

MAKING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF LITERATURE MORE MEANINGFUL

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Abstract

Teaching Literature has good impact to develop students of EFL imagination, culture awareness, even encourage critical thinking. This teaching - learning can construct the students –centered and interactive tenets of Communicative Language teaching (CLT) . However teachers/lecturers are expected to understand what they are teaching. They are supposed not to focus on teaching – learning method only but also to develop guidance on the analytical methods that are crucial to understand meaning and interpret literary works that lead classroom activities more effective. This paper is going to discuss integrated strategies to improve literary class and make the Teaching- Learning of Literature in Teacher College and University more meaningful.

Key words: *Teaching – Learning of Literature, Integrated Strategies , Meaningful.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and Learning literature in Teacher College and University is not so easy, in fact it is not also so difficult if the lecturer and the students understand the aim of learning literature. The aim of studying literature is to appreciate the literary work. Therefore the students are expected to understand, interpret as well as analyze the text. This is certainly not easy for the students who are used to spoon feeding style. As a creative writing, literary work is quite interesting in terms of their language style, dialogues, characters, even conflicts that occur in the story. All the events are close to the reality that make readers eager to read. Therefore reading literary work especially for EFL students will enrich their language skills as well as language components: vocabulary and grammar. Moreover the text enable students to develop their imagination since the work based on imagination of the writer, and help students to build the critical thinking as well as critical reading. Literary text is full of sociocultural aspects that is crucial for the EFL learners. It helps students enhance their culture awareness. Like what the experts say that teaching language should integrate with teaching culture. In this case literary work already offers it. For instance: every dialogue in a story or drama are based on context. It helps students understand how people use language in reality and understand why people say it.

Learning Literature not merely read the literary work such as a poem, prose ,drama even an essay. The way to read the text is not even the same with the one used for non literary text. Speed reading strategy is not going to work. In my class at English Department of University of Padang and also in Private university, most of students tend to stick on one meaning of a word. In fact a word has a bunch of meaning. This mistake will continue from year to year. They are very carelessly in reading that will bring them into the big mistake. Just because of one word, the meaning will far away from the real. For instance: the word “Spring”. By glance everyone see it as the word so familiar with them. it is so easy, and everyone think that it is something to do with the season. In fact there are other meaning will occur especially if it is in context. *Spring may means the coiled piece of wire or the pool where the water comes up through the ground* (Cobuild 1989). To help this, close reading

should be taught. It means students should read in detail by paying attention to the form of language.

Besides, the students should understand the elements and meaning of the text. Unfortunately the meaning in literary works are not always readily stated, most of them are stated implicitly. Those aspects should be taught to students. Thus the lecturer can not focus mainly on language teaching methodology, but should apply the analytical methods in teaching (Thi My Van 2009). In other word lecturer should lead students not only to read but also to analyze the text they read, so that they can get the meaning that is not stated but it is crucial. There are some strategies that can be derived from theory of literature to help lecturer in applying analytical method.

This articles presents integrated strategies to help lecturer in teaching literature and students in learning it. The strategies used enable them to make class more active and meaningful, since the class are changed into a discussion room suggested by Communicative language Teaching Approach. This includes the discussion based on my own experience as well as the idea from the experts who are familiar with different techniques from different methods.

B. DISCUSSION

Select the Literary work

Material for teaching–learning literature may become one of the problems that should be considered. Literary works are authentic material since they are not designed for teaching language. The works are believed to contain language that is difficult for students of English to comprehend. Besides, literary works loaded with culture that may totally be different from their own. In fact literary work can inspire more authority in the use and enrichment of language. It conveys two features in its written text: one is ‘ language in use’, the second is an aesthetic represent language within a certain cultural context (Cruz 2010). Moreover literary text can provide FL students with language experience that not will only motivate and foster oral language, but also provide models for their own writing (Ghosn 2002 in Aghgolzadeh and Tajabadi 2012). Thus the lecture should not worry in using material as long as they select it which is suitable to students.

There are four kinds of literary work that commonly used in teaching, they are prose (short story and novel), poetry, drama and essay. Those genre should be taught and students have right to know it. The lecture can not choose what they think easy for them and students. This is not the point to select material. What should be selected is the work that is going to be studied. It is certainly not easy to select the literary text which is suitable to the need of students. But the point is the lecturer should consider the text the students can acces and relate to (Thi My Van 2009). Van also gives suggestion to consider the language used in the text should match the level of students. However the difficulty of cultural material can not be avoided. The difficulties found in literary text may preclude the teaching language which is the main goals of language teacher (Aghgolzadeh and Tajabadi 2012). This difficulty should be faced by students, but it can be challenging if the lecturer can apply some interesting strategies in teaching. The lecturer should be the mediator between the text and the students. They should not do spoon feeding or translate it but guide students to think and give them a chance to respon freely. Therefore it is better to choose the topic of the text deals with the phenomena closed to the reality. Let’s say in short story, it is found the characters, conflicts and the solution that close to what we face in our life. While a poem is an expression about how to amaze the nature, people and even to express the sadness, disappointed and love. Therefore the lecture has to read and understand the text before they give it to students. These aspects are going to help students understand that the text is not just a creation without meaning, but something they need to know or even answer indirectly the questions they have.

They are going to realize that in general reading is wider their knowledge and literary text especially is not just for entertainment but they can learn something good for their life.

Another point to select the text is by considering the author. Try to find the text written by the author who already got award or just nomination. These mean that their work already read and reviewed by experts and certainly have multiple meaning. It is not necessary the classic one since the texts are too familiar in society, and the language used have complex syntax, where the words may not often be used in reality. My suggestion is the latest the better since the topic of the text must be actual and close to reality even to their own problem. This point will attract the attention of students. Besides, the language used are quite familiar with what they learn, the grammar and vocabulary are commonly used in society in this era. This will motivate them to read since they do not find too much obstacles in reading.

Need integrated strategies

The strategies discussed in this paper is not the one that can be chosen by the lecturer for their classroom. However these strategies should be applied integratedly, so that the class is more active and focuses on the students-centered. In other words the lecturer uses all the strategies at the same time for teaching- learning literature. In my experience these force them to read so that they are able to participate in learning, have self- confidence in expressing their own idea based from what they read and can appreciate others opinion. Indirectly they have developed their skills to communicate that is required outside of the classroom or in society.

Since teaching literature involves the analytical method, most of strategies of teaching and learning are derived from the approach to literary analysis. This teaching - learning can construct the students –centered and interactive tenets of Communicative Language teaching (CLT). The lecturer allows students to monopolize the class most of time. This happens since the students are given time to express their own responses. Of course different students have different responses, based on their reading ability. In fact, it is not easy to make students speak especially in English Department of UNP (Indonesia) since they are used to receive everything from the teachers. Thus it takes time to make students believe in themselves and want to express their own opinion, as well as to appreciate others.

Collaborative work

The lecturer are suggested to put the students in group work of three or four. But the group should be a collaborative work, where each member should have an idea that they have to discuss to produce a new opinion through the combination of different ideas. An indispensable element to collaboration is that all those involved in collaborative task must contribute more or less equally (Ingram and Hathorn 2009 in Kozar 2010). Collaboration is commonly not easy to achieve. Besides, Collaboration often does not come naturally to our students, especially in cultures that encourage individual responsibility and accountability (Kozar 2010). In my class, what I do is, from the beginning I told my students that they are going to be graded individually not in group. This motivates them to try to work seriously. It didn't work smoothly for the beginning since they think it is not serious. But at the end of the class 90% students work collaboratively. Every year the presentation increase. This probably happened for they got information from their seniors. They students who choose this class tend to be the ones who already learn the style. That's why the lecturer should explain the model and the rule of classroom they are going to follow since the beginning. They are given the text one week before the class. They may use the time for reading several time and have their own perception to be discussed in collaborative work. Then the result should be presented in classroom where every student should pay attention and gives their reaction whether they agree or not with their own reason.

Thus collaborative work is not only in group but also in class leading by the lecturer. In my experience some groups can not come to the conclusion or combination ideas since they have different reason to express their own ideas. Some groups even want to change their group since one of the member tend to monopolize or never listen to what the other members say. This is not collaborative anymore if each member can not give their opinion. This conflict shows that they are serious and want to participate. This happened since they have to present the result of their discussion individually. In other word each member has to speak in the class during presentation. The problem should be tolerated by the lecturer and try to discuss their opinion with some questions that make them realize they are wright or wrong. This is quite interesting since they understand why they are wrong, or what make them different. Thus strategies make them appreciate their friends opinion. Besides, it is easy for the lecture to recognize the students who never work in the group. This strategy will stimulate their self-confident to speak since they understand that everyone will make a mistake. Being affraid to make a mistake is not an obstacle anymore.

Close Reading

Close reading is a trategy of reading from formalist approach. The reader should read the literary works in detail; be sensitive to the words of the text both denotation and connotation values and implications and aware to the multiple meaning (Guerin 205). It should be considered that most of literary works contain connotative meaning. Thus in reading the students should do intensively and alert to every word and form of language. Read the text carefully, patient, line by line. Be open to whatever the text has to offer. Then try to get a sense of its overall pattern (Guth and Rico 1997). This is done to understand and interpret the meaning of literary work which is considered has self –contained. The role of the lecturer here is very crucial since they have to make students alert. But before the lecturer help them, let students express their own idea after discussing in collaborative work. This step will build the self- confident. They feel they are trusted by lecturer to express their own ideas.

Some steps to help students:

- Read the text with an open mind. Many readers are wary of what is new and unfamiliar. They are quick to judge or reject something different from them (Guth and Rico 1997). Thus the lecture should teach students to be receptive reader so that they can see something good the text offers. It is going to help readers in getting meaning. Reading by glance, just like reading a newspaper can not work in this study.
- Lead the students to pay attention to the form of the language, such as tenses; present, past even the future tense. The tenses tend to occur to show different event and meaning. Then considers every word especially if the words are repeated, slanted and capital. These style show that the words play an important role to help readers in revealing the meaning.
- Read the text more than once; by reading the text many times and slowly, the students will give closer look and able to see the significant detail.
- The three rules above should be told before they start working.
- During the presentation in the classroom, the lecturer pays attention to what they miss in their close reading. It is time for the lecturer to remind them that they already missed some significant details. This mistakes certainly affects the

meaning that may be far from the expectation. Thus help students by giving some questions that make them alert and realize why they are wrong. Let's see the two lines in a following poem

/ I'm going out to clean the pasture spring; /I'll only stop to rake the leaves away/

The questions are ; Who is the speaker? Why does the speaker want to clean? What for? What is the condition? What is the pasture spring exactly ?. Does the text talk about season? Etc . The questions from the lecture make the students be aware that the word *spring* they already thought dealing with the season is wrong. This certainly affects the meaning they revealed.

- Consider the culture existed in the text. As a reader, many people look at something from their own perspective, influenced by their knowledge, culture and religion. They tend to ignore that every poet has their own culture that may be different from them. The lecturer should be aware to this and explain to them so that they can understand. Here is the examples

/ I'm going out to fetch the little calf/ That's standing by the mother.

It's so young,/It totters when she licks it with her tongue./

The lines contain culture that tend to be ignored by students even the lecture. This shows how their farm different from us in Indonesia. Those cattle must be in the meadow where the new baby was born. The farmer is going to take care since the weather is cold. Unfortunately many students especially in my class never think that they are cattle. Their interpretation is totally wrong. This also can be introduced by giving questions such as. Where does it happen? What makes the speaker react like that? Can you see something different from your condition or culture?

The aim of the questions is to stimulate students to think and read more critically. In fact the students should have the questions in their mind when they read the text closely. However it is impossible since they never do it before. Thus the lecturer apply some questions, that lead students to be aware. In my experience at the beginning all questions come from lecture, then one by one students try to give the same question to their friend in discussion. All of this strategies really help them since the class seems not a class, but it is a room for discussion. At least these motivate them to build self-confident as well as thinking and reading critically.

Imagery

Another strategies is using imagery or what is called the open eye. A poet takes the readers into a world of images. An Image is a vividly imagined detail that speak to the readers' sense of sight, hearing, smell, taste or touch (Guth and Rico 1997). In other words in reading the text the readers also try to use their imagination, open their mind's eyes and ear wildly, so that they can visualize and hear as if it is reading aloud. They use the word to speak to their sense. They can feel the hate, or the sadness, disappointed even the anger in the text just by looking to the word or phrase used. Let's see the following quotation;

“ Only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years rattling inside me like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. Today I wish I was one hundred and two instead of eleven because if I was one hundred and two I'd have known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red

sweater on my desk. I would have known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with the look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth"(Cisneros. 1998)

- Develop the sense of students by leading them to see the relationship between one sentence to another, or one word to another word. Thus if you look at one sentence you should relate it to the sentence before, after or both of them. Since the meaning can not be concluded by one sentence only. The utterance “ *only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years*” the reader have to think why to day, why not tomorrow? What happened today? Is something wrong with the day? Such questions are supposed to occur in the readers mind, then they try to find out the answer. This questions emerge when the readers read the text several time so that they are aware that must be something crucial to be talked. It is the lecturer responsibility to develop students sense. In my experience it is not easy to do this, especially to the students who do not want to learn. It certainly takes time, patient and ready to do it again and again. At the end of the class after 16 times meeting there are some students do their best even more than it is expected. That is a reward for a lecturer
- Develop the image of students by giving critical questions, not telling or explaining the text. This is going to wake up students that they may ignore before. For instance: do you think the narrator or “I” is sad or disappointed? Why ? what makes I say *today I wish I was one hundred and two*? What does it mean? Does the age influence the image or attitude of someone? Do you think only old person has power to talk? Do you think only old person can be appreciated by others?
All the questions make them think and eager to answer by their own mind. Thus the communication will occur since they may have different perspective.

Reader -Response

Reader- Respon is one of approaches in literary analysis. This type of approach attempts to describe what happens in the reader's mind while interpreting a text. What the readers think and how they respond are the most important factors. Thus Reader- Respon supports activities that encourage students to draw on their personal experiences, opinion, and feelings in their interpretation of literature (Thi My Van 2009). Since the students are receptive readers they have right to give their personal respon. Therefore the lecture give students a chance to express their own idea about the text they already read and discussed in collaborative group. This strategies help the students be active participants in the learning proses. Unfortunately different students is going to have different opinion since they have different perspective depend on their reading ability, knowledge and experience. It is quite challenging since some students may express their good opinion with the good reason, however some students dare to say something that it is out of the text event there is no relationship at all. It is just their creation without reason. Of course the whole class will laugh. However it tend to happen at the beginning of the class. Later on they become alert to what they are going to say. In my class some students ready to be honest and confess that they haven't read yet. Even one or two of them quit from the class. It's better rather than they come for nothing. The lecturer should handle the class carefully:

- After the presentation in front of the class, let the whole class discuss. Some students start with questions that comonly heard from the lecturer before. Some other students say that they don't agree with the group by giving reason from the text. The majority

discussion is held by the students. The lecturer should manage the class, not just leave it to the class so that it does not come to chaos. This discussion is what the CLT called students-centered class.

- The discussion is ended by the input from the lecturer. The lecturer lead the discussion by asking the group and the whole class to look at the text back and read again. Ask them which word or utterance support their opinion. Lead them with several questions deal with the utterances which are going to make them realize that they have done the wrong thing in interpretation, since they miss one phrase even a word.

Reader-respon will develop into personal respon. The students give their opinion without having fear to be different from their friends even from the lecturer. Yet one or two students tend to defend their opinion eventhough it is wrong. It is ridiculous, but that is human being. Therefore the lecture asks them to show or read the words that make them come to such opinion. It is time for the lecture to make them alert to what they already read. This can be done by asking questions about it openly where another students can answer and explain it. If it does not work it is time for lecturer to read and show why they are wrong or even explain it to them. They finally understand why they are wrong.

C. CONCLUSION.

Selected material and integrated skills are crucial to develop in the teaching-learning literature, so that the class can be run well and more meaningful. The students are ready and eager to speak up since everyone gets the chance. The students indirectly develops their language skills as well as their critical competence that they need in reality. They are not going to be passive anymore. However they are going to see everything critically and brave to receive or refuse it. Their self-confident are developed. Besides, they are able to appreciate others opinion which may be different from them. There are many reasons why someone says something that needed to be considered. Moreover they develop their skill in speaking, they talk for there is something to be talked. Those skills are needed when they face their life outside of the class especially in the field of job. The strategies are not only for teaching literature at the university, but they can be applied in the classroom for school. This teaching-learning implicitly builds the characters of a students, they are not submissive (receive everything without thinking), or jugde something or people easyly. They are honest, able to give their opinion, make a choice and appreciate others. Finally this also develop the critical competence of teacher and lecturer.

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