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## **CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS TO LITERARY WORKS: A METHOD OF TEACHING LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERATURE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Teaching a language has become a challenging task for the teachers to train and to teach language for their students. In present time, the ability to master a language is vital for a language is a powerful means of communicating. Most of us will not focus on the language present in the literature part because our mind sets only towards the grammar. This has made both the teacher and students to ignore the literature part and made them to focus only on grammatical part to learn language. The urge behind using literary works in the teaching a language is to argue that the current attempts to implant literary works to the teaching of a language definitely develop students' critical thinking in such a way that help them to easily master a particular language. Learning literary works in a classroom not only make the students learn about a story but also study how the language are structured and how its structured bring a great difference in meaning. Through a literary works student sees the language of real-life contexts. They learn the feelings, ideas, and experiences of linguistics components that give a realistic touch and help them to learn a language in a comprehensive way. It is also found that using literary works in the teaching learning process can improve student's ability both in micro-linguistics and macro-linguistics.

**Keywords: critical thinking, literary works, grammatical, comprehensive**

### **ABSTRAK**

Kemampuan menguasai bahasa pada saat ini sangatlah penting karena bahasa merupakan alat utama untuk menjalin komunikasi dengan sesama. Sebagian besar pebelajar bahasa tidak bisa fokus pada bahasa yang ada di karya sastra karena pola pikir mereka tertuju hanya pada grammar. Hal ini membuat guru dan siswa menghiraukan bagian penting sastra dan hanya memperhatikan ketepatan grammar mereka. Diharapkan penggunaan literasi atau sastra pada pengajaran bahasa adalah untuk mendukung bahwa karya sastra bisa meningkatkan pemikiran kritis siswa untuk menguasai bahasa. Hal ini tidak hanya membuat siswa belajar tentang cerita, tetapi mereka juga belajar bagaimana bahasa disusun dan susunannya bisa membuat suatu kata memiliki makna yang berbeda. Melalui karya sastra siswa dapat melihat penggunaan bahasa di kehidupan nyata. Mereka belajar perasaan, ide, dan pengalaman unsur linguistik yang memberikan sentuhan realistik dan membantu mereka mempelajari bahasa dengan utuh. Belajar bahasa melalui karya sastra juga dapat meningkatkan kemampuan siswa pada mikro linguistik dan makrolinguistik.

**Kata kunci: berfikir kritis, karya sastra, tata bahasa, utuh**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the role of literature as a basic component and source of authentic texts in the teaching process has been gaining momentum. It is further strengthened by the fact that literature is a topic that every college and university student must tackle at some point in their academic career. Adult learners regularly confront complex and dynamic challenges in moments of crisis that require self-efficiency of intuition and immediate decision. Therefore,

the teaching and learning process had to be adapted in a deep and critical thinking. Critical thinking closely related with the skills of analyzing arguments, making inferences, evaluating, and making decisions. And the feature of literary text contains many aspects that require deep reading and critical thinking. Literature supplies many linguistic opportunities to the language learner and represents the language of real-life contexts. Learners are exposed to actual language samples of real life like settings and have to cope with the intended meaning of a text. They are coincidentally become familiar with many different linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings.

The common teaching strategy often significantly help learners to attain greater proficiency by making the learning process easier, more efficient, and more self-directed, but most students often fail to invoke strategic behaviors effectively. Consequently, they neglect the competence and ability to think creatively and critically. Therefore, the need to evolve a strategy to help them in their learning has become all the more important as globalization demands professionals with communicative competency and ability to work in diverse settings. The approaches to working with literary works in the teaching of language are based on the fact that language and literature are inseparable and their teachings should be complementary to each other. (Carter and Long 1991: 3) said that the literary texts provide rich linguistics input, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in other language and are a potential source of learner motivation. Literature supplies many linguistic opportunities to the language learner and allows the teacher to design activities that are based on material capable of stimulating greater interest and involvement than many other non-literary texts.

Literature and language are closely related and this is a fact none can deny. Literature, whether canonical or not, can make positive contributions to the language class by being motivating and thought provoking. According to Collie and Slater (1990:3), there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom. These are valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. In addition to these four main reasons, universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy and suggestive power and ambiguity are some other factors requiring the use of literature as a powerful resource in the classroom context. It is therefore suitable with the learning style of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that provides professional graduates who are globally competent. The objective of this paper is to enumerate the importance of Language teaching through literature and how the art of storytelling bring a greater help to the students' learning that plays an important role in their day to day life situations.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERATURE**

For many language learners, the ideal way to increase their understanding of verbal / nonverbal aspects of communication is by adapting how the native use their language in the daily situations. And as we know literary works are not created for the primary purpose of teaching a language, the texts then contain many authentic samples of language in real-life

contexts. The literary texts provide rich linguistic input, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in other language and are a potential source of learner motivation. Literature and language are closely related for literature is constituted by language and it represents one of the most recurrent uses of language. In addition, Duff and Maley said that literature reading is, no doubt, a communicative activity that is consonance with real, authentic communicative situations (1990: 3). Literature can be useful in the language learning process owing to the personal involvement it fosters in the reader. Once the student reads a literary text, he begins to inhabit the text. He is drawn into the text. Understanding the meanings of lexical items or phrases becomes less significant than pursuing the development of the story. The student becomes enthusiastic to find out what happens as events unfold via the climax; he feels close to certain characters and shares their emotional responses. This can have beneficial effects upon the whole language learning process.

Reading literary text for the very first time may gain a lot of effort for students have to deal with metaphor, symbols, and various challenging vocabularies. However, after several time they will get used to and expect to read more. The enjoyment of reading literature deals with themes and topics which are intrinsically interesting. Since it deals with ideas, things, sensations and events which either constitutes part of the reader's experience or which they can enter into imaginatively, they are able to relate it to their own lives. Mallikarjun (2003: 4) states that literature which is studied for its intrinsic merit and enjoyment is a powerful educational tool to imbibe values, style of language, and many other important learning items in the minds of learners. Literature is an example of language in use and is a context for language use. Thus studying the language of literary texts as language in operation is seen as enhancing the learners' appreciation of aspects of different systems of language organization. Consequently teaching language through literature acts as a means of cultural enrichment and acquaints the learner with understanding how communication takes place in their set up. It involves learners mentally and physically that makes language learning more interesting and exciting.

## **THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN THE CRITICAL TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS**

We all know the pleasure that literature can bring to the teaching and learning process. Literatures play an important natural role in students' lives in most cultures. They have a universal appeal and provide a rich source of language and imaginative input which make them ideal teaching tools in the classrooms. Literature demonstrates the background knowledge of the linguistic and cultural aspects of its language. Using literature as a tool in the teaching process can go beyond language learning and into the realms of critical thinking, a skill which is vital in today's world. Literature brings a great help for it express a background knowledge which is essentials for students to demonstrate their critical thinking skills. Literature introduces a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues, and prose. In addition to developing students' language skills, teaching literature also appeals to their imagination, develops cultural

awareness, and encourages critical thinking about plots, themes, and characters. Therefore, the role of literature in the critical teaching and learning process is quite essential.

The study of literature is indispensable because it exposes students to meaningful contexts that are replete with descriptive language and interesting characters. Teaching students to literature is referred to learning to evaluate, draw inferences, and arrive at conclusions based on evidence (Carr, 1998). Through literature students learn to actively engage in texts while simultaneously considering ideas, values, and ethical questions. The literature class gives a teacher the opportunity to engage students in discussions about the ideas expressed in literary texts. This exercise benefits student in two ways: firstly, it gives them an opportunity to express their own ideas about life and relationships, values and beliefs, and interests and dislikes; secondly, it forces them to use a more complex set of structures and a more “advanced” range of vocabulary. Having literature in the teaching and learning process can create the process of critical thinking for students will practice expressing opinions, drawing inferences, explaining cause-and-effect relationships, comparing facts and applying ideas they have gleaned from literature to new situations. In addition, they will learn how to analyze texts based on logical reasoning and to synthesize and evaluate the information in the texts.

## ANALYSIS

Today, professional organizations and the professional literature support critical thinking in the classroom and call for teachers to guide students in developing higher level thinking skills (Littlewood, 1986). Because teaching higher level cognitive processes requires comprehension, inference, and decision making, the teaching of language through literature is the logical place to begin. In this analysis several literary works are applied, novel genre are used in this analysis for novel gives us more comprehensive situation because it is written in the prose style. There are three different novels taken from three different regions to bring the broaden spectrum of the discussion. The first is Indonesian literary works “Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk” written by Ahmad Tohari. Second is the Khalid Hosseini novel’s “A Thousand of Splendid Sun” from Afghanistan and the third is English literature “Oliver Twist” written by Charles Dickens. The combination of these three different genres and areas are consciously chosen to give a broader spectrum in the teaching process.

*‘She was brought here last night,’ replied the old woman, ‘by the overseer’s order. She was found lying in the street. She had walked some distance, for her shoes were worn to pieces; but where she came from, or where she was going to, nobody knows.’ (Oliver Twist, p.4)*

Through this quotation, students can learn about the idea of tenses. How the sentences are arranged give us the idea how many events occur and how the chronological time is connected to the structure of tenses in English. “She was brought here last night”, “She was

found lying in the street” and “She had walked some distance”. Each of the event puts in the order based on the time of happening; it is why the action of *walking* put in the past perfect for it is the first event, continued with past continuous *was found lying* and the last event *was brought here* that uses past tense. The similar structure also appear in the next sentences which present in the forward motion; “where she came from”, “where she was going”, and “nobody knows” also use past tense, past continuous, and present tense, to show the following action . Reading this story not only gives a deeper understanding of what the story is talk about, it is also gives a deeper understanding of how the language works.

*Later, when she was older, Mariam did understand. It was the way Nana uttered the word-not so much saying it as spitting it at her-that made Mariam feel the full sting of it. She understood then what Nana meant, that aharami was an unwanted thing; that she, Mariam, was an illegitimate person who would never have legitimate claim to the things other people had, things such as love, family, home, and acceptance. (A Thousand of Splendid Sun, p. 15)*

Literature also gives us an understanding of how the words are defined. Through the narration of how people say a word, we can predict the meaning and so that literature really brings a great help to understand what the word means and enhance the vocabularies of a particular language. And through the way of people describe a word we may also predict what it is and how it looks like. As stated in the following quotation:

*Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to refrain from mentioning, and to which I will assign no fictitious name, there is one anciently common to most towns, great or small: to wit, a workhouse; and in this workhouse was born; on a day and date which I need not trouble myself to repeat, in as much as it can be of no possible consequence to the reader, in this stage of the business at all events; the item of mortality whose name is prefixed to the head of this chapter (Oliver Twist, p.1).*

From this quotation we know that workhouse is a place to stay, and this place is not a proper place to stay. Although one doesn't know what “workhouse” means, he/she can predict the meaning from the utterance and further one can also predict the situation, the description, and the atmosphere of the place.

Language of the literature is also special, the word is chosen in a particular way to express the meaning as well as the context. Therefore, learning the language of literature will definitely broaden our knowledge of the study of language. It is because people don't only learn about the words, or the grammar of the language. They also learn the culture, the context, and the hidden meaning of those concise words. Students are able to analyze the language of

the author, define the structure or grammatical thing, and figure out the atmosphere, senses, and style of the language. Paul and Elder (2008: 88) asserted that critical thinking provides a vehicle for educating the mind. And through literature one has the ability to analyze and creatively adapt to new situations which is the heart of critical thinking.

Another example can we see from this quotation which is taken from Indonesian novel “Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk” written by Ahmad Tohari.

*Angin tenggara bertiup. Kering. Pucuk-pucuk pohon di pedukuhan sempit itu bergoyang. Daun kuning serta ranting kering jatuh. Gemersik rumpun bambu. Berderit baling-baling daun gadung meluncur naik. Kicau beranjangan mendaulat kelengangan langit di atas Dukuh Paruk. Udara panas berbulan-bulan mengeringkan berjenis biji-bijian. Buah randu telah menghitam kulitnya, pecah menjadi tiga juring (Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, p. 3)*

Reading this quotation we can see that the area is far away from the wealthy and prosperity situation. “Daun kuning serta ranting kering jatuh”, “mendaulat kelengangan langit di atas Dukuh Paruk” definitely give us the idea of hunger, desperate, and poor environment. By having the first paragraph of the chapter one can predict the situation and the general idea of the story. It is because we analyze the sense, the atmosphere, and the style of the language that help us to understand the structure of the story.

*Sepasang burung bangau melayang meniti angin berputar-putar tinggi di langit. Tanpa sekali pun mengepak sayap, mereka mengapung berjam-jam lamanya. Suaranya melengking seperti keluhan panjang. Kedua unggas itu telah melayang beratus-ratus kilometer mencari genangan air. Telah lama mereka merindukan amparan lumpur tempat mereka mencari mangsa; katak, ikan, udang atau serangga air lainnya.*

*Namun kemarau belum usai. Ribuan hektar sawah yang mengelilingi Dukuh Paruk telah tujuh bulan kerontang. Sepasang burung bangau itu takkan menemukan genangan air meski hanya selebar telapak kaki. Sawah berubah menjadi padang kering berwarna kelabu. Segala jenis rumput, mati. Yang menjadi bercak-bercak hijau di sana-sini adalah kerokot, sajian alam bagi berbagai jenis belalang dan jangkrik. (Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, p. 4)*

Another quotation taken from the different part completed the ideas that the area is poor. The rice fields are dry because of a long summer with none of rain for several months. We then no need another explanation to show that the people in this village are also poor and experience a great hunger. From the quotation we can see that the birds, and even the coach cannot find any food; that they are suffering of waiting for a drop of water to make the rice

field live again. If the animals have to face this desperate situation we can easily predict that the villagers are experiencing the same situation.

*Di tepi kampung, tiga orang anak laki-laki sedang bersusah-payah mencabut sebatang singkong. Namun ketiganya masih terlampau lemah untuk mengalahkan cengkeraman akar ketela yang terpendam dalam tanah kapur. Kering dan membatu. Mereka terengah-engah, namun batang singkong itu tetap tegak di tempatnya.*

*Orang-orang dewasa telah bekerja keras di siang hari. Tanaman musim kemarau berupa sayuran, tembakau dan palawija harus disiram dengan air sumur yang khusus mereka gali. Bila malam tiba, keinginan mereka tidak berlebihan; duduk beristirahat sambil menggulung tembakau dengan daun pisang atau kulit jagung kering.*

(Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, p. 5-7)

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that literary texts, as they require imaginative and creative thinking and are rich in reasoning and inference, can serve teachers tremendously to improve learners' critical thinking ability. The results of the study have significant implications for teachers to teach language through literary works. By having literary works in the teaching and learning process, students find a perfect tools to seek the structure of a language and linguistics devices that help them to learn the particular language comprehensively. Using literary works students not only learn about the grammar and micro linguistics but also gain information about the culture, context of the story, and hidden meaning of the words. Teaching language through literature then definitely give a great impacts to the students ability to improve their competence in language. It is because they are not only studying the grammatical rules and the basic theory of a language, but they also learn to use critical thinking in the process of studying the language. This method gives a huge benefit for students because they treat the language in a creative and deep thinking that they finally get a maximum result of studying the language.

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