CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a brief overview of the study. It is divided into several parts: the background of the study, the purpose of the research, the research questions, as well as data collection and analysis. This chapter is closed with an outline of the organization of the research paper.

1.1 Background

It has been said by many scholars (Morris, 2005; Pradopo, 1994; Schwarz, 1986) that literature and reality are closely intertwined. More often than not, literature talks about the reality of the world around us. It has frequently become a beacon of criticism to uprising trends that are happening around the world. Indeed, many literary works have been shown to take inspiration from reality (Schwarz, 1986). According to Allan (2001), literary works are oftentimes seen as an actual representation of real life and is used by authors as a media to share their personal responses towards real life. It follows that literature can be a medium for authors to express themselves, where their thoughts, feelings, social life, and personal life intermingle and are shown through their works.

In today's digital world, literature has never felt closer. Starting from how literary works from different eras have become accessible to almost everyone, to how easy it has become to search and look up any kinds of literary works on the internet. Likewise, literature has become an increasingly accessible media to learn from in many language classrooms. In fact, various studies (Gillespie, 1994; Khatib & Alizabeh, 2012; Tutas, 2006) have shown the significance and importance of incorporating literature into the curriculum. By incorporating literature, students, as stated by Lazar (1993), are able to relate and improve not only their linguistic capabilities but also their knowledge of the world and themselves in the process.

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Using literature as a medium to present the world into the hands of students, teachers are able to expand their students' views and explore the world through the words and thoughts of others. However, while it is important for students to expand their horizons, they also need to be equipped with the ability to assess the values embedded in the literary works. This is where the ability to think critically is needed.

Critical thinking is a thinking mode where one's thinking structure is to delve into the deeper meaning of things (Khatib & Alizadeh, 2012). By this definition, to think critically one must first train and develop one's thinking structure into something that would further pursue the underlying message that is present. Tutas (2012) also states that to be able to think critically, students must also be engaged actively in the process of reading. This means that throughout the reading process the student has to be constantly thinking of the underlying meaning of the text. It is only after having a deeper understanding of the text will the student be able to respond to the text critically.

Reader response, according to Rosenblatt (1995), is an exploration of emotions and meaning of a certain text. Reader response also becomes a medium for students to channel their experiences through a text. The presence of this exchange is what signifies a good reader response. So, to put it simply, reader-response gives students their voices, connecting the text they are reading to their own situated contexts. Reader response can be a great tool for teachers to figure out if their students are able to think critically and respond to the given text, too.

This research focuses on students' written responses to a particular literary text taking place in a university EFL classroom setting. Some previous studies have shown that students are able to dissect the literary work and are able to connect it to their own experiences (Jaffar, 2004). In some studies, such as Tutas's (2006), the students are not only able to relate to the literary work but they have also shown to have developed critical thinking skills. Although most previous studies (e.g., Jaffar, 2004; Tutas, 2006) prefer

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using short stories as their literary text of choice, Bobkina and Stefanova (2016) chose to use a poem titled "If" by Rudyard Kipling. After having analyzed the poem with their students, the teacher asked them to write their responses in the form of a story. This study shows that students' responses can be written in different kinds of texts. Some other previous studies have analyzed whether their students are able to respond to the text critically by either talk (Sipe, 2000) or tests (Tung & Chang, 2009).

To contribute to the literature in the area, this research differs with previous studies as this research focuses on the students' feeling towards their classroom experience and their ability to express their emotions through making literature by analyzing the themes present in each response poem. As such, this research intends to analyze students' poems written as a response to a poem titled 'Did I miss anything?' by Tom Wayman (1994). This poem revolves around classroom experiences from a teacher's perspective. It tells us about a teacher's anguish when asked "Did I miss anything?" by students. As the poem emphasizes the teacher's perspective, this study intends to explore the voices of students in regard to their classroom experiences. To do so, the themes, tones and figurative language contained in the students' poems will be particularly highlighted. Understanding poetry through the lens of reader response is believed to have the capacity to better invoke feelings and emotions from the students and they will be able to voice their experiences in the classroom with more ease. Furthermore, in the classroom, teachers may sometimes forget to listen to the students' voices, letting themselves—aware or not—dominate. Yet, to make the classroom a comfortable place to learn and to nurture students' love for learning, it is of prime importance that the students' voices be heard, as well. For this reason, this research can also be seen as a bridge that facilitates dialogic engagement between teachers and students.

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1.2 Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to analyze how students are able to make meaning of their classroom experiences through their response poems. In teasing out their experiences through the theme present in their poems, this research will particularly highlight the emotions or mood and tone as well as the figurative language contained in those poems to further understand the theme and the students' classroom experience.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions have been formulated as follows:

1. What themes are present in the students' response poems?

2. How do students make meanings of their classroom experiences as reflected in their response poems?

1.4 Data Collection and Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, this study applies a qualitative research method. This method is chosen since the findings are in the form of text rather than numbers. This method is appropriate for this research since this research explores the meanings present in the students' poems.

Specifically, this research involves poetry analysis. The most important aspect of using a qualitative research method is to regard the text as the main focus (Kuckartz, 2013). By applying this method, the study highlights particular words, phrases, metaphors/similes and other figurative languages that help to convey the students' classroom experiences.

The data are taken from an English literature class focusing on poems written by twelve fourth-semester university students in response to a poem

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titled 'Did I miss anything?' by Tom Wayman (1994). This number emerged as the selected poems were written in more than three stanzas. In analyzing the poems, I first read them to get a general idea of what they were about, followed by a close-reading of the poems to discern any words or phrases that may hint to the students' experiences and feelings in the classroom. The themes emerging from the poems were particularly highlighted and formed the basis for data categorization. In making meaning of the students' poems, comparisons are drawn from the twelve poems.

1.5 Clarification of Terms

Literature

In this study, literature is seen to reflect reality. Literature is also perceived as an effective tool to develop critical thinking. Literature can not only deepen a student's linguistic competence but also their cultural knowledge, interpretative abilities, creativity, and emphatic skills, thus being able to educate students as "whole persons" (Lazar, 1993, p. 19).

Reader Response Theory

Reader response is a theory that revolves around the readers' experiences and emotions in relation to the text they are reading. This research focuses on Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reader response, in which she sees the act of literature reading as an emotional exploration towards a text's meaning.

1.6 Significance of Study

A number of research studies have been done with regard to the use of literary texts in EFL classes in relation to reader-response theory. Most of the previous research studies, however, use short stories as their chosen literary works. This research intends to contribute to the existing literature by analyzing students' poems written as a response to a poem titled 'Did I miss anything?' by Tom Wayman (1994). By doing so, it is expected that a

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dialogic engagement can be created between teachers and students, and better mutual understanding can grow as a result.

1.7 Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters as follows:

1. Introduction

In this chapter, the introduction of the study is made. Here, the background of the study, the purpose of the study, research questions, the research method, clarifications of research terms, the significance to the study and last but not least the organization of the study are explained and elaborated to get a clear view on what is to be expected in this study.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, the theories and all related sources (articles, journals, and documents) are all elaborated here. This study will take a focus on reader response and the elements of poems as this study explores the use of reader response theory and poems in a classroom setting to further understand a student's perspective on their classroom experience.

3. Research Methodology

In this chapter, the procedures taken by the researcher to conduct this study is explored. This chapter contains the research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, the findings of the data analysis are further elaborated and discussed. The theories that will be used and referred to in this chapter have been proposed in previous chapters. The main idea of this chapter is to ultimately answer the research question.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the conclusion of the study that is drawn from the discussion of the previous chapter is presented. Suggestions for future research within the scope of the topic is also present here.