures (Mayer, 1997). In conclusion, literature is anything in form of various media which implies some criteria of value that evoke responds from readers, listeners and or viewers where the central point is the reader or the "experiencer" with media might be in form of written texts, visual, audio or audio-visual.

The result of literary encounter what evokes the feelings and associations that can be made by the readers show the importance literature is the readers or literary "experiencer" (Bleich, 1975 in Musthafa, 1994). The readers play important role in making sense of literary works being experience by both interpersonal negotiation (Goodman in Musthafa 1992) and intrapersonal negotiation.

Interpersonal means the response made by readers is based on their own personality in term of feeling, thought, belief, value, background knowledge of the topic, and purpose of reading. Intra personal means when they negotiate the meaning of the literary work, they have to consider the community perspectives of values, tastes and opinion (Chase and Hynd in Musthafa, 1994).

In addition, Rosenbalt (1989) says that the meaning in the literary works on in the literary experiencers is derived from the interaction between the content and the structure of the author's intention and experiences and prior knowledge of the reader. Each reader constructs meaning during the reading process or while listening to stories, guided by personal knowledge and experience (Golden, Meiners, and Lewis, 1992, p. 22). Shortly, in reading we must have 'grand conversation' over the literature (Peterson and Eeds, 1990) for comprehending it.

Since the process of reading is two-way transactions between the mind of the reader and the nature of text (Weaver, 1988) the readers are encouraged to orient themselves to the ideas of the literary works which they create based on their expectations, intentions and purposes of the reading.

Therefore in learning literature then students are supposed to have two areas of knowledge that seemed important to their ability growth to read, comprehend, and interact with and about text: knowledge about what to discuss and how to discuss it (Raphael et al., 1992:55).

Paradigm Shift; from Transmission to Transactional Approach

Some theories (Harste, et all in Musthafa, 2003) conclude that historically at least there are three reading models in literacy works; behavioral model, cognitivistic model and transactional model.

Behavioral model emerges from mechanisctic paradigm (Weaver, cited in Musthafa, 2003) which assumes that there is one objective reality, the nature of reality is as objective and reductionistic (Heshusius, 1989, p.405). In line with it, Kamhi (1994) states this:

The nature of reality is determined by gathering sufficient data and while the nature of progress is determined by deterministic, additive and the same regardless of personal meaning and the context.

A study conducted by Darren Smith (1992) in Indiana USA, the use of this transmission model does not engage students in reading activity as the reading is considered as only figuring out what is stated, answering the questions whose answers is in teacher's hand. Furthermore, students feel not confidence with their own interpretations in reading.

The second model which is cognitive model is based on organic paradigm which assumes that learning is personally constructed (Weaver, in Musthafa, 2003). This personal constructivist supported by principles of cognitive psychologically which determine what is worthy personally and communally (Harste et all in Musthafa, 1984). In this model, literacy acts are rule governed.

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Differ from behavioral and cognitive model, transaction views of reading suggest a personally, emotionally, and intellectually active role for the reader (Cox and Many, 1992:28). It assumes that meaning resides neither in the environment nor totally in the head of language learner, but rather is the result of ongoing sign interpretation (Harste, et all in Musthafa, 2003), constructing meaning is done through transaction with the text, Rosenblatt describes this as a reciprocal relationship between reader and text. Supporting these theories, Purves (1993) said meaning resides in the negotiation among readers in an interpretive community, in authorial intention or in individual concerning the text.

The transactional views of learning a language is as a social process which considers social process and communal dimension take important role in internalizing text. Transactional views of reality (e.g., Bruner, 1986) and of the literary work (e.g., Rosenblatt, 1978) suggest an emotionally and intellectually more active role for children like the young readers, viewers, and writers which they assume an aesthetic stance in their encounters with literary discourse (Cox and Many, 1992:32).

Efferent and Aesthetics Reading Orientation

As mentioned before, the shifting paradigm also changed reading orientation from efferent to aesthetic. Rosenblatt's term of efferent reading experience from the latin word *effere* means 'to carry away'. This reading orientation emerges for some 'particular purpose' (Prather, 2001) in which students read for particular purpose of gaining information for a test or their teachers' requirements. Rosenblatt states, "the reader's attention is primarily focused on what will remain as a residue after the reading -- the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out (1965). Here, the reader is not interested in the rhythms of the language or the prose style but is focused on obtaining a piece of information. This efferent reading response is based on transmission view.

On the other hand, aesthetic reading is reading to explore the work and oneself. Here, readers are engaged in the experience of reading, itself. Rosenblatt states, "In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered

directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text." Then, a question might come, which one is the better, referring to efferent reading or promoting aesthetic reading in teaching literature?

According to Rosenblatt, the aesthetic stance is the more appropriate stance to assume when reading a literary work, as opposed to an efferent stance where the reader analyze a text for information to be learned and retained after the reading event.

The studies which conducted by Winke (1990) revealed that there are three main characteristics which were often evident in aesthetic response to literature. One was students' tendencies to image and picture a story in their minds. A second was to extend a story or hypothesize about it while reading. A third was to relate associations and feelings evoked while reading and responding (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 29-30).

Teaching Literature Approaches

In teaching literature, teachers might employ one or more approaches; it depends on what the objective of learning and what genre is learnt. There are at least 5 approaches that can be applied in teaching literature; stylistic approach, language-based approach, paraphrastic approach, information-based approach, personal-response approach and moral-philosophical approach.

Stylistic approach is more likely to cater for immediate and advance learners as learners are required a degree of language competence before they participate in learning literature.

Language-based approach relates to viewing literary works as means to helping students' improve language proficiency and as a source of stimulating language activities (Maley and Duff, 1990). This is done by exposing them the target language and connecting them to specific vocabulary and other aspect of the language.

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Paraphrastic approach deals with the surface meaning of the text (Hwang and Embi, 2007) which allows the teacher to use simpler words to more complicated ones and sometimes may translate it into first language. This is appropriate for beginners of the target language.

Information-based approach is a way of teaching knowledge about literature where literature is seen as a medium to provide source of information to students (Carter, 1998).

Personal-respond approach is connected with eliciting personal respond and fostering students' personal development, focuses on the learner's respond to the text (Hirvila, 1996). This approach motivates and encourages students to read by interconnection of making meaning between the text and the reader's personal life experience.

Moral-philosophical approach focuses on discovering moral values while reading particularly literary works (Hwang and Embi, 2007). It figures out the moral values and philosophical considerations behind the reader's reading (Rusli, in Rashid, et all. 2010)

Ideas of Using Poetry in Teaching Literature

In this study, writer uses a case of teaching literature through poetry since the poetry is a powerful source of phonetic words in conveying message which has multi interpretation (Amy, 2011).

There are seven good points in teaching literature through poetry; (1) poetry can be used as a valuable resource to introduce and practice language by exposing students to authentic models-real language in context (Brumfit & Carter, 1987); (2) poems provide students with an opportunity to enrich their vocabulary in a new way by offering meaningful context, in which they could be used and hence be remembered more effectively (Lazar, 1996; Norstorm, 2000); (3) poems encourage students in developing their creativity while providing a break from regular classroom routines (McKay, 1982). A students study the poems, they can simultaneously discover interesting ideas for

creative writing. Collie and Slater (1987) state using poetry in language classroom can lead naturally on to freer and creative written expression. (4) Poetry based-activities are motivating as they generate strong emotional reactions. As Hess (2003) notes, "Entering a literary text, under the guidance of appropriate teaching, brings about the kind of participation almost no other text can produce. When we read, understand, and interpret a poem we learn language through the expansion of our experience with a larger human reality" (5). According to Lazar (1996), poems also provide students with insight into developing cross-cultural awareness and this in turn will help them in acquiring fluency in the target language. (6) McKay (1982) points out that poems provide inspiration and can serve as a good model for creative writing (7) Heath (1996) said that poems deal with universal themes and human concerns, they offer opportunities for students to project their feelings and emotions, thus fostering personal involvement in learners. (8) Poetry is a medium that can offer the imaginary and symbolism that adults need to reach the spiritual aspects of somatic learning of deeper and embodied learning. Those who love poetry know the evocative, affective experiences this art form can arouse. In short, poetry can be a mean of affecting critical thinking in adult classroom education (Wright, et al 2011)

Most of researchers argue that poem is not a vehicle for objective analysis (McClure, Harrison, Reed 1989, Shen, 2001) however, poem is a source of poetic words, it is what Rosenblatt says as 'a happening, an event in which the listener or the reader draws on imagines and feelings and ideas stirred up by the words of the text; out of these is shaped the live-through experience" (1980). A reader-response perspective (Langer, 1994) from the students is encouraged toward poetry. Students are supposed to go beyond, involve within, and get experience with the poetry instead of searching for surface information.

Rosenblatt (1980) claimed that frequent affective engagement with poetry "should precede the theoretical analysis of such convention and thus knowledge of literary conventions will be absorbed in the actual reading". In line with transactional theory Rosenblatt, acknowledged that efferent analyses

contribute in strengthening aesthetic response with the text in this case is poetry, as quoted as following:

In the basic paradigm for literary criticism, then the movement is from an intensely realized aesthetic transaction with the text to reflection on semantic or technical or other details in order to return to, and correlate them with, that particular personally apprehended aesthetic reading.

Why aesthetic is needed in teaching poetry? As once student has been indeed a lived-through experience evocation from the poetry, students can have increasingly self-critical and sound interpretation (Rosenblatt, 1980). Based on this assumption teaching poetry then starts from an aesthetic stance, proceeds through reader-response, and ultimately with critical analyses. To sum up, the aesthetic response experience is essential to learning poetry. Through aesthetic reading, students might be more interested, motivated and become life-long readers of poetry.

Regarding the paradigm shifting in teaching literature from which transmission to transactional approach, most of Indonesia teachers are not ready yet in promoting aesthetic responses to poetry. Most of them still apply transmission approach in this case applying efferent responses. For instance, students are required to read poetry and interpret it based on the text in author's view (Brooks and Warren in Shen, 2001) and the correct answer is in teacher hands. Surely, this does not assist students' development in students' literary understanding. How to provide guidance for teachers in promoting the development of student literary competence through poetry? To know what the teachers should do, I discuss it first, by describing what the role of teachers in promoting aesthetic reading orientation of poetry and activities suggestions in teaching poetry.

Role of Teachers in Aesthetic Reading Poetry

Inevitably the teachers plays important role in aesthetics readings, which allows students develop their literary understanding poetry. According to Kathryn (2001) at least there are four points of what teachers should do, (1) The teacher needs to encourage students to have passionate to take an

aesthetic stance in internalizing poetry (2) the teacher need to be a 'good actor' to change the power relationship in learning process from the 'sole answer holder' to the 'role of learner' with students (Wilson, 1981) to create a supporting atmosphere which gives freedom for students to speak their understandings (3) The teacher needs to model reading and the process of interpretation a poetry through showing that including how learn from mistakes (Donley, 1991) might be for sometimes teachers allow students to see and to understand the process of reading and how to responses to the poetry in which during the process there might occur some mistakes (4) the teacher needs to have self-reflection about how and why students participate in the discussion of interpreting poetry.

In short, we can see that in reading poetry aesthetically, teachers are supposed to change the power relationship in the classroom; the teacher is more as a guide for students not as a person who hold the absolute answer. Flexibly, a teacher may change from the prompter, model, learner, or motivator.

Activities suggestions

Based on the writer's experience in learning literature through poetry in her graduate degree and supported by some theories, here are some activities suggested to promote student development in literary understanding.

- *Students are provided a poetry which is meaningful, relevant and multi-interpretation.* Kenneth Goodman, in Golden, Meiners, and Lewis, (1992) argues that whole texts that are meaningful and relevant are important and by giving multi interpretation poetry, students are encouraged to be critical as they have to interpret the poetry based on responsible reasons.

For example, 'The one' Poetry written by Bachrudin Mustafa, the teacher might ask students who 'The One' is, and why they think so.

The One

In a party of three
he, you, and me
we meet
in solemn prayers every midnight

In every prayer is union
three of us dissolve in one
like an equilateral triangle
one base supports the two
the two sides shape the one

in a party of three
he, you, and me
meet
in his unwavering light
we anchor our resting souls
You and me inhale his heavenly breeze

Stormy black winter's around the corner
You and me spread our slim arms
To reach out
The signifier of a form of his love
For us to be thanked for
As it tastes as good
For us three
He, you and me

He- you- and me
Hyphenated as one
In three we find our form and substance
As we're meant to be
One

- *To encourage students' involvement and experience in learning poetry, teachers involve students in selecting materials. The choice of materials may be in steps such as first the text is provided by the teachers, and for the next meeting students are free to choose any poetry, and in another time they are supposed to choose poetry based on determined topic. The topic is not determined by the teacher but by mostly students prefer to. For instance most of students chose love poem so for the next meeting students are asked to bring love poem. In this part, teacher may provide some questions as guidance for students to engage their critical thinking. The example of questions; (1) why do you choose this poem? Is the choice based on your experience, the author, the beauty of*

the words or something else? (2) Which part of poem is impressed you, and why?

By involving students' involvement in choosing poetry, students might be more interested and motivated to engage in learning literature through poetry. And this is useful for helping them in understanding the poetry because they have prior knowledge and experience to the poetry (Golden, Meiners, and Lewis, 1992:22).

- *Practices to theories.* Students learn theories of poetry such as what poetry is, what good poetry is and how to interpret the poetry is coming from getting experience from reading the poetry. This 'learning by doing' technique will bear good impression in students' mind (Goldden, Meiner, and Lewis, 1992)
- *The teacher might prompt how to read and to interpret the poem* with emphasizing that the way he reads and his interpretation is not the absolute truth. This activity will help students to build their mind set that everybody is free in reading poetry, everybody has own style. Ultimately this will build or increase students' confidence in learning literature through poetry.
- *Students are invited to get interpretation toward the poetry by applying think-aloud technique.* They read the poetry silently or loudly and speak their mind up. The feel-think aloud technique, according to Eva-Wood (2008) is an effective meta-cognitive method of training students aesthetically respond to poetry. In think-aloud technique students have picturing and imagining activity as a sign of the aesthetic response(Cox and Many, 1992:33)
- *Students are encouraged to describe his feeling, making associations with poems and their own life experiences*as Students who read aesthetically repeatedly make associations with their own life experiences and experiences of poetry (Cox and Many, 1992:32) which is useful in developing their literary understanding.
- *Provide students with 'nice' classroom environment* which develop student's confidence in taking part of learning poetry process and this

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will help students to get the idea of learning poetry including how to read the poetry aesthetically.

Assessment

How to assess student in learning poetry? There are two assessments could be employed during process of learning and after learning assessment. During process assessment, students are to be participated in classroom such as selecting poetry, and delivering the idea of learning poetry. While after process assessment, students produce in written texts their interpretations of a poem as Cox and Many, (1992, p. 32) say that logical conclusion to every reading event is to have students write a poem or produce anything at all.

III. CONCLUSION

Teaching literature has changed from transmission to transaction paradigm. This article discussed the paradigm shift and its implication in teaching literature particularly in teaching poetry by describing writer's experience in teaching and learning literature through poetry elaborated with some theories. It discusses; literature and learning literature means; paradigm shifting from transmission to transaction; efferent and aesthetic reading orientations; teaching literature approaches; ideas of using poetry in teaching literature and the assessment of learning poetry.

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