

TEACHING POETRY BY USING CBLT

Siswanto

Teaching Training and Education Faculty, Sebelas Maret University Surakarta,
Jl. Ir. Sutami No.36A, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

Corresponding e-mail: siswanto_uns@yahoo.co.id

Abstract: Poetry is the most neglected subject in the teaching of English as a Second Language. Being neglected for long, it has become a peripheral item. Unlike reading and speaking it is minor in the major trends. No wonder teachers and students are not familiar with it. Therefore they do not know how to interact with a poem systematically.

The major cause is the lack of competence in its convention. Culler states anyone lacking in it, would be quite baffled if presented with a poem. Like structure, it serves as the underlying system.

Arbitrarily it is a set of rules. To be able to interact with poetry, students have to provide themselves with it the way a poet does. It covers (1) figures of speech covering simile, metaphor, hyperbole, etc. (2) rhythm covering: syllable, foot, metre (3) meaning related to autonomy, theories developed on the back of the New Criticism, semiotic theories developed under the influence of the discipline of theoretical linguistics, and internationalist theories inspired by speech-act theory and Grecian analysis of meaning; and (4) poem forms covering ballad, sonnet, free verse, etc.

As the complex whole, poetry cannot be taught wholly at a time. It is broken into smaller parts called units of competence. Through the graded goals, the whole communicative competence will be achieved incrementally.

Keywords: The complex whole, units of competence, schemata, patterns of stress, trochaic, short-term goal

1. REASONS OF CHOOSING THE TOPIC

Literature in general or poetry in particular is the most neglected subject in the teaching of English as the second language. Much concern is focused on the teaching of skills as listening, speaking, reading and writing combined with the linguistic components as vocabulary, pronunciation and structure. While poetry constructed from the same linguistic components as vocabulary, pronunciation and structure is treated differently in the teaching. Being excluded from the English instruction, it becomes a periphery in the major trends. Consequently it is less popular or well-known with which teachers and students are unfamiliar.

Being unfamiliar, they do not know how to interact with it well as they do with reading text. If they are offered with a poem, for example they do not know how to analyze the rhythm of a single line systematically. They do not know either to identify the kinds of figures of speech of it.

Their incompetence in interacting with poetry is the result of the government's negligence. It has been lasting so long since the establishment of Salatiga Materials in 1950's which results in the exclusion of poetry from the teaching of English as the second language (TESOL) either in FKIP or FKIP.

The unpredictable consequence, in the writer's observation, is the teachers' and students' unfamiliarity in the institution with

poetry. And the impact of the exclusion is teachers and students of SMA do not have literary or poetic competence to interact with poetry in general or poems in particular. Whereas to be able to interact with poetry well a reader ought to have the knowledge of poetic tools or apparatus as the underlying system or convention.

The convention plays an important role because it regulates poetry composition. Its function is like the grammatical structure of language that governs utterances or expressions.

If they are provided with the convention that bears a set of intrinsic rules such as rhythm, figures of speech, meter, imagery, line, tone, etc, they can interact with poetry or a single poem. It will be indicated by their competence in analyzing systematically the rhythm of a single line in *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*. Their schemata on rhythm as the background knowledge in understanding poetry makes them able to identify the pattern of stress of the line systematically as follows:

— — — — —
Twinkle, twinkle, little star

The line uses trochaic with the pattern:

— = stressed
— = unstressed

And with the background knowledge on rhythm, too, they can give a name to the whole metrical system as follows:

— — — — —
Twinkle, | twinkle, | little star
1 2 3

On the basis of counting, they find there are three meters called trimeter. So the name of the rhythm of the line is **trochaic trimeter**.

Having learned the poetry convention, they can also identify the kind of figurative language and the kind of imagery of the line systematically too. Figuratively it uses apostrophe, not personification nor metaphor, because it addresses the star as the object spoken to. While the kind of imagery the line uses is kinesthetic because it refers to movement. So important is the role of convention that Culler says:

Anyone lacking this knowledge, anyone wholly unacquainted with literature and unfamiliar with the conventions by which fictions are read, would be baffled if presented with a poem (1978: 248)

From the statement we infer that to be able to understand and analyze a poem correctly, a reader has to know the poetry convention. His position is like a poet who has studied it in his attempt to write poems systematically.

On the ground of the same convention a communication between readers and poet through the work occurs. The communication takes place because poetry as the other forms of language utterances uses language as a means of expression. In other words, it is like a letter, a report, newspaper, etc. representing parole. Externally, poetry is compact, condensed, concise, and adorned with aesthetic language. So in form, it is different from the other utterances or paroles.

2. MEANING

Meaning is the complex problem in learning poetry. Scholars in literature argue about it, the one with his own argument and the others with their own. In this case, Kreidler writes literary scholars quarrel over the meaning of poem (1998: 2). The meaning of a poem which is apprehended in interpretation theoretically now has been widespread. The application of theories to establish meaning of a poem is undeniable since it, as a literary work, has its own characteristics and, as Olsen says (1987: 43) has its own way of creating meaning.

There are two main theoretical movements in creating meaning as described by Olsen (1978: 43):

1. The semantic theories developed on the back of the practice of New Criticism. It

assumes that poetry is autonomous. To describe meaning is not necessary to refer to anything outside of the literary work, except to the linguistic rules governing the language in which it is written.

2. The semantic theories developed on the back of inductive method, that the meaning of poems is established by the discovery of observed theories depending on the certain approach used by the readers in their attempt to interpret the work.

On the basis of various approaches such as structural, psychological, philosophical, cultural, etc. The poem's meaning is discovered. The main point in this activity is *reproduction of a story poem* (Wren and Martin, 1981: 535). What the readers of a poem in their own words in line with the relevant theory have discovered in their reading.

3. Semantic theory developed by Grice, that in his analysis of speech acts, he uses the four maxims (Kreidler, 1998: 81):

- a. The maxim of quantity
 - b. The maxim of relevance
 - c. The maxim of manner
 - d. The maxim of quality

As the reader of poems, as he further says, we are aware of those maxims though we do not explicitly recognize their existence. In discovering meaning, this Gricean theory is autonomous like what is developed by New Criticism.

3. CBLT

CBLT which stands for Competency-Based Language Teaching is one of so many methods for teaching language. It is a development of Competency Based Education (CBE) that focuses on the outcomes or outputs of learning. It is so because as Richards (2001: 141) writes in his book that most of the methods focus on inputs to language learning. Focus on inputs is based on the assumption that by improving materials, syllabuses, etc. more effective language learning will proceed better. By focusing on outcomes, CBLT requires what the learners do with the language learning.

Language, particularly English, is not in isolation from society. It is a means of communication for achieving goals and life

survival. And great literary works are communicated in it. Poetry, viewed from CBLT is the complex whole consisting of various elements. In teaching, the whole is broken down into parts and sub-parts. On Richards' formulation (2001: 1430 the whole is constructed from smaller components called units of competence. They are the teaching materials presented in a series of short-term goals, each builds upon the one before (ibid) until finally the whole competence (communicative competence) is achieved.

Teaching Model

On the basis of short-term goals each building upon the one before so the learners advance in knowledge and skill (Richards, 2001: 143). Below is an example of teaching a unit of competence:

Teaching Figures of Speech

Procedures:

- a. Planning
- b. Acting
- c. Evaluating
- d. Reflecting
- e. Revising

Teaching Material:

Figures of speech is one of the intrinsic elements that constructs the whole poetry. One of them is simile. Simile, according to Wren and Martin (1981: 489) is a comparison made between two objects of different kinds which, however, have a least one point in common. It is usually introduced by words as like or as. Examples:

- *My love is like a red, red rose*
- *Life is like a dream*
- *I wandered lonely as a cloud*

Exercises

Identify similes from the following lines and give your reason why they are so.

- 1) *Her eyes shine like the moon*
- 2) *She likes the morning star*
- 3) *The camel is like the ship of the dessert*
- 4) *His hands are as cool as cucumber*
- 5) *He likes dreaming*
- 6) *Michael likes Einstein so much*
- 7) *Richards is like a lion*
- 8) *She screamed as an eagle*
- 9) *You are like my sun shine*
- 10) *The eagle flew down like a thunder*

Key Answer:

- 1) *It is simile because there are two objects, her eyes and the moon with linguistic feature like.*
- 2) *Is is not a comparison, because the word likes is a verb*
- 3) *The line uses simile because it has a linguistic feature like.*
- 4) *It is simile because it compares two objects hands and cucumber.*
- 5) *It is not simile because there is no comparison. The word likes is a verb*
- 6) *It is not simile. The word like is a verb so that it does not compare two objects.*
- 7) *The line uses simile because it compares between Richard and lion by using the word like*
- 8) *It uses simile introduced by the word as*
- 9) *The line uses simile with the introductory word like, comparing you with sun shine*
- 10) *The line uses simile because the word like compares how the eagle flew as a thunder*

4. CONCLUSION

Poetry cannot be taught wholly at a time because as the complex whole, it is composed of various components, called the intrinsic elements. They are the poetic tools agreed as the convention that makes readers able to identify the whole systematically. Without knowledge of it, they will get difficulties in their interaction with it. Thus, to be able to respond a single poem, our students are demanded to have the knowledge of it by learning or studying as a poet does.

Teaching poetry on the basis of CBLT is teaching the convention parts by parts gradually, in a series of short-term goals, the ones build the ones before, so that the students advance in theory and analysis.

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