

## **Creating Performance Art through Local Literatures: A Vivid Contribution of Literature Role in English Language Teaching**

By:

**Rita Inderawati**

Sriwijaya University

Email: [ritarudisaid@yahoo.com](mailto:ritarudisaid@yahoo.com)

Literature has been assumed as a subject of recitation, enjoyment and having no contribution to language skills enrichment. It became less popular when language teaching and learning started to focus on the functional use of language. However, the role of literature in English language teaching (ELT) classroom has been re-assessed and many now view literary texts as providing rich linguistic input. Many experts insist that literature is beneficial in ELT; previous studies have also revealed that literature is usable in the classrooms for a number of reasons.

Learners can make use of literary texts to lead them to display performances of plays. The texts provide opportunities for multi-sensorial classroom experiences and can appeal to the learners with different learning styles. They also offer a rich source of linguistic input and can help learners practice the four skills.

This research-based paper highlights South Sumatra local literatures, i.e. *The Legend of Kemaro Island* and *The Bitter Tongue* (English Version) which were performed and video-recorded. The performance art was created by collaborating visual and non-visual responses after reading these local literatures developed through a recent research and development (R&D) method. The findings were the learners were able to: 1) do a monologue, 2) discuss the content by responding non-visually, 3) create a tableau, 4) discuss the tableau, and 5) create a socio gram in the tableau. This performance art creativity vividly contributes to develop learners' language skills as well as personality.

**Key words:** local literature, performance art, visual and non-visual response, literature role, ELT

## Introduction

Literature used in the ELT classroom is enjoyable for a number of reasons. It is a fact that when traditional language teaching approaches were applied in the classroom, literature became less popular since the focus of English learning was on the functional use of language. However, the role of literature in the ELT classroom has been re-assessed and literary texts are worthy to provide rich linguistic input, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in other languages and a potential source of learner motivation. McRae (1994) differentiates between literature with a small and capital L. Literature with small L refers to fable, song lyrics, and popular fiction, whereas the capital L literature indicates the classical texts written by great authors such as William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens. British Council has informed that even though ELT classrooms use canonical texts for literature from United Kingdom or USA, the literary works written by local writers from different countries and cultures in English version are also included.

Another reason why literature is important to be applied in the ELT classrooms is that literary texts provide opportunities for multi-sensorial classroom experiences and can appeal to learners with different learning styles. Texts can be supplemented by audio-texts, music CDs, film clips, all of which enhance even further the richness of the sensory input that students receive. Next, literary texts offer a rich source of linguistic input and can help learners to practise the four skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing - in addition to exemplifying grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary. Many experts have insisted that literary works are not only used for enjoyment, but also for the development of language skills (Moody, 1971; Purves, et al., 1990; Carter and Long, 1991). This insistence is strengthened by a research conducted by Takagaki (2002) as follows, "... literature has a vital role to play in teaching foreign language readers that it is a living, rich language and that literary works such as novels, poems, dramas, and short stories are full of feelings and emotions, along with imagination and creativity." Besides, sustainability inquiries done by Rudy (2005, 2007, 2008), Aryani (2007), Aisyah (2007), Yulianti (2008), Husin (2008), Irdahayu (2008), Sulaiman (2009), Fajri (2010). These inquiries apply new paradigm of literature teaching, that is the application of reader response strategy and visual symbols response which were presented both integrated and segregated way to develop students' language skills.

Furthermore, Literary texts are representational rather than referential. McRae (1994) states that referential language communicates at only one level and tends to be informational. The representational language of literary texts involves the learners and engages their emotions, as well as their cognitive aspects. Literary works help learners use their imagination, enhance their empathy for others and lead them to develop their own creativity. Literature lessons can lead students to display through posters of student creations e.g. poems, stories or through performances of plays. In other words, literary texts can be more motivating than the referential ones often used in classrooms for a variety of linguistic, cultural and personal growth reasons.

The next reason of literature role in ELT is that literature can help learners to develop their understanding of other cultures, awareness of 'difference' and to develop tolerance and understanding. At the same time literary texts can deal with universal themes such as love, war and loss that are not always covered in the sanitised world of course books. Moody (1971) states

that literature is very vital to teach since it is able to enrich students' culture, personal involvement, and language skills. Culturally and personally involvement, literature does not only help the students develop cultural understanding of other cultures, but also develop their personality and tolerance. Meanwhile, literature can develop their language skills.

Furthermore, it is a challenge for English teachers when they will use literary works in enriching students' language skills. It is obvious that language represents a medium for literature. By language, literature is established; on the other hand, literature enriches student's language skills. Previous researchers have investigated the relationship between language and literature. Nevertheless, the fact that literature is able to promote language skills is still confronted. Carter and Long (1991:2) insist the following:

It is sometimes argued that a justification for the teaching of literature is its value in promoting language development. This is taken by some teachers to mean that literature can be an instrument for use in connection with the teaching of specific vocabulary or structures or for language manipulation.

The insistence indicates that even though the existence of literature in language classrooms is suspected to be having no contribution to students' language skills, some teachers use literature as an instrument to teach language elements.

Hismanoglu (2005:53) also cites:

Among language educators, there has been a hot debate as to how, when, where, and why literature should be incorporated in ESL/EFL curriculum. Vigorous discussion about how literature and ESL/EFL instruction can work together and interact for the benefit of students and teachers has led to the flourishing of interesting ideas, learning, and improved instruction for all.

This citation argues the role of literature in ELT; nevertheless, some recent investigations have proved that literature will be meaningful if it is taught side by side with language. Teachers can exploit literary texts in a large number of ways in the classroom. Classroom work with literary works may involve pre-reading tasks, interactive work on the text and follow up activities.

Literary texts can present teachers and learners with a number of difficulties including: (1) text selection - texts need to be chosen that have relevance and interest to learners. linguistic difficulty - texts need to be appropriate to the level of the students' comprehension; (2)

length - shorter texts may be easier to use within the class time available, but longer texts provide more contextual details, and development of character and plot; (3) cultural difficulty - texts should not be so culturally dense that outsiders feel excluded from understanding essential meaning, and (4) cultural appropriacy - learners should not be offended by textual content (British Council, 2009). To overcome the challenges faced by teachers in presenting literary works in the classroom, Duff and Maley (2007) stress that teachers can cope with many of the challenges that literary texts present by asking a series of questions to assess the suitability of texts for any particular group of learners:

1. Is the subject matter likely to interest this group?
2. Is the language level appropriate?
3. Is it the right length for the time available?
4. Does it require much cultural or literary background knowledge?
5. Is it culturally offensive in any way?
6. Can it be easily exploited for language learning purposes?

They also emphasize the importance of varying task difficulty as well as text difficulty. Teacher must consider that when he/she selects a difficult text, the strategy of teaching must be a comfortable one; on the other hand, he/she can choose easy texts with complicated strategy and model of teaching in appropriate context.

This research-based paper highlights South Sumatra local literatures, i.e. *The Legend of Kemaro Island* and *The Bitter Tongue* (English Version) which were performed and video-recorded. The performance art was created by collaborating visual and non-visual responses after reading these local literatures developed through a recent research and development (R&D) method. The findings were the learners were able to: 1) do a monologue, 2) discuss the content by responding non-visually, 3) create a tableau, 4) discuss the tableau, and 5) create a socio gram in the tableau. This performance art creativity vividly contributes to develop learners' language skills as well as personality.

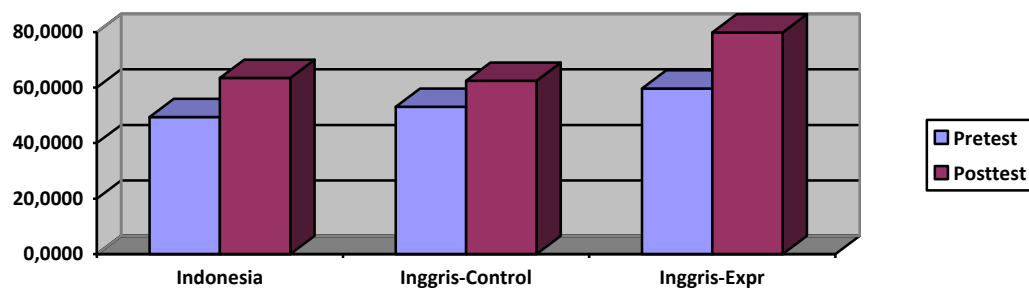
## **Method**

This paper is written based on the research and development (R and D) method in 2009. Data collected for this scrutiny were literary appreciation test, model of teaching in English study program of Sriwijaya University, and the application of the model was implemented in three senior high schools in South Sumatera and to students of other class in English study program of Sriwijaya University. The model of local literature performance art was socialized in Malang (East Java) after considering that the city rich in local literature collection to be use as learning material. The folktales used in this research were: (1) *The Legend of Kemaro Island*, (2) *The Legend of Bidar Race*, (3) *The Bitter Tongue*, (4) *The Legend of Nopumbolu* (Indonesian version), (5) *White Hair Princess*, (6) *The legend of Palm Tree* and (7) *Putri Pinang Masak*. Having discussed the reader response strategy and visual symbols response and treated the model of teaching, the subject of research performed the result of their appreciation test that they created and video-typed by themselves. Meanwhile, data from questionnaire was analysed in terms of percentage and thick-description.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Having conducted research and development for months, this paper highlights the teaching of literature in English learning context in Indonesia in order to prove and indicate that literature has vivid contribution and big role in ELT through local literature performance art. The result of the test after a treatment is conducted is that the posttest shows that there is a significant difference of students' ability in developing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor faculties. The difference is 17.16572 by comparing the average score of posttest in control and experiment group. Based on the independent sample t-test analysis, it can be inferred that the average score

of the students significantly increased after the model of local literature performance art was treated.



The development of learning model is that at the end of the students' activity in learning process, there is a creative performance art to stimulate their psychomotor faculty by collaborating seven reader responses and two of visual symbol responses (socio gram and tableau). The content of the performance art refers to model of teaching as follows:

1. Lecturer explains structuralism approach as the old paradigm of literary appreciation.
2. Lecturer introduces reader response strategy as a new paradigm of appreciation and exemplify each response.
3. Lecturer asks students to browse and read South Sumatra's folktales in English version.
4. Lecturer asks students to describe the elements of fiction by arguing, comparing, and competing toward the folktales.
5. Lecturer guides students to explain and conceive the folktales.
6. Lecturer asks students to connect the content of the folktales to their experience, other stories and film, other culture and social life, and religion.
7. Lecturer asks students to engage their feeling, imagination, and thought towards the characters of the folktales.
8. Lecturer asks students to interpret the folktales by putting forward the theme and identifying an important word.

9. Lecturer asks students to judge the folktales and the plot.
  10. Lecturer introduces visual symbols response and asks students to respond the folktales by applying one the symbols.
  11. Lecturer asks students to perform a tableau and discuss the meaning of the performance.
  12. Lecturer explains the collaboration between the two responses.
  13. Lecturer puts forward the arrangement of performance art.
  14. Lecturer shows a scenario of performance art and discusses it with students.
  15. Lecturer asks students to arrange performance art by collaborating the two distinct responses.
- 1.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Memandu mhs menyusun satu seni pertunjukan</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meminta mhs diskusi tablo yang telah diciptakan</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meminta mhs menciptakan kreativitas seni pertunjukan</li></ul>

Di akhir pembelajaran, ada penambahan aktivitas motorik mahasiswa dengan cara mengolaborasi simbol visual tablo dan sosiogram untuk menciptakan sebuah tampilan seni pertunjukan yang kreatif.

---

---

### **BIO DATA**

Rita Inderawati, English lecturer of Sriwijaya University Indonesia has conducted inquiries on the roles of literature in ELT and was very active in international seminars. She presented in a seminar held by CESA at Hong Kong University (2007). In 2008, she shared her research at Asia TEFL in Bali. Since 2006 -2009, she presented papers at TEFLIN.