

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates the introduction of this study. It is divided into several parts. The first part tells about the background underlying this study. The following parts point out the research questions, the purpose of this study, the significance of this study, and the definition of terms. Finally, the organization of the paper is presented.

1.1. Background of the Study

Poetry, like other non-literary genres, has the characteristics to be used in the Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL). It has meaning to be conveyed contextually. The difference is that poetry is written in an aesthetical way. According to Carter & Long (1991) poetry is beneficial to be used in the TEFL because (1) it can be a good language model from which learners may learn sentence construction (syntax) and acquire vocabulary; (2) it can enrich target language culture knowledge; and (3) it can develop students' personal character through the moral value embedded in it.

In Indonesia, the use of poetry is not mentioned in the current curriculum (see KBK & KTSP) in the school level. As a consequence, poetry is rarely used in the school setting. Besides the absence of poetry in the curriculum, the unpopularity of the use of English poem at school level is also triggered by its difficulty. Some research showed that many students found poetry as the most difficult literary work to be learned (Alwasilah, 2001; Ki, 2010; Murdibjono, 2011).

In the new EFL curriculum designed (Kurikulum 2013) poetry is included as one of genres that students should learn (see Kurikulum 2013: Standar Kompetensi SMA/MA). This demands EFL teachers to be able to use poetry as materials effectively. Since there are limited studies identified in the use of poetry in school setting (Isaeni, 2004; Rudy, 2001), there is no sufficient information on how poetry is taught and learned at school level in Indonesia. Hence, many

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English teachers might be unfamiliar with the appropriate way of the teaching of poetry. The use of inappropriate teaching methods can cause failure in learning (Beach & Marshall, 1990; Hennessy, Hinchion, & McNamara, 2010). An inappropriate teaching way noticed by researchers is traditional method. Beach & Marshall (1990) mentioned that the use of traditional literature teaching method which focuses on one valid interpretation makes students bored in learning. They also described that the students whose interpretations are rejected by the teacher become unmotivated in learning literature.

In fact, according to the transactional theory of reading coined by Louise Rosenblatt, literary texts (including poetry) have the potential to engage and motivate students in learning through reader-text transaction. This theory proposes that there is a transactional process between the reader and the literary text in which the reader makes meaning (Rosenblatt, 1988; Probst, 1987). During the process, the reader involves their linguistic competence and life experience to interact with the text to attain meaningful interpretation (Rosenblatt, 1985 in Cox & Many, 1992). Hence, readers may have different interpretations since their experiences may be also different. This theory implies that in the teaching of poetry, students/readers can be the most involved parts. Teachers should emphasize the discussion of students' interpretation rather than the teachers'. This is a key of engaging the students in learning literature (Marks, 2000; Shernoff et al, 2003; Jones, 2009). Engagement is very important for learning development and it has very strong correlation with learning achievement (Marks, 2000; Shernoff et al, 2003; NCSE, 2006).

Apparently, poetry can engage students by involvement and enjoyment. Poetry is an authentic human feeling expression through which students can attend and relate to their feelings and experiences (Musthafa, 1994). Therefore, to fully engage students through poetry, teachers should carefully attract students' enjoyment in choosing appropriate poetry which is relevant to their age. For instance, poetry about love and friendship will be suitable for adolescents. The presence of enjoyment in learning can make the sense of belonging in learning grow. So, learning can last longer and effective.

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Seeing the limited study and the new curriculum design, the study on the use of poetry in teaching English at school level is considered important. Therefore, this study was designed. This study investigated how the use of poetry as materials in teaching English engaged students in learning. It also aimed to see how students responded to the use of poetry in learning English.

1.2. Research Questions

There were two basic research questions this study aimed to answer. The first question was related to the students' reading engagement during learning through poetry in the classroom. The second question dealt with the students' response on the use of poetry in learning. These were represented in these following questions:

- 1) How does the use of poetry engage students in EFL reading?
- 2) How do the students respond to the use of poetry in EFL reading?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Based on the research problems above, there were two purposes this study intended to achieve.

- 1) This study aimed to describe the students' reading engagement during learning through poetry in EFL classroom.
- 2) This study intended to find out the students response to the use of poetry in learning English.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The result of this study provided some benefits in three areas of English language pedagogy.

a. For theory

This study can enlarge the horizon of language teaching theory in the EFL classroom particularly related to the use of literature as material to increase students' language learning engagement.

b. For policy

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This study also brings up the awareness of the usefulness of using poetry in EFL pedagogy with appropriate implementation, so that it can provide academic information to increase the chance of literature being integrated into the EFL curriculum in Indonesia.

c. For practice

Finally this study can provide chance for English language pedagogy practitioners to improve the quality of teaching practice especially in the use of various effective materials and methods in teaching.

Those significances mentioned above are seen as rational goals for the development of EFL pedagogy in Indonesia, i.e. to create a generation who are able to compete and exist in the globalization challenge.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

This study relates several broad concepts of teaching literature. This part aims to specify them in terms of their use in this study. They also will be explained more deeply later in chapter II.

a. Poetry

Poetry is a type of literary text which contains a variety of linguistic devices (Maley and Moulding, 1985 in Ki, 2010) and presents experiences, thoughts, and feelings (Hanauer, 2004 in Ki, 2010), and is written for enjoyment (MacKay, 1993 in Ki, 2010). The poetry used in this study has been selected through consideration of students' prior and potential competence for learning as to promote Zone of Proximal Development (See Vygotsky, in de Bot, et.al., 2005).

b. Reading engagement

This study focuses on the students' engagement in the reading instruction which encompasses the theory of engagement as "a psychological process, especially the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning" (Marks, 2000, pp. 154-155). The description of engagement in this study covers three areas of engagement proposed by Fredericks, Blumfield, &

Paris (1994, in Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008), namely *behavioral*, *cognitive*, and *emotional* engagements.

c. EFL classroom

EFL classrooms are defined as the situations where the students of non-native English background learn English language as a foreign language in which it is not used in the community as a means of communication alongside the native language (Brown, 2007).

1.6. Organization of the Paper

This paper is organized in five chapters. Each chapter provides subtopics which explain the related issue. Chapter I presents the introduction which contains the background, research question, the purpose of this study, the significance of the study, definition of terms, the scope of this study and organization of the paper. Chapter II focuses on review of related literature. It elaborates the theoretical framework underlying the topics of this study namely poetry reading and students engagement. In chapter III, the research methodology is provided in which research design and setting, data collection and analysis, and the procedure of the research are described. Chapter IV presents the result of the study elaborated in the findings and discussions. Lastly, Chapter V ends this paper with the conclusion and suggestion given from this research.